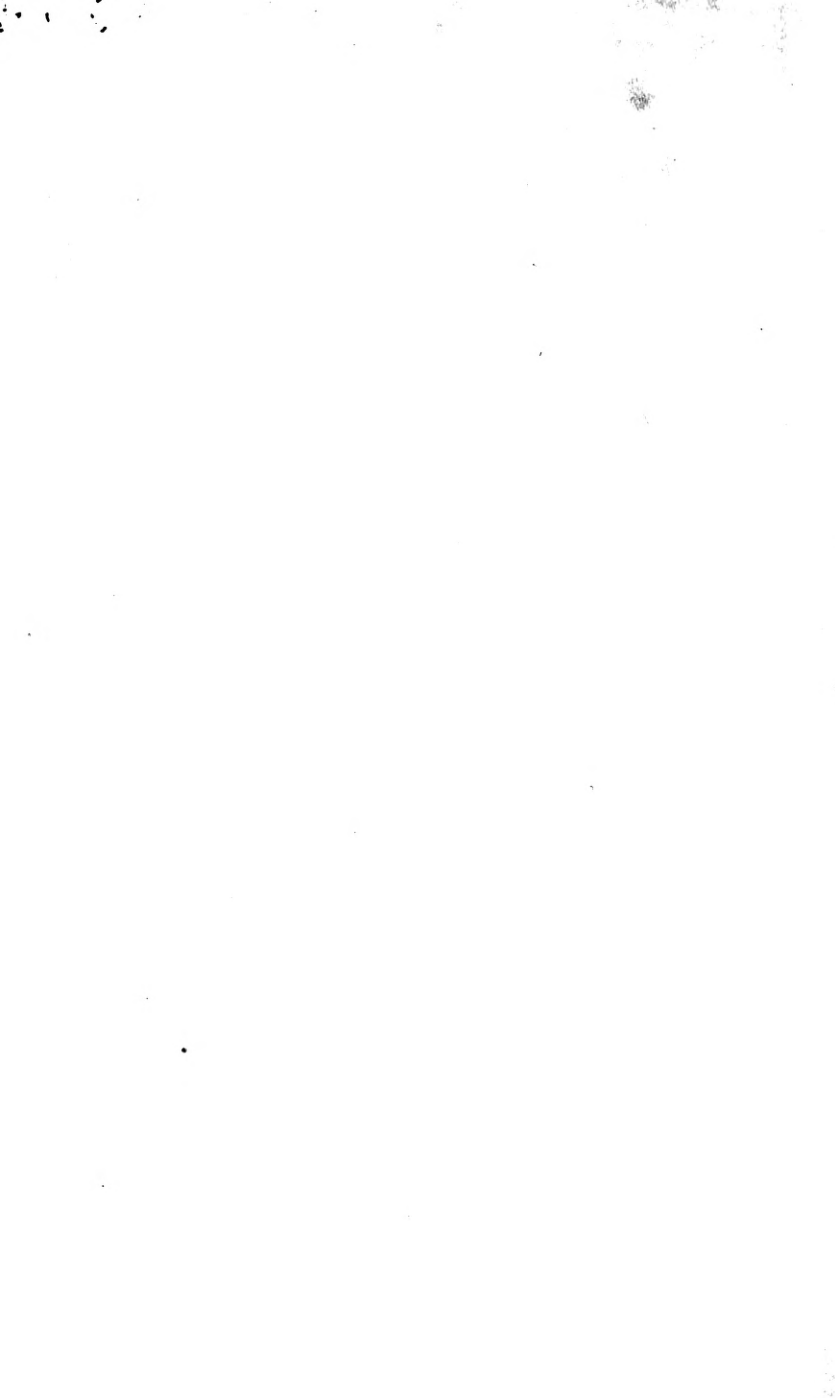




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John Miller 1811

F U N E R A L DISCOURSES,

In TWO PARTS;

CONTAINING,

I. CONSOLATIONS on the Death of our
FRIENDS.

II. PREPARATIONS for our OWN DEATH.

By WILLIAM HARRIS, D. D.



L O N D O N :

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M D C C X X X V I .





T H E

P R E F A C E.

THE contemplation of Death has always been esteemed a point of wisdom, in the heathen philosophy, and recommended with great solemnity. 'Tis founded in nature and reason: For if we are certainly mortal, as the experience of every age testifies, it must needs be reasonable to be sometimes seriously thinking of it, and preparing for it; and very unreasonable to put it out of our minds, or think of it with indifference. 'Tis represented in the scripture as an instance of wisdom, to consider the latter end, to number our days, and know how frail we are; and we are instructed by the greatest examples, to be sometimes speaking of our decease, and of the dissolution, and putting off this our tabernacle.

'Tis indeed a very grave and serious thought, and for that reason a very ungrateful one to the generality of mankind. The young and the gay are ready to object, It would spoil all our mirth, and destroy the relish of life; though 'tis well consistent with all sober and rational joy, and there can be no true comfort and enjoyment of life, till this thought is made easy, and we can think of

death without terrour and dismay. They think 'tis fit only for elder persons, and that 'tis time enough in the decline of life; which is very true, if elder persons only died, and youth were a protection from the stroke of death, or did not need this guard to their virtue, and motive to religion. The men of business are commonly in a hurry, and can't find leisure, or disposition to attend to a thing so foreign to their designs—But they must find time to die notwithstanding; and no wise man would chuse to go out of the world in a hurry, and without any serious forethought about it.

But how disagreeable soever it may be, 'tis nevertheless a necessary and important thought, and capable of extensive influence, in forming our spirits, and in the conduct of life. 'Tis very useful to correct the vanity of nature, restrain unruly appetite, guard against temptation to sin, to allay the heat of passion, and compose the mind to sobriety and moderation, in all the troubles and comforts of life. 'Tis proper to breed an habitual seriousness of spirit; to dispose to thoughtfulness and consideration; to awaken our concern, and quicken our diligence; to improve our time and talents, to their proper purposes, and to the best advantage; to check too eager pursuits of present good; and raise the heart to heaven, and another world.

I confess funeral discourses, like other things, have been sometimes greatly abused to the flattering of the dead, and hardening the living; and have sometimes led to great superstition. But I have always found, that a serious discourse upon

a proper subject, on such occasions, when managed with care and conscience, has met with greater attention than ordinary, and been more effectual for good.

'Tis with this design the following discourses are brought together and presented in one view, which were preached at distant times, and on different occasions; which is the true reason of the same thoughts sometimes returning, though commonly used to somewhat a different purpose. If any should think that two or three of the following characters, have something in them extraordinary; I can only say, That such were the persons: and I am not sensible upon a review, of exaggeration, or excess.

I pretend not to gratify the curious and the vain, either by the argument, or management of the following discourses: They have a turn and taste of mind another way. But if they may contribute in any degree, to the reviving and promoting a serious sense of religion in the world; or give any assistance and entertainment, under the sorrows of life, and the thoughts of death, especially to the elder, and better disposed, in a solemn retirement, or on the leisure hours of the Lord's-day; it will be a great satisfaction, as it was the sincere design of the author; who has long accounted usefulness of life, the noblest end, and pleasure of life; preferable to all the grandeur and gaiety of it, and the best preparation for death and another world.

May the divine blessing crown every sincere endeavour, for the glory of God, and the good of men, with the desired success.

W. HARRIS.



T H E
C O N T E N T S.

P A R T the F I R S T.

Scripture-Consolations on the Death of our
Friends.

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Consolations in the Death of *good men.*

I Theff. iv. 8. *Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*

Preached at *Hackney* upon the occasion of the Death
of *Mrs. Bathshua Barker*, Sept. 18, 1719.

S E R M O N II. p. 42.

Consolations in the Death of good men *in the midst*
of their days.

Psal. cii. 23, 24. *He weakneth my strength in the way:
He shorteneth my days: I said, O my God take me not a-
way in the midst of my days, for thy years are throughout
all generations.*

Preached at *Crouched Fryers*, April 27, 1729, on
the occasion of the Death of the late Reverend
Mr. *Samuel Harvey*, in the 31st year of his age.

S E R-

S E R M O N III. P. 87.

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2 Sam. xiii. 33. *And the king was much moved, and went up into the chamber over the gate and wept, and as he went thus he cryed, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son.*

S E R M O N IV. P. 112.

Consolations in the death of *Infants.*

Matt. iii. 18. *In Ramab was a voice heard, lamentation and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.*

S E R M O N V. P. 134.

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Job. v. 26. *And thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in its season.*

Preached on the Death of Mrs. *Dorcas Billingley*, late Wife of the Reverend Mr. *John Billingley*, at *Crouched Fryers*, December 29, 1717.



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The happy end of a useful life.

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Preached at *Crouched Fryers*, on the Death of Mr. *John Merccer*, May 16, 1725.

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2 Cor. v. 2. *For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon, with our house which is from heaven.*

Preached at *Crouched Fryers*, on the occasion of the Death of the late Reverend Mr. *John Billingsley*, May 13, 1722.

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Matt. xxiv. 44. *Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the son of man cometh.*

Preached at *Chestnut* in *Hertfordshire*, on the sudden Death of Mr. *Thomas Pickard*, Feb. 14, 1719-20.

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Finishing the christian course, considered and argued.

Acts xx. 24. But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto my self, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord.

Preached in *New-Broad-Street, Petty-France*, on the Death of the late Reverend *John Evans, D. D.* in the 51st year of his age, *May 23, 1730.*

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Diligence in the christian Life, necessary to be found in peace.

1 Pet. iii. 14. Wherefore, beloved, seeing you look for such things, be diligent that you may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Preached at *Kingston upon Thames*, on the Death of the late Reverend *Mr. Daniel Mayo*, *June 24, 1733.*

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2 Tim. iv. 8. — And not to me only, but to all them who love his appearance.

Preached in *Southwark* on the Death of the late Reverend *Joshua Oldfield D. D.* *Nov. 23. 1729.*

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Of Deliverance by Christ from the fears of Death.

Heb. ii. 15. And to deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.

Preached at *Wapping* on the Death of Mrs. *Sarah Bush*, late Wife of the Reverend Mr. *William Bush*,
June. 13, 1731.

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A Christian's *desire* to depart; or *Willingness* to die.

Philip. i. 23. *I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better.*

Preached at the *Old Jewry* on the occasion of the Death of Mrs. *Lydia Leavelly*, late Wife of the Reverend Mr. *Thomas Leavelly*, June 29, 1735.

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PART the FIRST;

SCRIPTURE-*Consolations* on the
Death of our *Friends*.



S E R M O N I.

Consolations in the Death of *good men.*

I THESS. iv. 18.

*Wherefore comfort one another with
these words.*

COMFORT in *Death*, may sound disagreeable in the ears of men, when *mourning* and sorrow are thought more seasonable; and like *singing of* Prov. xxv. *sings to an heavy heart.* Men choose to in- 20. dulse their grief for the loss of their friends, retire from the conversation of the world, and give free vent to their troubled souls: They *mourn, and refuse to be comforted, because they are not.* But if ever comforts are *needful*, 'tis in a time of sorrow, like a cordial to a fainting spirit, or *wine to those who are of heavy hearts.* Ib. xxxi. If they are suitable and effectual, able to abate 6. our grief, and support our minds; they are certainly proper and in season, when we are
B mourning

mourning over our dead, and lamenting their loss. We find the Apostle here after several other directions of duty in the former part of the chapter, proceeds at ver. 13. to direct the Christians to the proper grounds of comfort, in this circumstance of sorrow; *I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep, &c.* The words I have read, are the close of the whole paragraph, which is the proper *seat* of this subject, and contains the *peculiar* comforts the Gospel prescribes in the death of *good men*.

IN speaking to them suitably to the *scope* of the Apostle and the present *occasion*, it will be necessary to consider two things:

- I. WHAT are *the words* to which the Apostle refers, and which he makes the Ground of *comfort* under the death of godly friends.
- II. WHAT matter of *comfort* they are proper to afford in such a case: And then apply them.

S E C T. I.

I. WHAT are these *words* to which the Apostle refers, and which he makes the ground of *comfort* to sorrowful Christians: *Comfort one another with these words: i. e.* the words of the foregoing discourse. And if we look back into the *Context*, we shall find two things refer'd to, which it will be needful to represent a little as the ground of that *comfort* which is to be deriv'd from hence.

§. I. THE *Resurrection* of the body. This may be consider'd in the following Instances:

THEY

THEY will be rais'd from the dead: *Them* Ver. 14.
also that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.
They who have long lain in the grave, will attend the appearance of the glorious judge. And the *dead in Christ shall rise.* They who died Ver. 16.
for Christ, *martyrs* to his faith, or who died *believers* in Christ more at large, and were *faithful to the death*; they shall be rais'd to life again, in conformity to the resurrection of Christ, and by the virtue and power of it. And when they have been long resolv'd into the dust of the earth, and scatter'd in remote and distant parts, they shall rally together, and reunite again by the power of Christ. They who have long slept in the grave, shall awake and rise. The quickning head will enliven all his members, and give life to them that slept the sleep of death. The prophet speaks to this sense, *Many of them who slept in the* Dan. xii.
dust of the earth, shall awake. And the Apo-
stle tells us, *As in Adam all died, so in Christ* 1 Cor. xv.
shall all be made alive. And of this there is 22.
the same evidence, as there is that *Jesus died and rose again.*

BESIDES, the dead will be rais'd, *before* the living are chang'd. This peculiar circumstance is related, ver. 10. For *they who are alive; and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them who are asleep.* The *dead in Christ, will rise first,* ver. 16. They who have been dead many ages of time, and have lain long in the grave, shall be first rais'd from the dead, before the living who remain upon the earth at the time of our Lord's appearing,

pearing, shall pass that change which is equivalent to death, or have glorified Bodies: For, *1 Cor. xv. 51.* the Apostle says, *we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.* There will be no disadvantage in this respect to have died before others, or have lain long in the grave; for the dead will be first raised and restored to life, and stand upon an equal foot with those who survive, and remain alive. They will not prevent them who sleep, or be glorify'd before them. And this he tells them by the *word of the Lord*; by special direction and revelation from heaven. And elsewhere calls it upon that account, *a great mystery: Behold, I shew you a mystery, we shall not all sleep; but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be rais'd incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

FARTHER, This will be done by the sound of a trumpet. *The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trumpet of God.* He will appear in a visible glory, with the shout of holy angels; and the voice of the archangel will be like a trumpet to summon the dead together; or, as the tribes of *Israel* under the law were summon'd together by the sound of a trumpet. Our Lord tells us, *The hour is coming, in which all who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.* And more expressly, *He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other.* And the Apostle

Apostle tells us, *The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be rais'd.* 1 Cor. xv. 52.

FINALLY, *Both* together will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: *Then we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.* 1 Cor. xv. 10. We shall all be join'd together; all surviving believers, who remain upon earth at the great day, and all those who were dead, and now rais'd again, shall be carry'd together, and in a body, into the air to meet the Lord; that is, in order to their own final judgment, and to attend his glorious appearance, and be assessors with him in the judgment of the wicked. Ib. vi. 2. They will make one collective body, or united society before the presence of the glorious judge.

THIS is wholly peculiar to the gospel-revelation, what the heathen world did not understand, and the light of nature was not sufficient to direct them to.

§. 2. BEING with the Lord. *And so shall we ever be with the Lord.* Ib. ver. 17. This may be consider'd in the following instances too. For *example*:

THEY will be *present* with the Lord: In his immediate and glorious presence; for we *shall be with him in paradise, and in his kingdom, we shall be present with the Lord, and be with him, and behold his glory;* in a place of the highest happiness and greatest glory. There will be so great a nearness and enjoyment, that the nearest access at present is in comparison absence and distance from him. They will not

lie at the footstool, but stand before the throne. They will be so near him as to *see* him, and *know* him in all the dignity of his person and glory of his advanced state: And be admitted to the fullest communion and participation which their natures are capable of, and their perfect happiness makes necessary: they will be with him as friends and companions, the objects of his favour and partners of his glory, with whom he will freely converse, and to whom he will graciously manifest himself; for *being with the Lord*, describes the happiness of true believers, and must needs import such a presence with him as is capable of making them happy, and proper to support their happiness.

BESIDES, they will be *ever* with the Lord, it will be a constant everlasting presence and enjoyment, 'tis not for a short duration or any limited time, but perpetual and endless. He will never withdraw himself from them; for 'tis his glory and delight to have them with him.

John xvii
24. *Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am.* 'Tis a great satisfaction and joy to all the heavenly host to have every believer with his Lord, every member with its head. If there is *joy in heaven*, and *among the angels of God* over one *sinner who repenteth*, there will be much more so, when another member is added to the blessed society above. And they will never depart from him, they will never *leave their own habitation*, as the sinning angels did theirs, or like our first parents, forfeit the heavenly paradise.

paradise. They will be confirmed in their happy state by divine grace, and be perfectly pleased; there will not be a single defect or uneasy thought, nor room left for a wish or desire of more.

AGAIN, They will be with him in *body and soul*: in their raised body and glorified soul, they will be compleat and entire in both parts, exactly conformable to the glorious body and soul of their redeemer, and suited to the place and happiness they are to partake of. In the mean time they are only *present in spirit*, but *absent in body*: The body lies in the dust of death, from the time of their dissolution to the resurrection: 'tis confin'd a prisoner of the grave, and under the arrest of death. The sentence of the broken law is executed upon them, and remains in force: but then death will properly *be abolished*, and he who *had the power of death destroyed*. The raised body will be united to the glorified soul, and both together in full perfection be *present with the Lord*.

FINALLY, This will commence at the *time* of his appearing, and be the consequence of it. *And so shall we ever be with the Lord*, i. e. when the *Lord shall come in the clouds*; when he shall *descend from heaven with a shout*. And this may be understood of the *season or cause* of it; it follows upon the appearance of our Lord in the order of time; when the solemn transaction of his glorious appearance is over, then shall they all be gathered together in one, and *be for ever with the Lord*: and it not only fol-

lows upon it, but *flows* from it, there is something *causal* in it as well as *consequential*. When he has raised the dead at his appearance, and judged the world, he winds up the whole matter, and finishes the great undertaking, by taking believers to himself, and *bringing the many sons to glory*. 'Tis the last act of his mediation, and compleats the whole design.

II. WHAT matter of *comfort* these considerations are proper to afford in such a case: Or what use we are to make of them to this special purpose, in the death of godly friends, or those who *sleep in Jesus*.

THE comfort here spoken of, plainly stands opposed to the *excess* of sorrow and the *defect* of hope, *sorrowing as others, who have no hope*, an immoderate degree of sorrow exclusive of a future hope. And must accordingly be understood to lie between these two extremities: 'Tis something which is able to allay our *sorrow*, and encourage our *hope*. For tho' we are not to be insensible under afflictive rebukes, and ought to be duly affected; yet we must not *abandon* our selves to grief, or sorrow without measure; we should reduce our concern within proper bounds, and set limits to the most afflicting grief. Nor ought we to be without hope, as if they were wholly lost, who die out of this world, and we were never to see them any more. We must encourage the expectation of a future state, under present losses and griefs, and look beyond death and the grave for our relief and support.

Now

Now I reckon all the comfort such a case admits, *i. e.* of an absent friend, or one at a distance, is either the consideration of their *own* state, and the condition they themselves are in; or the expectation of *being with them*, and partaking of their happiness. Both these concur in the present case, and are powerful springs of comfort. I shall represent them a little distinctly, with reference to the special case of our departed godly friends.

§. I. CONSIDER the *personal glory* to which they will be advanc'd; or the condition they will then be brought into. We may consider this in the double instance here refer'd to.

(I.) THE *bodies* in which they will be rais'd. The bodies of the saints in this world are frail and mortal. *We dwell in houses of clay, whose* Job iv. *foundation is in the dust, and are crush'd before* 19. *the moth: i. e.* as a garment is eaten with a moth; or sooner than a moth. The *earthly* 1 Cor. v. *house of our tabernacle* will quickly be dissolved. 1. They are *earthen vessels*, made out of the dust of the earth, and liable to be broken to pieces, and crumbled into dust again.

BUT their bodies at the resurrection will be quite other kind of things, and rais'd to greater advantage. We find a particular description in the Apostle, *So also is the resurrection of the body: 'Tis sown in corruption, 'tis raised in incorruption.* ^{Ib. xv. 41.} *'Tis sown in dishonour, 'tis raised in glory. 'Tis sown in weakness, 'tis raised in power. 'Tis sown a natural body, 'tis raised a spiritual body.* The expression of *sowing* must be understood to refer to the rise and origin of the

the body, as well as to its *dissolution*; to its state and condition in this world, as well as that in the grave; and so much his allusion to *seed sown*, and to *Adam's* being made a *living soul*, as well as the properties themselves ascrib'd to it, do necessarily suppose. Nor must the Apostle be understood here to speak of the *substance* and matter of the body, which will be the same; but of the form and *qualities* of it, which will be chang'd. For example:

'Tis sown in *corruption*: 'Tis here in this world a *mortal body*, subject to dissolution, and will *see corruption* in the grave. For 'tis made of contrary principles, and carries the seeds of *mortality* in its nature; and is under the sentence of death, and must necessarily return to dust. But it will then be *incorruptible*; not subject to present decays, or final dissolution. It will commence immortal, like the spirit to which it belongs; without any principles of corruption within, and deliver'd from the sentence of death. *The dead shall be raised incorruptible; for this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.* And our Lord tells us, *But they who are found worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more: for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.* 'Tis sown in *dishonour*: it has now dishonourable parts; the Apostle speaks of the *members of the body which are less honourable, and of our uncomely parts.* And the dead body

is vile and offensive ; we are glad to bury it under-ground, and put it out of our sight, tho' never so lovely and desirable before ; as *Abraham* did by his beautiful and beloved *Sarah*. So 'tis call'd the *vile body*, or the body of our humble state. But it will be rais'd *in glory*, beautiful and lovely, like the *living soul*, form'd out of the dust of the earth. They will appear in just symmetry, and in a lovely form, without any natural deformity, or accidental defect, and shine with an illustrious and surprising glory, rais'd out of the *rottenness* of the grave, and from the company of *worms*, and fitted for the blessedness of *heaven*, and enjoyment of the blessed God. They will shine as *the brightness of the firmament*, and as *the stars* for ever and ever. Yea, the *righteous* will shine as *the sun in the kingdom of their father*. 'Tis sown in *weakness* : The body is now subject to the fatigue of labour, decay of time, and injury of accident and disease ; and it will drop into the grave under its own weight, and thro' the infirmities which attend it, not able to sustain the burden of nature, or support itself any longer in being ; not to resist the corruption of the grave, or the feeble efforts of a crawling worm. But they will be rais'd in *power* : with full vigour of nature, and endow'd with extraordinary strength, able to preserve itself without decay, and capable of the proper offices of its glorified state. Finally 'tis sown a *natural* body ; or rather an * *animal* * body : Our bodies in this world consist of flesh and blood, suitable to this earthly and sensible

Phil. iii. 21.

Gen. ii. 7.

Dan. xii.

Matth. xiii. 43.

ψυχική

state, quickned and acted by a living soul, supported with constant supplies of food and air, like other animals; and subject to all the weakness and misery of the animal life, to the passions and pains, the changes and accidents of all natural things. But it will be raised a *spiritual* body *, endowed with a proper life of its own, and able to subsist without any foreign aid; or refin'd from gross matter and earthly alloy, approaching nearer the perfection of spirits, pure and active, a fit companion and instrument of a glorified soul. Or possess'd and acted by the holy spirit, a *living temple* of the holy Ghost, and a fit inhabitant and votary of the *temple* of God above. *Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven*, and 'tis here called the *heavenly*; and elsewhere, ἐξ ἑρανεῖ the *house which is from heaven*, or of an heavenly make and materials.

2 Cor. v.
2.

Phil. iii.
elt.

THE Apostle represents the excellence of the raised body in one general character: *Who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.* i. e. It will be suitable to its pattern, and answerable to its cause; the glorious *body* of the Redeemer, and mighty *power* of God. And if his body appeared so glorious at the *trans-*

* Ἐν ᾧ ἡ ψυχὴ τὸ κῶρυθ καὶ τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ἔχει. Oecum. Σῶμα ψυχικὸν ἔστι ὅπ τις ψυχικοῖς ὑπερβήσασθαι πάθεισιν πνευματικῶν ὅπ ἔ τις ψυχικοῖς ὑπερβήσασθαι πάθεισιν. Phot. apud Oecum.

* Ἡ τὸ χορῶν πᾶσαν τῶ ἀγία πνεύματι τὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ κοινωνίαν. Meth. apud Oecum, Ὅπ κρυότερον ἔσαι καὶ λεπτοτερον καὶ αἶον καὶ ἐπ' ἀέρει ὀχεῖσιν. Chrysoft.

transfiguration, that his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light, Matth. xvii. 2. how excellent and bright must the glorified body of the Redeemer appear in heaven?

AND now let us pause a while, and consider what comfort may be derived from hence. Our present bodies are often inconvenient and uneasy habitations to the soul, like an house decaying and out of repair. We *groan* under the burden of a mortal body, 'tis the seat of grievous *distempers*, and afflicting *accidents*. The *psalmist* in allusion to this represents the distress of a guilty soul by *broken bones*; and the Apostle speaks of the *thorn in the flesh*. 'Tis the subject of present *suffering*: The Apostle *bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus*: Scars Gal. vi. 17. of honour by sufferings for Christ; and often speaks of *stripes and scourging, bonds and imprisonments, being stoned, sawn asunder, killed with the sword*. 'Tis often a clog and snare, a Heb. xi. 37. great hindrance to the lively actings of grace, and spiritual exercises; and an instrument and occasion of sin. Bodily appetites are often unruly, and the prevalence of the sensual nature is a burden under which the best of men sometimes groan. Hence the Apostle so pathetically exclaims; *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!* And found Rom. vii. 25. it necessary to *keep under his body and bring it in subjection*. Sin is said to *reign in our mortal body*: 2 Cor. ix. 27. And the unrenew'd nature is often represented Rom. vi. 12. by the *flesh, the members, the deeds of the body, &c.*

BUT then we shall be delivered from every burden of the present body: There will be no disease

disease of nature, or decay of sense; no pining sickness, or racking pain, no more a dim eye, or a trembling hand, or an aking head; nothing to disturb the order of nature, or hinder its repose. There will be no injury or oppression from any hand of violence or accident of evil; *The wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.* Sin and suffering will end together, as they began together; *God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain, for former things are pass'd away.* They will be no longer a hindrance in our way, or occasion of sin, there will be no tedious attendance upon health, or painful methods of cure; no escapes from present fatigues, or refreshment and diversion of life. There will be no vitious and unruly appetite to curb and restrain, no melancholy fumes and vapours to darken and disturb the mind; no dead and drowsy frame, or listlessness or weariness in the service of God. Yea, they will be quite the *reverse* of their present state. The glorified body will be advanced and improved to all the perfection, and all the glory which the bodily nature is capable of: They will be more healthy, more beautiful, more active, more lasting than ever they were in this world. And how blessed a change will this make, and how pleasing a prospect, and sensible a relief may it give, under the remembrance of the pain and distress of their past lives, and last moments, their living sorrows, and their dying agonies and groans.

Job iii.

17.

Rev. xxi.

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(2.) *THE happiness* they will possess. The entire person, body and soul will be compleatly blest'd, in the presence of Christ, or *being with him*. This may be considered in the following particulars according to the scripture-representation, and will be so many farther grounds of comfort in the case.

I. *THERE* is an immediate *sight* of his glory without present distance and darkness. Much of their sorrow and trouble in this world arises from their distance and separation from their Lord, many clouds of darkness often interpose, many discouraging fears, and uneasy thoughts, spring up in their mind. But then they will be brought to a nearer sight and immediate presence of his glory. This is a constant description of the heavenly state: *If any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am, there shall also my servant be. I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.* John xii. 26. Ib. xiv. 3. This was our Lord's prayer for his disciples, *Father, I will that those also whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.* Ib. xvii. 24.

THEY will be brought to the same place where Christ himself is, and be locally present with him in his glorify'd state. He is gone to prepare a place for them among the mansions of his father's house; and he will *come again to receive them unto himself*. He is returned *into his glory*, and they will have an *entrance administered* to them into *his everlasting kingdom*. He sits upon a glorious throne, and shines
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in the perfections of the deity; redeem'd from all the meanness and reproach in which he appear'd in the world; and they stand round his throne, and sit *down with him on his right hand, and on his left, in his kingdom.* He is attended with glorious hosts of holy angels, who bow before him, and do his will; and *they are join'd to the innumerable company of angels,* and bear their part in the common service and praise.

I Cor. xiii. 12. So the Apostle represents the matter: *For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know but in part, but then I shall know, even as I am also known.* And, *we shall see him as he is.* They have now only a distant view of Christ in the glass of his word, and the ordinances of worship, in the lively exercises of faith, and a rais'd and spiritual frame of mind; but then they shall behold him as *Moses* did, *face to face:* which imports the nearest access, and most familiar converse. The veil will be drawn aside, and they will behold him just as he is. They will stand in the presence-chamber of the king of heaven, and gaze on his resplendent glory. Their eyes *behold the king in his beauty,* advanc'd to the highest dignity; and possess'd of the highest glory.

IF OUR Lord could tell his disciples here on earth, *Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear; and many prophets and righteous men have desired to see what you have seen, and have not seen them; and hear what you have heard, and have not heard them:* how much more blessed are they who *see what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered in-*

to the heart of man: and with the Apostle, are ^{1 Cor. ii.} caught up into the third heaven, and bear un-^{9.} speakable words, which 'tis not lawful for a man to utter; or possible for any mortal to apprehend or express.

2. PERFECT *likeness* to him, without any weakness or defect. 'Tis the glory of our present natures, to bear some likeness to Christ, and have his image renew'd upon our souls; but there is a great degree of *dissimilitude* and unlikeness to him remaining. We often complain of the *body of this death*, as well as of the *mortal body*. How unlike are the best saints on earth, the most enlighten'd and improv'd, to the final perfection or the *patterns of things in the heavens!* ^{Heb. ix.}

BUT now the immediate sight of the glorified redeemer, will transform them into a perfect likeness to him. So 'tis represented by the Apostle; *Beloved, now are we the sons of God;* ^{1 John} *but it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but* ^{iii. 2.} *we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* It carries a transforming power with it, and produces a wonderful effect; a sinless likeness and conformity to him: we shall be as like him as we are capable of being. Our whole nature will be purify'd and exalted to its highest perfection, and bear the exact image and resemblance of the blessed Jesus. Our *bodies* will be *fashioned* after his *glorious* body, and be a bright copy of the divine original; and our souls like his, in holy dispositions and heavenly qualities; in the perfection of our knowledge, and purity of love. The glorify'd person will receive an *impression,*

like that of the seal upon the wax, or the image of the mould into which any thing is cast.

IF conversing with God a little while upon the mount, made *Moses's face to shine*, so that he put a *vail upon his face*, while he spake to the people; as if conversing with God had render'd him unfit for human converse: what a glory must it give to those who *always behold the face of God*? If *Stephen, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*, by *looking stedfastly to heaven*, and seeing the *glory of God*, and *Jesus standing at the right hand of God*; appear'd to them who fate in council with *his face as if it had been the face of an angel*; with how bright a countenance will they appear, *who always stand before the throne of God*? If the present glory of the gospel is so lively, that with *open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord*, we are *changed into the same image from glory unto glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord*; how much more powerful and efficacious must the glory of heaven be, and the immediate sight of God?

3. THE highest joy without any alloy of sorrow. Good men in this world possess the truest joy: they have comforts which the *world knows not of*, and *strangers intermeddle not with their joy*. Our Lord appear'd concern'd for his followers, that their *joy might remain*, and that it might be *full*. But there are many alloys of their present joy; sometimes a bitter cup is put into their hands, a *cup of trembling and astonishment*; or a bitter drop is mingled with a cup of consolation, which gives a disagreeable tincture, if it don't embitter all the

the rest. They are often sorrowful and sad under their present burdens, or the fear of future evil.

BUT in the presence of their Lord there is no sorrow, but *fulness of joy*; *In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.* Pfal. xvi. ult. And, *I shall behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.* Pfal. xvii. ult. There is a mighty satisfaction arises from the immediate sight of Christ, and perfect likeness to him. They are infinitely pleas'd with the *exceeding glory* round about them, and the perfect rectitude of their own nature. Their *meetness* for heaven is matter of everlasting *thanksgiving* to the father. They are said to *enter into the joy of their Lord.* 'Tis a state of joy which they must *enter into*, and will become the element in which they breath. And *when his glory shall be revealed, they shall be glad with exceeding joy*: exceeding all other joys, beyond what they ever found before, or are able to represent to others. Or exceeding all the expectations, and all the capacities of their souls; an overflowing joy, or more than they can contain. They will be as full of joy as they are able to hold, without any mixture of sorrow with it; the most refin'd and exalted joy, without any check to their pleasure, or damp upon their minds; any danger of excess, or fear of sin.

IF the disciples were glad when they saw a risen Lord, and he *shewed them his hands and his feet*: what gladness will it give them to see the ascended and *glorified* redeemer? Will not their joy be fulfilled, when they see the *lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne*? If

there is *joy and peace* in believing; in the distant prospect and expectation; what must be
 1 Pct.i. 8. the joy of sight and enjoyment? If by *loving him whom we have not seen, and believing on him, tho' now we see him not, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*; how unspeakable and glorious must the joy be which arises from a seen Jesus, when we shall *see him as he is, and behold his glory!*

4. EVERLASTING *continuance*, or duration without end. They will be *for ever with the Lord*. The happiness they will possess will be eternal. And tho' this is only a circumstance of it; yet 'tis of the greatest importance, and adds unspeakable weight to all the rest. If it were limited, tho' to ever so long a distance; and were to alter and cease, after ever so long an enjoyment, it would lessen the glory, and abate the pleasure all the while. The thought of leaving it at last, would damp the pleasure of the highest enjoyment, and make the trouble and disappointment the greater at last. To leave so long an enjoyment, and be turn'd out of the delights of the heavenly paradise, would give the deepest and most afflicting grief.

BUT now 'tis a great addition to all the other considerations of their happiness, that it will never end: *The righteous go into Life eternal, and enter into the everlasting kingdom*. They will never be separated from the glorious presence of Christ. The general assembly will never dissolve and break up. There will be no interruption or end to the joyful praise, and perfect service of that blessed state. And it must needs be so: for there is no period set to it by
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the divine will: The promises of the gospel are every where of *eternal life*; and they are made ^{1 John ii. 25.} *pillars in the temple of God*, and *shall go no more out*. It will not be in the power of any enemy ^{Rev. iii. 12.} to disturb them; for they are out of the reach of tempting objects, and every envious and malignant power. No foul fiend can enter into the heavenly paradise, or endanger a new defection there. If the Apostle could triumph in this world over all his enemies, *who shall separate from the love of Christ*; how much more will they be able to do it then, when their *warfare is accomplished*, and the victory complete? And it will never *decay* or wax old: for 'tis an *inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and never fadeth away*. There is no principle of corruption in the heavenly happiness, as there is in all the happiness of this world, which gradually declines, and *perishes in the using*: The *moth* cannot corrupt, any more than the *thief* break thro' and steal. Yea, it will grow and improve, and be ever fresh and new. The sun of glory will never set, or suffer an eclipse; there's no cloud to intercept its light. 'Tis fix'd in the meridian of the highest heavens, and shines with an equal and everlasting lustre. The continual displays of unknown perfections will yield a fresh admiration and delight to all eternity.

LET us view the matter in this light: What a comfort is their future happiness proper to inspire into a sad and sorrowful heart? If we reckon it a great satisfaction, that 'tis well with our absent friends, in a foreign country or remote

place; that they enjoy perfect health, prosper in their affairs, and are advanc'd to honours; how much greater reason of comfort should it be, that those we love and esteem, though they are now remov'd and at a distance from us, will be rais'd to so great a glory, and possess so high a happiness? that tho' they drop'd their bodies in the dust in their ascent to heaven, as *Elijah* did his mantle, and *worms destroy their body*; yet *in their flesh they shall see God*; and tho' *they see man no more on earth with the inhabitants of the world*; yet they always behold the face of Christ, and find an infinite and everlasting pleasure in perfect likeness, and full enjoyment of him.

§. 2. WE have thus far consider'd the *personal* glory to which they will be advanc'd; we are now to consider the *share* we shall bear with them. This is of mighty account in the case too. The Apostle makes the *resurrection* of the body, and *being* with the Lord, the common happiness of all true christians; 'tis the *state* of them who *sleep in Jesus*. *So shall we ever be with the Lord*. *We*, as well as *they*, and together with them. This implies two things full of Consolation.

I. THAT we shall *be with* them. We shall know them, and enjoy them again, and to greater advantage. 'Tis reasonable to suppose that we shall know our departed friends, in the other world, especially after the resurrection, when the glorified soul will be united to its own body, which will probably retain its proper form.

IF we can suppose it capable of contributing to our satisfaction, or being any ingredient in our happiness, to converse with our departed friends; we shall certainly do so: for there will be nothing wanting to the perfection of our blessedness: and I think there can be no reasonable doubt but it will. What is so suitable to a *social* nature, and so sensible a delight in this world, will not surely cease to be, or signify nothing in the other: tho' all fond regards arising from the lower considerations of present *relation*, or mere natural *instinct*, will wholly cease in that refin'd State.

THERE are several intimations in scripture to this purpose. We shall know the glorified Redeemer in heaven; the human nature of the Lord Jesus will be distinguish'd by peculiar marks; for he will appear as a *lamb slain in the midst of the throne*. Heaven is represented as a *general assembly*, a universal congregation and meeting together; among the rest there will be the *spirits of just men made perfect*. An Heb. xii. assembly of persons altogether unknown to one ^{23.} another, would rather gaze and wonder than communicate sentiments, or maintain a pleasurable converse. *Peter, James and John*, knew *Moses* and *Elias* upon the mount, tho' they had Matth. xvii. never seen one another before, and the distance of time in which they liv'd was so great. The rich man knew *Abraham*, tho' one was in heaven and the other in hell. The angels rejoice at a sinner's conversion, tho' *they* are in heaven, and we on earth. And we shall Matth. viii. 11. *sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the king-*

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dom of heaven. If we shall know them then, whom we never saw in this world, whether that will be by immediate *revelation*, or by any *Signature* they wear, or mark of distinction; shall we not much more know them who were most intimate to us in this world, and with whom we often took sweet counsel together? And it must needs be to infinite advantage that we shall see and enjoy them in that perfect state, without any present defect or sinful weakness in body or soul, which often lessens the comfort of present enjoyment between the nearest relations, and the dearest friends. We shall see them rais'd and improv'd to the highest perfection, and the greatest happiness. If we were never to meet again, and death made an everlasting separation, it would be more uncomfortable and afflicting; as the elders *wep't sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kiss'd him; sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more.* But how seasonable a Relief does this afford, *that they only depart for a season, that we may receive them for ever?*

Acts xx.
30.

Philem.
15.

2. THAT we shall *partake* with them in all their happiness. And this makes it still a more comfortable consideration. For tho' 'tis a great satisfaction to *bear* of the welfare and prosperity of our absent friends, when we are never the better for it, or are in a different circumstance of things ourselves; yet 'tis an unspeakable addition to it, to partake of their honours, and share in their joys; to be with them, and to be like them in their prosperity and advancement.

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THIS is the case here, *we shall be rais'd up in glory, and be for ever with the Lord,* together with them. We shall be sharers with them in all the glory and blessedness of the heavenly state, as we are now *fellow-citizens with the* Eph. ii. *saints, and heirs according to the hope of eternal* ^{19.} *life.* We shall see the Lord, and be like him, and rejoice for ever with him, as well as they, and in society with them. It will not lessen the heavenly blessedness, or move an uneasy passion, that others enjoy it as well as we, or that 'tis shar'd among so many; 'twill heighten the satisfaction, the more 'tis diffus'd: each one's happiness will increase another's, and add considerably to the whole. So the Apostle represents it, *God having provided some better thing* Heb. ix. *for us, that they without us should not be made* ^{40.} *perfect.* The final perfection of the heavenly blessedness requires all the heirs of glory: and there is some sort of defect, and 'tis incompleat while any member is absent or wanting. The *vail* of the heavenly temple will be *rent in twain*, which separates the outward court from the holiest of all: we shall *enter within the vail.* The *wall of partition* will be taken down, which now parts the family of God, and all will appear in a body, and be always present together. And what a fountain of consolation is this; that we shall ever be happy together? It may be, we have been often sorrowing and mourning together in this world under a like disease of nature and exercise of mind; engag'd in like conflicts, and struggling with the same difficulties of life; but then *all tears shall be wiped away,*
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and we shall rejoice together, and be happy together for ever. What a joy was it to the aged *patriarch*, to hear that *Joseph* was alive, and advanced in *Egypt*? 'tis said his *heart faint-ed and he believed them not*; but when he saw the waggons, his spirit *reviv'd*, and he said, *it is enough, Joseph my son is yet alive*. And when *Joseph* met him in *Goshen*, and presented himself to him, and he fell on his neck and kissed him; when he saw him in all his glory, and shar'd with him in the prosperity of his exalted state, he expresses himself with a transport of joy, after his *mourning for him many days*, and *refusing to be comforted*: and *Israel* said to *Joseph*, *Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive*.

S E C T. II.

BUT it may be said here; that tho' this is matter of comfort indeed in such a case; yet it is *remote* and distant. All this relates only to their happiness after the resurrection of the body, and at the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ: But what is their *present* state, *who sleep in Jesus*, between the time of their death and resurrection? Is there no comfort to be drawn from the consideration of the state they are *now* in? I answer briefly in the following particulars, which will open a fresh spring of consolation in this case.

I. THEY are *now* present with the Lord. 'Tis true their happiness will not be compleat till the resurrection, and their being with the Lord in soul and body: and to this the con-
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texture of the Apostle's discourse has all along confin'd us. But then it must be consider'd, that tho' the body sleep in the dust till the morning of the resurrection, yet the soul is in some sort with Christ immediately upon the dissolution. They are already happy in their best part, and in the noblest kind, tho' not in the highest degree; and 'tis not wholly deferr'd till the time of the resurrection.

THE scripture represents the present state of good men in the other world in the same terms by which the final happiness is represented, *this day thou shalt be with me in paradise*. The Apostle makes it the immediate consequence of a dissolution; *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord*. And 'tis the reason of his desire to depart, and leave a state of present service and enjoyment; *Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better*.

Luke
xxiii. 43.

1² Cor. v.
8.

Phil. i. 23.

EVERY true believer is *immediately* with the Lord: They are now with him from the time of their absence and departure. As soon as ever they depart from their friends, and are absent from the body, they are present with the Lord, beholding his glory, conform'd to his likeness, and rejoicing in his love; tho' it will no doubt be more improv'd, and more compleat hereafter. 'Tis now with them as they could wish; and they enjoy the greatest desire of their heart. They are perfectly satisfy'd with their present state, and would not come down into the world again. They would not leave the realms of light and joy, for this dark

dark and distress'd world; nor the presence of their Lord, for the company of the dearest friends on earth. A late excellent person could say upon his dying-bed, That he would not be four and twenty hours from the presence of his Lord for the sake of a near relation, who was yet dearest to him in all the world.

AND should not we be comforted concerning our departed friends, considering the *present* happiness of their state, and what they immediately enjoy, and be *comforted in their comfort, and exceedingly the more rejoyce, for the joy with which their spirits are refreshed?* Should we disagree with them now, with whom, it may be, we have always agreed; or be uneasy at their advancement, and grieve at that which gives them the greatest satisfaction, and is the reason of their highest joy?

2 Cor. vii.
13.

2. THE *relation* wherein we stand to them. Death dissolves the relations of this world. All the natural and civil relations of life cease; 'tis our *late* relation and friend; for in strict propriety, they are no longer such. They last no longer than *till death do us part*. But the *spiritual* relation remains still, and is never dissolv'd; for they stand related to God as their father, and are the members of Christ. They are alive to him, tho' dead to us: *He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; he is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him*. They live a more noble and excellent kind of life; and he stands related to their dead dust, and will raise it up again. They remain the children of God, and living mem-

Luke xx.
37, 38.

members of the glorified Redeemer in heaven: They are *the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.*

UPON this consideration the Apostle tells us, *For this cause I bow my knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named:* Eph. iii. 14, 15. All the children of God make up one family, part of which is here *below*, and part *above*. The family above consists of angels and glorified saints; but they are the *same* family, and bear a common *name*, tho' they are of the upper house, and advanc'd to higher stations. Our departed friends are in our father's house, tho' in a higher mansion there. They are children of the same family, tho' like elder children, or those grown to age, they have enter'd upon the inheritance. When the Apostle describes the heavenly state by an *innumerable company of angels, the general assembly, and church of the first-born, and spirits of just men made perfect*; he says, *ye are come to mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.* Which can reasonably import nothing less than, "Ye stand related to them, " ye belong to the blessed society, and really " partake with them already. Ye are now " ally'd to angels and departed spirits."

So that the spiritual relation continues between us: They are our christian brethren, and fellow-members. We have *one* Father, and are *named* by the same Lord, *their* Lord, and *our* Lord. Angels are *fellow-servants, and brethren of them who keep the sayings of this book.* Rev. xxii. 9.

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A Funeral Sermon on

The change of state, and distance of condition don't alter this relation, tho' it dissolves all other. And how comfortable is it to think of our departed friends under this consideration; That tho' they are remov'd out of the world, and from our sight, yet they are not wholly lost to us? They are *ours* still in the highest and most valuable relation in which we stood to them; the children of the same family, and members of the same Lord. They are *ours* in *Abraham's* bosom, and parts of *ourselves* now glorified in heaven.

3. THE *concern* we had with them in this world. If we were serviceable to them, or they to us, in the way to heaven. If they were our natural or spiritual off-spring, the fruit of our loins, or the children of our faith. If we have brought them forth, or brought them up for heaven. *If of the fruit of our loins, according to the flesh,* God has rais'd up an *holy seed* to himself, and we have the great joy

3 John 4. *to see our children walking in the truth:* 'Tis an high honour to bring forth a child of God, and breed an heir of glory.

AND this comes with peculiar advantage, if we have been the instruments of their new birth, and have *begotten them again thro' the gospel.* If as *parents* or *ministers*, or christian *friends*, we have had a hand in training 'em up for glory. Especially if several considerations concur, and we have born a various part; if God has own'd our instructions and counsels for the first awaking of their minds, directing them in their course, encouraging them in their

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difficulties, satisfying their doubts, and ministering to their establishment and joy. If they receiv'd either the first *lineaments*, or last *finishing* from our hands. The Apostle speaks of such a case; *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing, are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory, and our joy.* And doubtless it ought to be a great satisfaction at present to consider, that such are safely arriv'd to heaven thro' our means, or by our help; that we have been made the instruments of their being in this world, and their blessedness in the other too.

ⁱ Thess.
ii. 19.

OR if they were such whom we have got good by: Our fathers in Christ; concerning whom we may say; *Tho' we had many instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus they have begotten us through the Gospel.* They were the great instruments of a saving change, or spiritual edification. They are now in heaven whom God own'd to do so much good to my soul: my *parent* or *pastor*, or *friend*, to whom I owe more than to any creature. They rest from the labour of life, and receive their reward in heaven; *rejoice in the travail of their soul*, and possess the *joy of their Lord!* Tho' we have lost the opportunity of farther advantage by them, and shall no more receive the benefit of their counsels and warnings; yet *they* have received the commendation of their faithfulness: and the good we have gained by them, will add to their satisfaction and reward, increase their pleasure, and add to their weight of glory.

ⁱ Cor. iv.
15.

4. **THE** *shortness* of the distance and separation. If we were not to be with them till the resurrection, it would not be a great while, considering the long duration and continuance of their happiness, and judging of things by God's account; for *a thousand years are with the Lord but as one day: and the end of all things is at hand.* We read expressly, *He who shall come, will come, and will not tarry.* And, *Behold I come quickly.*

BUT if it appear irksome and tedious to wait so long, and we should be ready to think it an age of absence from our beloved and glorify'd friends; why then we are to consider, that we shall be with them in their present happiness, as soon as we leave this world. And how short a distance is that? The whole compass of life in this world is but a short space; *our days are but a hand's breadth.* And it may be a great part of life is already run-out; perhaps we have lived the best and longest time of our lives in this world; why then we are so much the nearer them, by all the time we have lived in this world: for *our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.*

You may be with your departed friends in a little time, and sooner than you think of. Comfort thyself with this thought, that in a little while you shall see them again, and enjoy them for ever. A few more days of absence in this world, and we shall go to them and be where they are. A few more sabbath-days on earth, and we shall come to the *rest* which *remaineth for the people of God,* and keep a glorious

ribus everlasting sabbath together above. We shall be actually joined to the *general assembly* to which we now relate, and which shall never dissolve and break up; we shall join in the praise, and partake of the blessedness which they possess.

III. APPLICATION.

I. WE may learn the great *excellence* of the gospel-dispensation, which affords such powerful reliefs under the sorrows and afflictions of life. How much happier are we in this respect than the heathen world, who had only the light of nature and natural considerations to support and comfort them. The *philosophers* fetched their consolations against the fear of death, and sorrow for the dead, from moral considerations and the reason of things; and many of them were excellent in their kind and have their proper use: but a christian fetches his comfort from the *Scriptures*, and such considerations which they knew nothing of: *That we through patience and comfort of the scripture* Rom. xv. *might have hope.* The Gospel opens new^d springs of consolation, and surer grounds of hope, without the mixtures of mistake, uncertainty and fear, which the wisest heathens often betray'd in their boldest flights of expression, and highest fallies of assurance.

How much have we the advantage of *former* dispensations of the divine will, when the future glory was obscurely reveal'd, in dark and general hints, like the types and figures of the sacrifice of Christ? The resurrection of the
D body,

body, and the eternal life of the other world, are the peculiar glory of the gospel-revelation. *He hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel:* Brought it out of its former obscurity, and plac'd it in a fuller light.

AND this furnishes more powerful supports, and proper grounds of comfort, under the darkest appearance of providence, and the worst circumstance of life; as the loss of the dearest friend, or the greatest affliction which befalls us. And upon this account, as well as upon others, the ministration of the spirit is *rather glorious, and exceeds in glory.* Yea, *Even that which was made glorious, had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.* The clearer discoveries of the gospel-revelation, darkened the dim light, and drew a veil over the fainter glory of the law; as the brighter light obscures the less. And in allusion to this, the Apostle says, *That Moses put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not look stedfastly to the end of that which is abolished; but we all with open face behold as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.* This should raise our esteem of the *lively oracles*, and direct the use of them. We should value the high privilege, and improve the great advantage, especially to those purposes to which 'tis peculiarly fitted and design'd; to bear afflictions with composure, and submit to the hand of God with silence, to restrain unruly passions, and support and relieve our minds under the greatest losses and sorrows of life.

2. THE *unreasonableness* of immoderate sorrow for the dead; especially for godly friends departed. It was this caution occasion'd the whole discourse: but *I would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them who are asleep;* Ver. 13: concerning their state in the other world, *that you sorrow not, even as others who have no hope, i.e.* with excess and despair, as the heathens do *, who have no hope of a resurrection, or certain knowledge of a future state. They howl and lament over the dead, abandon themselves to inconsolable grief, as tho' they were lost for ever, who are once departed out of the world; and there were no hope left of their future being, or any farther enjoyment of them.

HE does not forbid them all sorrow for the dead; that were *unnatural* and impossible. The affection of *grief*, as well as joy, is planted in our nature by the hand of God: And something is due to the memory of our departed friends, according to the degree of what was excellent and lovely in their lives; and the nearness of our relation and concern with them: And a wise and well-tempered sorrow in such a case, is allowable and becoming. 'Tis recorded of our Lord, when *Lazarus, whom* Luke xi. *he loved, died, That Jesus wept.* 'Tis only 35. sorrow, *without hope*; a hopeless, despairing

* Some suppose the Apostle refers to the *Jewish zealots*, who were very pompous in their *funeral* sorrows, and thought that none but *circumcis'd Israelites* could have any share in the happiness of heaven; and that the christians had no more hope than the heathens. The *Epicureans* and *Sadducees* had no expectation of a future state; and the *Pharisees* among the *Jews*, and the *Platonists* among the philosophers, had not the christian hope, and were liable to more uncertainty.

sorrow, when men let loose the passion of grief, and suffer it to carry them beyond all bounds; and the bitter waters rise, and swell, and overflow: When there is *lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning*; Rachel *weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not*: When it grows intemperate and ungovernable; runs to an undue degree in the measure and continuance of it; and men are *swallow'd up with overmuch sorrow*; or unfits for proper duty, and affects our bodily health, like *the sorrow of this world, which worketh death*.

Matth. ii.
18.

2 Cor. ii.
7.

—vii. 1c.

THIS the Apostle charges with *ignorance* of the state of the dead; of the gospel-revelation concerning the resurrection of the body, and a future life in the other world. This is an *heathenish* grief, and like the *Gentiles* in their state of darkness; and highly unfuitable to the gospel-state, and the heavenly hope.

I SHALL conclude all with the *exhortation* of the text, *Comfort one another with these words*: With this view and consideration of the case of our departed friends. Let mournful and afflicting christians take in the comfort of this thought, and minister comfort to one another. Let them who *fear the Lord speak often one to another about these words*. When *Moses and Elias* appear'd in glory upon the mount, they *spoke of our Lord's decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem*. And the Apostle speaks of *shortly putting off his tabernacle*, and what should happen *after his decease*. 'Tis good to be speaking of one another's

Luke ix.
31.

2 Pet. i.
14, 15.

ther's

ther's departure and separation, especially who have continued long in the world, and lived many years of life together. It tends to preserve an habitual seriousness, and promote a heavenly mind. And it would be very profitable to be sometimes speaking concerning others who are already departed, to discourse together concerning the happy state of departed saints. How comfortable is it for christians thus to bespeak one another; " I have a *father* or *mother*, *brother* or *sister*, *husband* or *wife*, *son* or *daughter*, a dear and intimate *friend*, now with Christ: I have lost the benefit and pleasure of their acquaintance and converse in this world; but they have better company, and are in a better state. They are fled from my embraces, but they rest in *Abraham's bosom*. They are safe in their *Father's house*, and have chang'd worlds to infinite advantage. I am waiting my departure and release, when I shall see them again, and dwell with them for ever. We parted with sorrow, with great reluctance of nature, and deep distress; it was like a *sword piercing thro' the bowels*, or rending a limb from the body; but how comfortable will be our meeting together again, how joyful will be the first interview and greeting of dear departed friends; how pleasant the enjoyment after so long an absence, and how unspeakable the delight for ever!"

Take ii.
25.

I HOPE by this time we are prepared to hear what I have to offer concerning our *deceased friend*, whose death occasion'd this dis-

course. I shall speak with the greater *freedom*, because I am able to do it with great *satisfaction*, and upon the best *authority*. It was most agreeable to her known disposition, to use great *modesty* of speech upon such occasions. She had no great opinion of *funeral oratory* so often employ'd to flatter the *dead*, and abuse the *living*; and was sometimes ready to suspect, the dead were often praised for no other reason, but because they were dead. Something however is due to her *memory*, and to the honour of the divine *grace* in her, in whom were many things very *excellent*, and *exemplary* to others.

THE name of her father Mr. *Robert Gledhill* is still very precious among the good people where he liv'd and died, as he was a bright example of *family* and *practical* religion, and *publick* usefulness in those parts*. She often spoke of his eminent holiness with gratitude and pleasure, and was always thankful for the singular blessing of descending from *godly parents*, and of a *pious education*. The *impression* of his example, instruction, and prayers remain'd upon her, and was a great means of softening her heart and influencing her behaviour. The more she grew acquainted with divine things, she had still higher and greater apprehensions of belonging to God in a *covenant way*, and of the value and importance of the relation and rights of a covenant state. She often reflected on the *vanity* of her *youth*, with a true concern; but was always
sensible

* *Near Wakefield in Yorkshire.*

sensible of the mercy of being preserved by divine grace and providence, in the midst of many snares, from the *error of the wicked*, and the *path of the destroyer*.

AFTER *she became a wife*, she increased in fervent *desires* after God. And as she had the advantage of constant assistance, she was a most suitable *companion* to her nearest *relation*; and by her natural cheerfulness, and easy mind; her great fidelity and tender affection; both strengthen'd his hands, and comforted his heart. Her wisdom and experience in *family* affairs, eased him of the burden of worldly cares, and her presence and conversation, gave a sweetness to all the blessings of life. She had a very *humble* sense of her own *unworthiness* towards God, and would often speak of the *future happiness*, as a *vast* and *mighty* thing; and be even astonish'd at the *freedom* and *riches* of divine grace, which must bring a *sinful* creature to heaven.

THEY who best knew her will readily agree, she was strictly *honest* and *sincere*, and *spoke the truth from her heart*. *Dissimulation* was her aversion and dread. She was *courteous* and civil to all, and had a pleasure in *serviug* and *obligiug* every one about her. She was of a *tender* and *sympathizing* spirit, and had a mighty sense of the *affections* and *afflictions* of her friends; and always dispos'd to *rejoice with them who rejoiced*, and *mourned with them who mourn*. She was always *contented* with her state, and *thankful* for the happy condition in which God had placed her; neither *despising*

A Funeral Sermon on

those below her, nor *envying* those above her. In the midst of every earthly enjoyment *heaven* had her heart, and heavenly things her best affection.

AMONG the troubles of her life, the *losses*, *miscarriages* and *afflictions* of her *relations*, were neither few nor small; but she was remarkable for a great and steady *trust* in God, in all the difficulties which beset her; and would often say, *prosperity* was the greatest snare, and that she never met with *affliction*, but she had reason to *blefs* God for it. She waited at *wisdom's gates* with spiritual benefit, and found peculiar comfort and delight in a serious attendance upon all the ordinances of the gospel-worship. She excelled in the most difficult duty of the christian life, and what is commonly found so hard to others, was easy to her; a readiness to forgive injuries: She had formerly been try'd in several instances, and in very tender points, tho' blessed be God, she had little occasion to exercise this vertue in this place.

HER last *sickness* was grievous and *painful*; and tho' made as easy by the tenderness and compassion of her dear friends about her, as possible, of which she expres'd the tenderest *resentment*, and which has left the most grateful *remembrance* in her surviving *relict*; yet it was sufficient to try her patience and her faith. She often said, "None knew what she underwent, but God only:" Tho' no one could call her *impatient*, but herself alone. Her passage at length was easy, as her soul was *calm* and compos'd: Her last words were, "I will
" lie

“ lie down and sleep.” She did so, and without a groan, she *slept the sleep of death*, and I doubt not, *sleeps in Jesus*.

THO’ her sickness and death were the more grievous and surprizing, by being *absent* from home, and in a *journeying* state; there is this comfort in that case, that every place is equally *near* our heavenly Father’s house, and the *presence* of Christ, which makes the happiness of heaven, will easily make up the want of any conveniences on earth. ’Tis the same thing to a *glorify’d* saint in heaven, whether his passage out of the world was early or late, with difficulty or ease, from his own home or the remotest corner of the earth. The first moment of the heavenly blessedness, will wear out all the impressions of *sorrow* in this world, and be a sure earnest of *eternal joys*.





S E R M O N II.

The death of good men, in the midst of their days, considered and improved.

PSAL. cii. 23, 24.

He weakeneth my strength in the way, he shortneth my days: I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days, for thy years are throughout all generations.

THIS psalm, without the name of its author, is entitled, *The prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelm'd, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord.* It was probably composed at the end of the Babylonish captivity, or soon after the Jews return'd to their own country, when the temple lay in ruins; and the building of it met with great obstruction. This occasion'd many mournful reflections and complaints; as he sometimes encourages himself in the hopes of
 God's

God's faithfulness to his promise, and the honour it would be to his name in the eyes of the Gentile world.

THE words I have read are of the former kind. *He weakeneth my strength in the way, he shortneth my days*: The strength of nature began to fail in the midst of life: God seemed to threaten an immature death, and before the ordinary course of nature. This put him upon this prayer to God; *O God, take me not away in the midst of my days*: q. d. with relation to the case he had in view; "I hoped
" to have lived to see the finishing of the
" temple, and that I had been in a fair way
" to it; but the great opposition made to it,
" and the great decays I find in my self, make
" me fear I shall fail of the pleasing hopes:
" take me not away before it is complete, but
" suffer me to live to see thy promise fulfilled."

WHAT the Psalmist here had only the apprehensions of concerning himself, is sometimes actually the case with other good men: *He weakeneth their strength in the way, and shortens their days, and takes them away in the midst of their days*. Nothing is more affecting to considering minds, and more dark and unaccountable in present providence, than when eminently good and useful persons are removed in early life, while wicked and useless persons are spared to old age. It carries something strange in its appearance, and is contrary to nature. That old persons die, worn out with service, and decays of nature, is no wonder, and a less loss to the world; that is
agreeable

Job xxi.
23.

agreeable to the course of nature, and what every one expects. But when younger persons are cut off in the midst of their days, and the height of their usefulness, richly furnished, and ripe for service, like blossoms nip'd in the tender bud, which promised much fair fruit, *When one dies in his full strength, and wholly at ease, while their breasts are full of milk, and their bones of marrow*: this naturally strikes the mind with surprize and astonishment; and we are apt not only to grieve at the loss, but to be shocked at the appearance, and puzzled at the dispensation; and to say with the Psalmist on the like occasion;

Pf. lxxxix.
45, 47.

The days of his youth hast thou shortned; remember how short my time is— Wherefore hast thou made all Men in vain! I believe you are all beforehand with me in this reflection upon this melancholy occasion; and I thought I could not more properly improve it, than by the consideration of this subject. I shall only propose,

I. To enquire into the reasons of this dispensation, and consider what account can be given of it.

II. To direct to the proper improvement, and shew how it may be made most useful to us. I shall speak a little distinctly to both.

S E C T. I.

I. I shall enquire into the *reasons* of it. And because the thing is strange in its first appearance, and apt to perplex and distress our minds; it will be the more needful to offer something to justify the divine conduct,
remove

remove the horror of the appearance, and reconcile and satisfy our minds about it.

I. THERE is the *Sovereignty* of the divine will. God is the Creator of the world, and the natural Lord of his own creation. *He made us, and not we our selves: and we are his, and not our own:* he has the right of disposal who is Proprietor and Lord, and may do his pleasure with his own creature: *He created all things, and for his pleasure they are and were created.* He is an *absolute* Sovereign, and he only is fit to be so; for he has an higher right to all his creatures, than they have to themselves, or to any thing they call their own: and he is fit to exercise such a power, who is infinitely perfect, and can never mistake or use it ill. We have nothing to fear from one who acts under the conduct of infinite wisdom and goodness in all his ways.

HIS sovereignty and dominion extend to all his creatures in heaven and earth: *He doth his will in the armies of heaven, and among all the inhabitants of the earth.* Angels move at his command, and always *do his will.* And it reaches to all the disposals, and all the circumstances of life: *He hath determined the bounds of our habitation, and the times before ap-^{Acts xvii. 26.} pointed:* the place of our birth and abode, and all the relations and conditions of life. Yea, it reaches to life itself; for *our life and our^{Psal. xxxi.} times are in his hand:* the different periods of^{15.} our time in the world, and of our dissolution and departure out of it. *His days are deter-^{Job xiv. 5.} mined, and the number of his months are with thee,*

thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. He claims it as a prerogative of Deity: *I wound and I heal, I kill and I make alive.* God acts as the proper Sovereign of life, when he removes any out of the world, in whatsoever season or circumstance: he has the *keys of hell and death*; of the invisible world, and the passage into it. And this is always a reason of silence and satisfaction. When *Nadab and Abihu*, the two sons of *Aaron*, presumptuously offered *strange fire before the Lord*; and an immediate and extraordinary vengeance overtook them, 'tis said, *And Aaron held his peace.*

Levit. x. 8. When *Samuel* related the terrible judgment upon *Eli's* house, concerning the death of his sons *Hophni* and *Phineas*, he said, *'Tis the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.*

1 Sam. iii. 18. When *Job* received the heavy tidings of the death of all his children in a violent manner, while they were eating and drinking in their elder brother's house; *He rent his mantle, and shaved his head*, expressions of a deep sorrow, and fell upon the ground and worshipped: i. e. he shewed a becoming and a religious concern: and as soon as he recovered himself, he made this wise and humble reflection; *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, the earth, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.* He has a right to take his own gifts, who always retains his own propriety, and only lends us the use of them for a season.

AND his dominion is uncontrollable, as well as absolute; and always takes place: *Behold*

he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say to him, what dost thou? And, who hath resisted his will? Nor is he accountable to his creatures for his proceedings: *God is greater than man, why dost thou strive against him, for he giveth not an account of any of his matters?* He is infinitely above us, and not to be arraigned at our bar; or obliged to let us into the secrets of his government, and the reasons of his disposals: that were for the judge to descend to the bar. We may say of the time of death, what the Apostle says of another dispensation of providence, *Nay but, O man, who art thou who repliest against God?* It is finally to be resolved into the sovereign will of God, and his absolute pleasure; and this consideration alone, ought to satisfy us, tho' nothing else could be said about it. But the will of God is always reasonable, and we may, without presumption, assign other reasons of this conduct, tho' we cannot pretend to take in all his views, or dive to the bottom of his designs. And therefore,

2. 'TIS a point of *wisdom*. We are born mortal and under a sentence of death. This is the state of fallen nature, and the consequence of the original threatening, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.* And the Apostle makes it the standing effect of sin, *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* We have the seeds of mortality in our nature, and tend to a dissolution by our make and constitution, tho' no accident

accident or disease ever beſel us; and we are under the ſentence of the violated law, and liable to the execution of it every moment, from our birth to our diſſolution. It muſt be executed ſome time or other: That is aſcertain'd by the divine law, and evident by univerſal experience; 'Tis appointed for men once to die; and there is no diſcharge from that war. There have been but two exceptions in all the generations of men for more than five thouſand years, that of *Enoch* and *Elias*, by a peculiar favour, and for an extraordinary purpoſe, who were tranſlated alive, and carried immediately up to heaven. It was a noble ſaying to this purpoſe, of *Anaxagoras*, one of the eminent *Greek* Philoſophers, upon the tidings of his ſon's death; *I knew that I begat a mortal, and that he was liable to death when he firſt came into the world* *.

BUT now the *time* and the *ſeaſon* of it is not ſettled by the divine law; that does not ſay, we ſhall die either old or young. 'Tis left to the divine pleaſure, and is a point of wiſdom, in what ſeaſon of life, or circumſtance of things, the ſentence ſhall take place: God is at liberty to fix the time as he pleaſes, and to execute the ſentence in what part of life he ſees fit, whether in youth, or old age. And 'tis highly reaſonable to ſuppoſe, That the *only wiſe God* chuſes that period of life for our removal out of the world, which, all
cir-

* Nihil, inquit, mihi inexpectatum aut novum nuntias: ego enim illum ex me natum ſciebam eſſe mortalem—atque ut mori reminem ſolere qui non vixerit; ita nec vivere aliquem quidem poſſe, qui non ſit moriturus. *Val. Max. l. v. c. 10.*

circumstances consider'd, is fittest and best, and which we could not but approve if we knew them all. When any therefore are removed in early life, as there is nothing uncommon and extraordinary, or beyond what is usual, and may be expected at any time; so 'tis nothing but what he has a right to do by the constitution of his law, and has reserved the judgment of to himself. But more particularly still,

3. 'Tis a display of his *all-sufficiency*, and to shew that he needs not the best instruments, and the most fitted for his service, but that he can do without them, or raise up others in their room. When God takes away an eminently good and useful person out of the world, it makes a great gap, like the fall of a fair spreading oak in a forest, or a *standard-bearer* in an army. We are often apt to despond in such a case, and to say, Religion will die in such a family with such a person who belonged to it, and was the great example and support of it. The interest of God will sink in such a place, with such an active and useful person; especially, if he was of a publick character, of singular worth, of great esteem and influence, and remarkably owned and prospered. 'Tis ready to give us discouraging views, and make us think with the prophet, That we shall be *left alone*, and that none will remain to *bear up the pillars of the earth*, to support the interest of goodness, and the cause of liberty in the world, &c.

BUT now we often find it otherwise, and that we judge by wrong measures, and form

unfuitable conceptions of the great God: *His thoughts and ways are not like ours.* He sometimes removes eminent instruments of publick good, to make room for others to stand up in their places, and fill the vacancy they have made. He raises up other instruments whom he designs to serve him, and gives them an opportunity of appearing in the world. Some by such providences have been drawn out of great obscurity, and placed in greater eminency; and drawn forth to greater activity and undertakings, than their more private stations did admit or require. Thus God raised up *Joshua* upon the death of *Moses*. One would have thought that *Moses's* great experience and authority, among that froward and rebellious people, could never have been made up; and that none was so fit to bring them into the promis'd land, as he who in such a wonderful manner brought them out of *Egypt*, and carried them thro' the wilderness: And yet *Joshua* was honoured to do that, which *Moses* was not thought worthy of. And young *Elisha* had a double portion of *Elijah's* spirit, when he was taken up from him, who was the *chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.* The residue of the spirit is with God, and he can furnish and spirit others for his service, for whom the most eminent and useful receive all their capacities and success. He plainly shews by such dispensations, that he can never be at a loss for proper instruments to do his work, and accomplish his designs, who has the framing and forming them in his own

hands. He can easily raise up others to serve him, who can raise up *children to Abraham*, out of the *stones of the street*; so he *hides pride from man*, and forbids *glorying in the creature*, and *no flesh shall glory in his presence*, but *he who glorieth, shall glory in the Lord*. How God will supply the present vacancy he only knows; but we have reason to expect his direction and care, who has remarkably provided for us in this kind several times over.

4. 'Tis in great *mercy* to themselves. 'Tis a great kindness to them, tho' 'tis a grief and loss to us. Thus, for example; He sometimes removes them from the *evil* of the world, and impending calamities coming upon it. So the prophet represents this case: *The righteous* Isa. xlvii. *perish, and no man layeth it to heart, and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous are taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace, they shall rest in their beds, each one walking, or having walked, in his integrity.* In that case they are safely housed before the impending storm, and lodged in the ark before the deluge comes. 'Tis certainly a wise act of kindness in the great God to lay up his treasure in a publick danger, and place it out of the reach of harm. The death of excellent and useful persons has sometimes betokened approaching judgments upon the world; for good men are the greatest strength, as well as the glory of the places where they live, and their removal is like the taking the ark of God by the *Philistines*, when the *glory was departed from*
E 2 *Israel,*

Job xxii.
30.

Israel, and judgments came upon the *Philistines*. God could not destroy wicked *Sodom*, till *Lot* and his family were removed out of it. 'Tis a remarkable passage of *Eliphaz* to *Job*; *He shall deliver the island of the innocent, and it is delivered by the pureness of his hands*: That is, in modern language, for the sake of the puritans who live in it: I mean all righteous and upright men. *St. Austin's* death was observed to be the forerunner of the terrible devastations of *Hyppo*; and *Luther's* death was followed with the siege of *Heidleburgh*, the strongest place in the protestant interest, and where was that noble library which was afterward transplanted to *Rome*, and is now in the *Vatican*. God only knows what miseries are coming upon the world at any time, and the great decay of all virtue, and the abounding of impiety and wickedness, is always a threatening presage. And in that case, to live longer would only be a calamity, and like putting back into a tempestuous sea, and venturing afresh in the midst of dangers, at the harbour's mouth.

Or they may be taken from the *snare*s of life, and the temptations of sin, which might prove a great disadvantage to them; and from all the conflicts and hazards of the christian life, which they are sure to be exercised with. Death is a discharge from the christian warfare, and a release from all danger. When God removes useful persons in the midst of their days, 'tis very grievous and afflicting: It certainly has a dark side, and we are often apt to pore too much upon it. But there is a brighter

brighter and better view of the case, which is to be considered and taken into the account; that tho' they are taken from present comforts and enjoyments, and further service and usefulness unto others; yet they are taken from the evils of life too, and all farther danger of evil to themselves. The wise God, who *knows the end from the beginning*, and to whose all-comprehending mind all future events lie distinctly open; foresees the tryals of continued life, and further engagements in the world; the different circumstances of all the revolutions of time, and change of condition; how they will affect and operate, and what would be the issue and event. Perhaps he sees they would be too hard for them, and disproportionate to their strength; that the storm would rise so high as to endanger the oversetting them, and *after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, they would be again entangled and overcome*; and when they have *known the way of righteousness, turn from the holy commandment*; and *being led away by the error of the wicked, fall from their own steadfastness*: And when they were *once enlightened, and tasted of the heavenly gift, fall away*. In wise compassion to their infirmity, and tender concern for their safety, he takes them away in the midst of their days, and that they may not be *tried above what they are able*, sometimes makes this *way of escape out of it*. How often have we seen instances of young persons hopeful beginnings, and who have made some progress in religion, by the weight of

2 Pet. ii.
20, 21.

iii. 17.

Heb. vi. 4.

worldly cares, and the fatal baits of pleasure, in a long course of years, borne down and overcome? They are carried at length off from their biafs, and down the stream, by the power of suitable and prevailing temptations, or greatly weakened and impaired by them. It might have been happier for them, to all appearance, if they had died several years sooner. How many after serious convictions and purposes of mind, under great afflictions of life, or upon a sick bed, have soon forgot their former vows, and returned to their former vanity of mind, and careless walk? 'Tis related in the life of the famous earl of *Rocheſter*, that he dreaded the thoughts of living longer, and feared if God ſhould reſtore him, he ſhould loſe the good impreſſions upon his mind, and not be able to endure the future temptations which might attend him *. Who can tell what ſome might poſſibly have proved, by a longer life of tryal, who appeared to have made a good end?

BESIDES, 'tis a great inſtance of divine mercy, that he takes them the ſooner to *heaven*, and gives them their reward betimes. They are not only the ſooner out of danger, but the ſooner happy. The remaining years of life in time, and in this world, are made up to them in the glories of heaven, and the bleſſedneſs of eternity. Whiſt others live in the weakneſs and imperfections, and with the many ſtruggles and conflicts of the chriſtian life, they are ſet free from the body of ſin, and perfectly conformed to God. They are employed in ſinleſs ſervice and perfect love. They

* See his Life by Dr. *Burnet*.

are safe arrived at the harbour of rest, while others are longer out, and tost in a tempestuous sea. When God removes them in the midst of their days, he prevents the further service and enjoyment of life; they leave their mourning friends, and all their prospects and designs of good: But then he brings them the sooner to glory, and rewards them who have wrought only *one hour*, the first hour of the day, while others are left to bear the *heat and burden of the day*. He does them no hurt to take them from the good of this world, and bestow upon them infinitely better, to remove them from their friends and comforts here below, and carry them to *Abraham's bosom*, and the society of angels and saints in heaven. They live out the rest of their days, which we spend under so many disadvantages, in a better state, and what was wanting to them in this life, is all made up in eternal life. They are joined to the *general assembly* above, and serve God without any sinful defect, and with the highest satisfaction and joy. And how wise and kind is this? How greatly have they the advantage of us?

I might add here, That God will accept the *purposes* of their heart, and what they further designed for his glory in the world, which their early death prevented the execution of: They will not be lost to them, but turn to a comfortable account; as God told *David* just before his death, *Thou didst well that it was in* ^{1 Kings} *thy heart to build an house to my name.* Again, ^{viii. 18.}

A Funeral Sermon for

5. IT may be considered as an act of *justice*, and as the punishment of sin. This is the known reason of all afflicting dispensations to ourselves and others. 'Tis sin which provokes the anger of God, and brings down judgment upon us: even death itself is the fruit and *wages of sin*. Now God may remove useful persons in the midst of their days, in rebuke for their *own* sin. He may see fit to contend with them for former offences, or any notable miscarriage and escape of life, by cutting their days short on earth, tho' their souls are accepted and saved. Particularly for disobedience to parents; for as the *fifth* commandment is the *first* commandment with promise, and the promise is, That *their days shall be long on the earth*; so no wonder if God sometimes cuts short the lives of the disobedient, and punishes them with the contrary threatening; *That they shall not live out half their days*. 'Tis possible they may be taken out of the world, when they are not cast into hell, and that they may lose their lives for their disobedience, when they don't lose their souls, and the punishment may extend no further than to the temporal life. It was the general corruption of the old world, which brought that sweeping destruction upon all the inhabitants of it; and the disobedience and murmuring of the *Israelites*, provoked the Lord to cut off that whole generation who came out of *Egypt*, young and old, and none were suffered to enter into *Canaan*, but only *Caleb* and *Jeshua*, who had followed fully after the
Lord.

Lord. They all perished in the wilderness by death, tho' there is no reason to doubt but many of them were pious, and their souls saved in the day of the Lord: He *took vengeance on their inventions*, tho' he *forgave their iniquities*. God suffered *Moses* to see the land of *Canaan* from mount *Nebo*, but commanded him to die there, because he *trespassed against him among the children of Israel, at the waters of Meribah*. *Hezekiah*, another good man, because he *rendered not to the Lord according to his benefits*, and his heart *was lifted up*, was *sick unto death*, and had the *sentence of death in himself*. He breaks out in the most mournful and moving complaints; *He said, In the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave; I am deprived of the residue of my years. I shall not see the Lord in the land of the living, and behold man no more with the inhabitants of the earth; my age is departed and removed from me: tho' upon his humbling himself, and earnest prayer, the sentence was reversed, and fifteen years added to his life.*

Pf. xcix. 8.

Deut: xxxii. 40.

2 Kings xx.

OR else they may be removed for the sins of *others*. God may take them away for our *over-indulgence*, and too great opinion and expectation from them. We may kill them with our kindness; and by setting our hearts too much upon them, provoke the jealousy of the Lord against our selves. When we put them in the room of God, and place our confidence and hope in them, we make them an *image of jealousy*, and no wonder if in just displeasure, he

he casts it down, and breaks it all to pieces. 'Tis probable *David* was criminal this way towards *Absalom*, a lovely and beautiful, but rebellious and disobedient son. His disconsolate passion at his death bespeaks an immoderate love to him living. And the death of his child by *Bathsheba* was the execution of the threatening by *Nathan*; *The child also who is born of thee shall surely die.* And we find God threatens the house of *David* this way. He had sworn once to *David*, that his seed should continue for ever, and his throne as the sun before him. But the Psalmist afterwards complains of God's punishing for sin, *Thou hast cast off and abhorred, and been wroth with thy anointed: Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant, and profaned his crown by casting it to the ground. Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries, and made them to rejoice:* and particularly v. 45. *The days of his youth hast thou shortened, and hast covered him with shame. Selah.* This was remarkably fulfilled in the case of *Josiah* and *Jeboiakim*, who died young; and of *Zedekiah*, who was disgracefully condemned as a rebel to the King of *Babylon*, to lose his eyes, and remain a prisoner all his days. The renowned *Gustavus Adolphus*, the great patron of the Reformation, is reported to have said in the midst of his remarkable victories and success, "That he believed God was about to lay him aside, because the eyes of all *Europe* were drawn upon him, and their expectations raised to so great an height."

2 Sam.
xviii. 33.

—xii. 14.

Pf.lxxxix.

2 Kings
xxv. 6.

OR else, it may be on the other hand, when they are *neglected* and slighted. God sometimes punishes the ungrateful world, by removing early eminent persons, whom they did not know how to value or treat with kindness. The *excellent of the earth* are taken away, for the neglect, or ill treatment they meet with in it: *Jerusalem killed some of their own prophets, and stoned them who were sent unto them.* When men of great usefulness are treated with coldness and disregard, and great excellencies are overlooked for the sake of little frailties and mistakes; God may raise the value of them, by removing them; and make us sensible of their worth and consequence to the world by the want of them. The Apostle *Paul* was contemptible in his *presence* and *speech* to some of the *Corinthians*, tho' they allowed his letters to be *weighty* and *powerful*; probably, as some learned men think, because he was of less stature, and of a stammering speech. It may be said of some excellently pious, and valuable men, with respect to the disregard of their friends, as well as their sufferings from their enemies; *Of whom the world was not worthy.* But let no man think it a light matter to slight the gifts and graces of any of God's faithful servants, and grieve and wound their spirits by a vain conceit, or a wanton curiosity.

6. 'Tis for the *good* of others, and to exercise the *graces* and virtues of those who survive. 'Tis one of the greatest trials of life, to part with beloved relations and friends out of this world, especially in their younger years
of

of life. When God comes into our houses and neighbourhoods, and gives death a commission to seize a near relation, and take away a dear friend, what does he mean by it? what is the language of the dispensation? Why, plainly to try our graces, to see how we will behave our selves under one of the greatest difficulties of life; how well we will take it to *receive evil things at the hand of the Lord*, as well as *good things*. When the same hand which supports our being, and reaches out all our blessings, sees fit to touch us in a tender point, and blasts the *gourd* under which we sat with delight, this naturally calls forth the exercise of some peculiar graces, and gives them a greater advantage; they appear in a greater glory, and redound more to the honour of God. So he tries our faith and trust in him, when he strikes off our hold from the creatures; and our patience and submission to his will, when he lays a heavy burden upon us. When an afflicted Christian can lie down at the foot of God, and humbly adore the hand, and kiss the rod that smites him; can put his mouth in the dust, and *hold his peace, possess his soul in his patience, and accept the punishment of his iniquity*; yea, can approve his conduct towards him, and *blefs his holy name*; how highly honourable is this to God, and how glorious does a Christian appear? what a reputation does it give to the Christian principles, and to the divine grace?

AND what can be more proper to awaken our concern, and excite our diligence in every service

service of God, and duty of life? What so powerful and effectual to keep a lively sense upon our minds, and be a constant spur to duty? should we not work *with all our might*; and *with fear and trembling*, when there is *no working in the grave*, and the *night* is approaching? when this is the only working time, and all our opportunities and helps, the whole state of trial and mercy is measured by the short time of life, and determined by it? The Apostle thought it meet to stir up the Christians to *give all diligence*, because he 2 Pet. i. knew he was shortly to *put off this tabernacle*. What so proper as the thoughts of death, to inspire our sluggish souls with life and vigour, and make us more *servent in spirit*, and *zealous of good works*? to keep up a lively sense of religion in the world, and a constant care to please God? Hereupon,

7. To be a standing monument of human *frailty*, and give *warning* to all about them. When God removes younger persons out of the world, especially of great eminence and worth, 'tis a standing memorial of mortality to others, and plain evidence that such may die. Nothing is so sensible, and apt to impress our minds, as the death of those of our standing and circumstance of life. If we saw only elder persons drop into the grave, and that death always observed the order of nature, we might possibly think, that it did not much concern us, and that our time was a great way off. But God gives warning to us by the death of others like our selves, not
only

only of the same nature, but of the same age and rank with our selves; our familiar friends, with whom we daily conversed, and maintained the offices of friendship and religion together. 'Tis a home instance to younger christians, and younger ministers, when any of such eminence and worth are taken away; and they *being dead, speak to us who survive, prepare to follow; be ye also ready.*

AND to be sure, elder persons are concerned to take the warning; for if younger than we die before us, to be sure we must quickly follow; and every person who dies young, loudly calls upon those more advanced in life, to be mindful of approaching death, and attend to the shortness and uncertainty of life. This is a gracious dispensation to a careless world, to teach us wisdom at others cost, and make their death instructing and monitory; to remind us of what so nearly concerns us, and quicken our regards, where we are so very apt to forget.

8. PERHAPS it may be considered as an instance of our *conformity* to Christ. As the servant must not be above the Lord, and we must not expect kinder usage from the world than he met with; so we must not wonder if we are suffered to stay no longer in it than he did. Our Lord lived a private life with his parents in *Galilee*, and was known only as the *son of Mary*, and the *carpenter's son*, till he was about thirty years of age, the time when the priests under the law were admitted to the office of priesthood, and the service of
the

the tabernacle; and then he appeared upon the stage of the world, and entered upon his publick ministry. And he spent but about three years in all his preaching and miracles, before his *decease which he accomplished at Jerusalem*. He had a short ministry of three years, and a life of thirty-three. And what if God sees fit at any time, that any *disciple whom Jesus loves*, and who bears a great similitude to his Lord, in intire devotedness to God, and zeal for his glory, be made conformable to Christ in this respect, and be allowed no longer time for his ministry and life than he had! Our Lord tells *Peter concerning John, If I* John xxi. *will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?* And if he will that any should come to him sooner than others, what is that to us? have we any reason to complain? Or does he act unsuitably to himself? Our deceased friend had something a longer ministry, but not quite so long a life. How agreeable is it to say of any of our friends; He was removed in the midst of his days, but he lived and preached as long as Christ did, or thereabouts.

PERHAPS they have done a great deal of work in a little time, as he did; and tho' no good man ever lived to do all that was in his heart for God, but the man Christ Jesus, or could say as he did before his death, *It is finished*; I have done all I ever designed to do for God before I die: yet they may have filled up their short course with great service, and run over a great compass of ground in their short race. Perhaps they have *begun a good work*, and left

left impressions on the minds of many, which others must *perform* and perfect. And as they rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, and in the presence of their glorified Redeemer; so I doubt not they are pleased with every instance of likeness and agreement to him.

9. 'Tis to make *heaven* more desirable to us, and raise our hearts more powerfully thither. Every good man lost out of this world, is gained to the other: and heaven is the richer for the death of every saint. They go to the *Spirits of just men made perfect*, when they leave the society of the church of God on earth. How many of our Christian friends and acquaintance have got the start of us, and gone to heaven before us, younger and elder ones? One would be tempted to envy their felicity. And should not this be a powerful attractive to our sluggish earthly minds, and raise them up above this region of sense and sin, and make us of finer breath in a purer air, and converse with our departed friends; especially, *to remember them who have had the rule over us, and spoken to us the word of our Lord?* Should not this make heaven more familiar and more agreeable to our thoughts, that so many are called thither, who once dwelt in flesh, and were dear to us, and high in our esteem? And every circumstance of the case which either heightens their value, or aggravates our loss; that they were distinguished by peculiar excellencies, or died in the midst of their day; is proper to strengthen the motive, and affect our minds the more.

AND

AND tho' God is the chief good, the center of blessedness, and rest of souls; and that is the greatest reason and motive of our choice and love of heaven, and all our desires and hopes of it; yet the divine Being is vastly above our thoughts, and our best conceptions of him are very imperfect; *Behold God is great, Job xxxvi. and we know him not.* But the consideration^{26.} of the glorified Redeemer in our nature, and of our fellow-Christians there, is a more sensible thing, and a great relief to our thoughts, and is both more within our reach, and more apt to impress and affect our minds. And does not this make it worth the while? What a wise expedient is this to help the infirmities of our faith, excite the exercise of devotion, to promote the heavenly mind and life, and further our preparation for heaven?

UPON these several accounts this strange conduct of providence may appear reasonable, and be justified in some measure to our minds.

S E C T. II.

II. LET me direct you briefly to the proper *improvement* of this contemplation, and shew how it may be made useful to ourselves, either to regulate our conduct, or affect our minds: It would naturally lead us to many serious reflections.

I. WE should *reverence* and adore the divine *sovereignty and wisdom*. Things are sometimes so circumstanced as to be dark, and difficult to account for, and very grievous and afflicting in the dispensations of providence;

Clouds and darkness are round about him; and his ways are often in the deep, and his footsteps are not known. He sits encompassed with venerable darkness, and walks in untrodden paths; but then righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne; and his ways are always equal. There is wisdom and reason in the most involved appearance of things, and the most unsearchable counsels of God; and we ought to justify God in all his dealings with us, and submit to his disposals; and never to repine or complain at the hand of God, when it presses hardest, and we are most at a loss about it. Who art thou who repliest against God, or pretendest to reason and wrangle the matter over with him? Has he not a right to do what he pleases with his own? Does he do us any wrong, when he takes away what is his, and calls back again, what we first received from him, and enjoyed so long by his leave? Let us adore with humble reverence the mysterious dispensations of Providence, and acquiesce in his wise and sovereign pleasure. Let us hold our peace, from any complaint; or only say, Let him do what seemeth him good; and Blessed be the name of the Lord. O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Wait with silence the further, and final revelation of the

Rom. xi. 33. *divine will, since what he does, we know not now, but shall know hereafter; as our Lord told Peter.*

2. LET us look more to God, and live more entirely upon him. Let us learn this point of

of spiritual wisdom from such dispensations, to look at the instruments, of any good, less, and God, more; and lay less stress upon them, and more upon him. We are very apt to exceed in our regards to creatures, and the more, the more excellent they are; and to confine and limit the Holy-One to particular means, and particular persons; and we often find ourselves disappointed and bereaved. Let this teach us to look more at the fountain head, from whom the gifts and graces of the best proceed, and on whom the success of all their endeavours depends; who gives them all that was excellent, and made all that use of them they were of to us, and who can raise up other instruments, and furnish them with like abilities; and give the same effect. *Paul planteth and Apollo watereth, but God giveth the increase: 'Tis by the grace of God they are what they are; and our sufficiency is of God.* Let us then look beyond the intermediate causes to the first cause, and fetch all our supplies more immediately from God, and live in a closer dependence upon him, in the use of all prescribed means. Eye the living God more, and dying creatures less: there we shall never be disappointed; here we cannot fail of being so.

3. LET US *comfort* ourselves in their loss by the consideration of the *mercy* it is to them. How much more safe and happy are they in heaven, than they could be here on earth! 'Tis well with them, however it is with us. They are set out of the reach of every danger; and possess of the most desirable good; ad-

vanced to the highest honours, and enjoy the purest pleasures. And should not we be *comforted* concerning them, tho' we *grieve* for ourselves? Let us not think much at their happiness, or their early arrival at it, because we want their presence and help: God will take care of us, if we are faithful to him; and of his own interest, when the best instruments on earth are removed. Let not us be uneasy that they are happy, and repine at that which is the matter of their joy. When we have a well-grounded hope of the happy state of our departed friends, we should rather rejoice at their preferment and advancement, at the greater improvement of their state, and their happy and advantageous change; that it is so much better with them than it is with us, or than ever it was before. So our Lord told his sorrowful disciples, *If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father.*

Joh. xiv.
28.

4. YET we should be *humbled* under the sense of their loss, and lament it as a great affliction. We must not be insensible of the hand of God upon us neither. When excellent instruments of God's glory are removed, 'tis a great loss to the world, and to the church of God: All the usefulness of their lives is at an end, who might have lived many years, and done great good to many souls. And especially when we have reason to think, that we had any hand in it, or contributed any thing to it, either by too great, or too little regard to them; we should be sensible of the affliction, and humbled for our sin. *Tho' we must*
not

not weep for them, 'tis their advantage and gain; yet we ought to weep for ourselves, for 'tis a loss to us, and to the world about us. And when 'tis in a qualified degree, and with due submission to the will of God, we may fitly lament their loss. *Jesus wept* at the death of *Lazarus*, whom he loved; and the elders of *Ephesus*, at *Paul's* departure from *Miletus*, because they should see his face no more. Acts xx. 28. And the Apostle don't forbid, but only regulates our grief, concerning them who are *asleep*; that we sorrow not as others, who have no hope; with the hopeless despairing sorrow of the heathen world, who were ignorant of the resurrection, and uncertain about eternal life. 1 Thes. iv. 13. Something is certainly due to natural relation, and the tender affections of our minds, to the resentments of gratitude, and the obligations of duty, in such a case; and 'tis very allowable to drop a tear over the graves of our departed friends, tho' 'tis very easy to exceed. There indeed is our danger; for the passions are the unruly part of our nature, are difficultly kept within bounds; and sometimes need all the restraints which reason and religion are able to give them.

5. IT should teach us to value useful men while they live, and make the best use of them we can. Labour to be better for them, and get some good by them, while you have them. *John the Baptist* was a burning and shining light, in his ministry and conversation; and the people rejoiced in it for a season; for he died young too. Joh. v. 35. Consider them as dying creatures, who

may be removed in the midst of their days, or in a little time from us; let us not lose the benefit of their help and converse while it may be had; but wisely improve for spiritual advantage their gifts and graces, their wisdom and experience, their kindness and concern for us while they last. Let us never have reason to say, That a useful minister and friend was early taken away, and I made no use of them while they lived, or was little the better for them: I now regret the opportunity I lost, of great advantage by their service.

6. THE reasonableness of *early religion*, and being in good earnest in it. And here let me caution you against dangerous *delays*, and reckoning upon long life, and neglecting present duty. How natural is this in youth and health? Who is there, at such an age, who thinks of dying, or ever seriously puts the case to himself? Who don't expect to live many years longer, if not to arrive to old age? We plainly see this in the schemes and designs men lay in the world, which the longest life seldom suffices to accomplish. They reckon upon attaining to such a condition of life, to execute such purposes of their minds, to reach to such a pitch of greatness, and such a proportion of years; and in the mean time neglect the great end of life, and are cut off in the midst of all their other designs. *They reckon their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places throughout all generations: But this their way is their folly, though they bless themselves, and posterity approve their sayings.* The rich fool

in the gospel reckoned upon *taking his ease*, and having *goods laid up for many years*, when he had lived his last day already, and that *night his soul was to be required of him*. What a disappointment must it be to die young, to one who never doubted to live to be old; and to put off the execution of every serious purpose, 'till death overtakes him, and prevents it all!

AND let the consideration of dying young be a powerful restraint from *youthful vanities* and vice. The sprightly vigour of nature, the gaiety of mind, and the high relish of sensible good, at such an age, commonly lead them to vanity of life, and forgetfulness of God. The suitable baits to various dispositions, and the constant solicitations of temptations round about them, powerfully insinuate, and strike dangerously upon the senses and imagination, which are generally predominant, and carry them to looseness and licentiousness, and presumption and security. Keep your minds under the strong impression of your mortal state. Use this thought upon every occasion to preserve your innocence, and fortify your minds against the impressions of evil. Oppose this consideration to all the vanity of your minds, and assaults of temptation. Sit down one serious moment, O careless and licentious youth, and consider that death is hastening towards thee, whether thou thinkest of it or not, and may suddenly surprize thee in all thy security and mirth! *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth—but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee to judgment.* Death,

Dan. v. 6. *the king of terrors, like the hand-writing upon the wall, will quickly appear, and make thy countenance fall, and thy thoughts troubled, and the joints of thy loins be loosed, and thy knees smite against one another, as it did to a great king, in the midst of a splendid feast. Death will humble the stoutest heart, and make the vainest creature serious. Improve the time and opportunity of life to secure the safety of thy soul, and promote the usefulness of thy life; and waste not the precious moments of short uncertain life in idle neglects, ensnaring diversions, or bold violations of the law of God.*

IF men die in the midst of their days, 'tis infinitely reasonable to be religious betimes, because nothing else can make us secure and happy. Men commonly take up with the first impressions of their education, whatsoever they happen to be; and satisfy themselves with a *traditionary* religion, the religion of their ancestors, and the places where they live, or of those they converse with and most esteem; without ever considering the matter, or settling upon right grounds; neither understanding their religion, or making it properly their own. And it is commonly answerable, a mere outward lifeless form, or a sudden flash and blaze; without proper convictions of mind, or kindly relish and savour of things; without sincerity or zeal; without constancy and perseverance, especially in trials or opposition. But this is not a religion either to live, or to die with. Let me advise you to be wisely, as well as seriously religious; upon a thorough satisfaction
of

of mind, and in good earnest. Use the best judgment you have in the greatest concern of life: Endeavour to be well grounded in the great principles and duties of the gospel-religion, and to have both a distinct and practical knowledge of them. Let it become the governing habit of your mind, and run thro' all the actions of your life. Make religion your *business*; be constantly diligent and watchful in all the duties, and all the snares of life, in a dependence upon the divine grace. Let younger Christians be ambitious to make up the loss of useful lives, which are cut off in the midst of their days, and *supply their lack of service* to the church of God; that the interest of God and religion may suffer as little as may be, by the death of any who were great examples of it, and greatly instrumental to promote it.

AND let me particularly recommend it to younger persons to bethink themselves of their *baptismal* covenant, and of solemnly renewing it at the *Lord's table*; to perfect their profession, and become complete christians. Remember the death of Christ, by which you hope for acceptance with God, in the way he has prescribed, before your own death overtake you. If you are willing to be the Lord's with all your heart, and without reserve; and to take him, through the blessed Redeemer, for your Lord and portion, whom you are to obey and enjoy; doubt not of your being prepared, and fear not a gracious acceptance with him.

7. WHAT reason of thankfulness for *longer life* and opportunity? How great is the mercy of continued life in a view of further usefulness, and better preparation for heaven; to be spared beyond the midst of our days, and to more advanced life, when many others are taken off in the midst of their days? How many have we survived and followed to the grave, of our acquaintance and friends, younger and stronger than ourselves, more likely to live, and capable of service than we were? We are *spared yet one year longer*, and are continued under the means of grace, and calls of mercy; and have the opportunities of further usefulness to others, and improvement to ourselves. 'Tis certainly a great mercy in itself, and in the intention of God; for the *long-suffering of the Lord is salvation*. Let us not alter the nature of it by continued neglects and disobedience, and turn it into a greater aggravation of sin. Improve it with all thankfulness while it lasts, as a valuable and accountable talent. I only add,

2 Pet. iii.
15.

8. LET us all be mindful of our *own mortality*, and quickened to daily preparation. Remember that you are dying creatures as well as others, under the same sentence of death, and liable to the execution of it. When a good man is removed out of the world, consider with your selves, “ what would have
“ been my condition, if I had been removed,
“ and my soul had gone in his soul’s stead?
“ Whither would death have landed me?
“ What

“ What would have been my lot and state in
“ the other world ?”

LET the thoughts of death quicken our preparation for it: Do something every day for eternity; that you may be found in a safe state and prepared frame of mind; and that in whatsoever *hour of the night*, or age of life, our Lord shall come, we may not be surprized unprepared; but be found *ready*, and *watching*, and *waiting*, and *looking* for his appearance.

PARTICULARLY, let me address myself in a few words to *younger ministers*, whither the present providence particularly points. Let this awakening instance of mortality, of one of your own number and order, of your age and standing, of your friendship and acquaintance, and whom ye valued and esteemed, excite your attention and regard. Hear your deceased friend and brother, thus bespeaking every one of you: ————“ Be more frequent in the
“ thoughts of your own death, for the *pro-*
“ *phets don't live for ever*, and sometimes die
“ young, and in the *midst of their days*. Be
“ more careful about the safety and prosperity
“ of your own souls, as well as the instruction
“ and salvation of others; that you may not
“ *preach* to others, and be *castaways* yourselves:
“ And of your daily walk and conversation,
“ not only to be *unblameable*, but *examples to*
“ *the flock*. Be diligent and faithful in all
“ your preparations, and ministrations; that
“ you may fill up the time of life with proper
“ duty, and *finish your course with joy*, and
“ the

“ the *ministry* you have received of the Lord.
 “ Let the thoughts of death, your own and
 “ others, inspire you with tender compassion,
 “ and warm zeal for the good of dying sinners,
 “ and precious and immortal souls; and make
 “ you speak and preach as sinners to sinners;
 “ and dying men to dying men. *Watch over*
 “ *the souls* of others, as those who must give
 “ *an account*: Endeavour by faithful instruc-
 “ tion and warning, to stand *clear of the blood*
 “ *of all men*, and that their *blood may not be*
 “ *required at your hands*; but that you may
 “ find comfort in your present service, and
 “ they among whom you labour, may be
 “ your *joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of*
 “ *the Lord.*” And may the living and un-
 changeable God make us *wise to understand*
and consider our latter end; and *teach us so to*
number our days that we may apply our hearts
unto wisdom; that we may be *found of our*
judge in peace, and may have *confidence at his*
appearing, and not be *ashamed before him at*
his coming.

I have finished what I proposed from the
 text, and shall speak now, as this mournful
 occasion directs, of our deceased friend; of
 whom I shall give this exemplary and instruct-
 ing account, from a long intimacy with him,
 and the undoubted testimony of others. And
 I desire to *speak the truth in Christ*, and would
 not *lye for God*. I am informed by them who
 knew him in his earliest youth, That there
 were manifest indications of a very *serious spi-*
rit, almost as soon as he could speak, and that
 from

from the manly gravity of his deportment in the first years of life, he never was a child. He told a worthy minister, his dear and intimate friend*, That as long as he could remember any thing, he remembered his being concerned for the salvation of his soul; and that he always preferred his books and his closet, to the diversions of the childish age. He loved the conversation of ministers and christians, especially when it turned upon religion; and from the fifth year of his age, the impressions of the best things never wore off; in which he received great assistance from an elder sister of eminent piety. He had a natural love of learning, and inclination to the ministry; and was much employed at this time in reading the best practical books of religion, and promoting his spiritual edification.

HE was educated for the ministry, some time under the care of the pious and ingenious Mr. *John Reynolds* of *Shrewsbury*; but chiefly under the learned Mr. *Hill* of *Derbyshire*, of whom he always spoke with particular respect; and Mr. *Jones* of *Tewksbury*: and he finished his studies at *Findern*, under the worthy Dr. *Latham*, who succeeded Mr. *Hill*. He made a great improvement in all the usual parts of *rational* learning, and was critically skilful in the *Greek* tongue, in which both his tutors were eminent. But he especially applied himself to the study of *divinity*, as more agreeable to the temper of his mind, and design of his life.

* The Rev. Mr. *Broadhurst*, of *Birmingham* in *Warwickshire*, Mr. *Harvey's* native Town.

life. His inclinations to the *ministry* were too strong to be diverted by any worldly views, but grew up with him from his infancy. When his tender and prudent father feared lest his stature should render him despicable, and be an obstruction to his acceptance and usefulness in the world; he declared to a friend as his deliberate sense, “ That he was willing of any pains, or any reproach for term of life, if he might be the instrument of saving one soul:” Such was his high sense of the worth of souls, such his ardent zeal for God so early in life! And God granted the thing he desired, without the difficulty he was willing to undergo for the sake of it. Here he used to have set meetings with a select number of fellow pupils designed for the ministry, at their several chambers, for solemn prayer to God for a blessing upon their studies: a custom which he afterwards proposed to some younger ministers of his particular acquaintance in this city. He spent many hours, and sometimes parts of a day in prayer; not from a superstitious fear, or as an imposed task, but for the kindly breathings of his soul to God, and as a way of delightful communion with him.

His *natural capacities* were excellent. He had a sound judgment, a quick apprehension, a tenacious memory; as he read much, he retained what he read, and would give a surprising account of the sermons he heard, when his retired and close attention made him sometimes thought to be absent. He had

had a great justness and compass in his thoughts; a natural ease and propriety of expression, and a great mixture of gravity and liveliness, when he was engaged in any service, in his countenance, and in his speech.

As to his moral and *Christian* character, he was a man of thorough *sincerity*, of clear and open integrity of heart; an *Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile*. He was a stranger to artifice and deceit, and greatly disliked any appearance of them in others. There was an uncommon degree of genuine unaffected piety, and a deep and habitual sense of God visible upon his mind. He was of great diligence and application to his work: it was his constant delight and joy. He was very conscientious in his words and actions, perfectly inoffensive in his behaviour to others; and hated detraction, or taking unrighteous liberties with other mens characters and conduct: I remember not to have ever heard him *speak evil of any man*, in all my acquaintance with him. He delighted in religious conversation, and seldom cared to bear a part in any other, tho' he would be sometimes chearful too. Here he shone, and appeared with great advantage, and was most free and communicative. He had a great opinion of the good which might be done by it, when it turned upon useful and important subjects, and was managed with discretion, and with a serious design. Perhaps he was led to this by the remarkable instance which he told an intimate friend; That when he was a school-boy,

boy, his conversation about religion had been the means of the conversion of one who is now in the ministry ; which account, he said, he received some years after from the person himself. He was always inquisitive after truth, and zealous in what he thought important, especially in what related to vital and practical religion ; and greatly lamented the visible decays of it among Christians of all sorts in the present age. It appears now, that he kept a *diary*, for more than sixteen years together, of the state of his soul, and remarkable providences of God ; in which are many wise and judicious remarks, and the most devout reflections and ejaculations, bewailing the disorders of his mind, imploring divine aids, and adoring the divine mercy, &c. A worthy minister of his intimate acquaintance, and who knew him from his youth, declares, “ That in the latter part of his life, he considered him as a Christian fully grown, and arrived to the most advanced steps of the divine life, which are found among men on earth.”

As to his *ministerial* character, he was greatly furnished, beyond his years, and above the common rate. His discourses were always upon the most weighty and serious subjects ; composed with great judgment, and disposed in the best order, delivered with a manly decency, and a becoming warmth and zeal ; which engaged attention, and gave delight, and acquired him the great esteem of the serious and judicious, in all the congregations in
city

city and country wherever he came. He did not affect a vain ostentation of learning or wit, but chose to appear *serious* and concerned, as one who was in good earnest himself, and intent upon doing good to the souls of men. He had great apprehensions of the *mediation* of Christ, and the standing *influences* of the divine Spirit, as the grand peculiarities of the Christian dispensation; and feared that the want of due regard to them, was one great reason of the languishing state of the Christian interest among us, and the frequent revolts from it.

WHEN he first settled in this place, and engaged in constant work, he thought it proper to study over the *church controversy*, and not rest in the first impressions of education. He read the *London cases*, and other principal books, on both sides, with close application and impartiality; and settled at length, upon a deliberate judgment, in the principles of *moderate nonconformity*; which, he thought, stood upon the great principle of the Reformation, *viz.* “The perfection of the scripture rule, and the only authority of Christ in the Christian church; and the unalienable right of every man to judge for himself, according to the best light and advantages afforded him.” He stood firm upon a broad bottom; and satisfied himself to be faithful to his light, without censure, or uncharitableness to others; and thought he had the advantage of the narrow-spirited on all sides, that he could worship God in the way

he preferred, and at the same time own and receive fellow Christians of other communions, and was not confined by any principle, or prejudice of mind, within any little circle, or distinguishing denomination; or obliged to refuse actual communion, upon any proper occasions, with those who have all the essentials of the gospel religion, and whom Christ will own at last. He was truly a *primitive Catholick*, who loved and owned all sincere Christians; and was of no one party exclusive of all the rest. He was just reading over the Christian writers of the three first centuries, when his sickness seized him.

HE had great anxiety and sollicitude about his choice at *Sudbury*, for some time together; and was desirous to know the will of God, by carefully weighing the circumstances of things; and determined to follow it, whoever should be of another opinion from him. His friends generally apprehended him fit for this city, where there is the greatest extent of service, and the great resource of all reliefs to the country; and that the work there would be too great for his strength. Their uncommon value and affection to him, and the apprehensions he entertained of greater usefulness in a pastoral relation, among a considerable number of very serious people; determined his acceptance. When he was admonished by an elder minister, of the weakness of his constitution, he said, He was willing to venture his life in the service of God, wherever he should call him; that it was a
good

good work, and he served a good Master, and he was not solicitous about the event. He told me, then in confidence, and with his usual modesty and humility; That he had spent a whole day in the exercises of prayer and devotion, for the divine direction and blessing upon his ministry; and next morning received the first motion of going to *Sudbury*. But they are bereaved, as well as the church of God, of his further labours; as *Paul and Silas essayed to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit* Acts xvi. 7. *suffered them not.* The little earthen vessel which contained so great a treasure, is broken, and we have returned it to the dust from whence it was taken: God has determined the matter, and prevented all our fears, as well as all our hopes, concerning him.

I MUST bear this testimony to his memory from the most intimate acquaintance, and I know I have the concurrence of my brethren, who best knew him; That I never knew any young minister of so serious a spirit, and so earnestly set for doing good. He was indeed ripe for service, and ripe for heaven betimes. I can truly say, That I never heard him without pleasure, and often with admiration: Tho' I desire to be thankful to the *Father of lights*, for the excellent furniture, and serious spirits, and promising hopes, of many of the younger Ministers.

His sickness was a slow fever, which proved fatal, thro' the weakness of his constitution, before it was apprehended dangerous. He ventured out while the feverish disorder

hung upon him, and much exhausted his spirits in a conversation with some younger persons, who greatly valued his ministry, to enlarge their minds to generous and worthy conceptions of the divine Being. When his books were packed up for his removal, he said to a friend, at the beginning of his sickness; "Perhaps I have a longer journey to go than to *Sudbury*:" and so it proved; for he died within one, on the same day he designed his journey thither. The slow advance of his distemper at first, which gave no apprehensions to those about him; and the sudden turn of it afterwards, prevented any expressions of his mind about his death; which I doubt not would have been of a piece with the rest of his life, and a fit close of it: greatly to the edification of those about him. He was often heard to pray the last night, and sometimes in *Latin*; I suppose for the greater freedom of his thoughts, and that he might not be understood by those who attended him.

HE designed to have taken a solemn leave of this congregation, for whom he always expressed a sincere value, in a *farewell sermon*; as we had solemnly resigned him up, and committed him to the divine blessing, the last sacrament day at the Lord's table; for which he expressed the most affectionate gratitude. He had begun his sermon on 2 *Cor.* xiii. 14. The Apostolical benediction; which he designed to publish to the world, and leave as a publick mark of his respect to you, and a help to the understanding of one of the most weighty

weighty and comprehensive expressions, most used in all the Christian churches, and perhaps one of the least considered, of any in the New Testament.

THIS was the Christian, this the Minister, whose conversation and labours we enjoyed for almost seven years. I doubt not many found that benefit by his ministry, which will never be forgot; I am sure we have all a great account to give of the improvement of it. And God grant that our *profiting* by the sickness and death, as well as by the life and labours of his faithful servants, may *appear to all men*; and that we may *give our account* of them at last, with *joy and not with grief*.



AN EPITAPH

TO THE PIOUS MEMORY OF

MR. SAMUEL HARVEY.

HERE lie the Ruins of a lowly Tent,
 Where the seraphick Soul of Harvey spent
 Its mortal Years. How did his Genius shine,
 Like Heaven's bright Envoy clad in Powers divine!
 When from his Lips the Grace, or Vengeance broke,
 'Twas Majesty in Arms, 'twas melting Mercy spoke.
 What Worlds of Worth lay crouded in that breast!
 Too strait the Mansion for th' illustrious Guest.
 Zeal, like a Flame shot from the Realms of Day,
 Sec p. 83. Aids the slow Fever to consume the Clay,
 And bears the Saint up thro' the starry Road
 Triumphant: So Elijah went to God.
 What happy Prophet shall his Mantle find,
 Heir to the double Portion of his Mind?

Sic Musâ jam veterascente inter justissimos
 Amicorum & Ecclesiæ fletus
 Harvæo suo parentat

I. WATTS.

S E R.



S E R M O N III.

Consolations in the death of *wicked relations.*

2 SAMUEL xviii. 33.

And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom; would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son.

Absalom was David's third son, while he ^{1 Chron.} reigned in Hebron, by Maachab the ^{iii. 3.} daughter of Talmi, the king of Geshur. He was a beautiful and lovely person, of a graceful countenance, and well proportioned; *In all Israel there was none so much praised as* ^{2 Sam. xiv. 25.} Absalom for beauty, from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head there was no blemish in him. He was exceedingly beloved, and a great favourite of his father. 'Tis said the soul of

G 4 king

2 Sam.
xiii. 59
xiv. 1.

king David longed to go forth unto Absolom, and the king's heart was towards him. He had a strange fondness and partiality toward him, even when he was under his displeasure. He had been all along very disorderly and unruly, perhaps very much thro' his father's fondness and indulgence; for he craftily slew his eldest brother *Ammon*, for which he was banished three years from *Jerusalem* to *Geshur*, and he set *Joab's field of barley-corn on fire*, because he cautiously refused to come to him. When he was, by *Joab's* interposition, restored to his father's favour, he soon insinuated himself into the people's favour, by great civilities and many popular arts: *He stood in the way of the gate, and when any controversy arose, he said, there is none deputed of the king to hear thee.*

30.

xv. begin.

O that I were made a judge in the land, that any man who hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice. And when any came nigh to do obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. Thus by much fair speaking he beguiled the hearts of the simple.

10.

11.

12.

UPON a deceitful pretence of performing a vow at *Hebron*, He sent spies thro' all the tribes of *Israel*, and many went in their simplicity, and knew not any thing; and the conspiracy was strong, and the people increased continually with *Absolom*. He proclaimed himself king, and set himself at the head of a formidable rebellion against his rightful sovereign and indulgent father, in the decline of life. This created great disorder and distress, for all the country wept with

23.

with a loud voice; and all the people who were ^{2 Sam. xv. 30.} with David covered their heads and went up weeping. And if Achitophel's wife counsel had not been defeated by the advice of Hushab, David's friend, he had bid fair to have dethroned his father, and destroyed his life. ^{xvii. beg.} But it proved otherwise by the appointment of providence, and the formidable army was routed in the wood of Ephraim, and in the flight, Absolom's head caught hold of the thick boughs of a great oak, and the mule which was under him, went away. Joab, contrary to David's express charge to the generals and captains, in the hearing of all the people, to deal gently for his sake, with the young man Absolom, ^{9.} struck him thro' the body with a dart. Upon the tidings of his death by Cushai, Joab's messenger to the king, he breaks out into this passionate exclamation, O my son Absolom, my son, my son Absolom, would God I had died for thee, O Absolom, my son, my son; and he wept, ^{14.} and mourned, and was grieved. This was a strange instance of unreasonable fondness for a rebellious son, and very improper and impolitic in this juncture of affairs; and therefore Joab told him, upon his return from his victory, with great freedom indeed, but just resentment, *Thou hast shamed this day the faces of thy servants, who have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons; thou lovest thy enemies, and hatest thy friends; for thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants; for this day I perceive, if Absolom had lived,* ^{6.}

lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well.

THE use I design to make of this relation, is only to consider the case of the death of *wicked relations*, and what *comfort* and support may be afforded in it. This indeed is the severest tryal of the kind, which most needs comfort, and admits the least of any other. When a good man loses a wicked relation or friend, concerning whom he has little ground of hope, and great reason of fear; who is probably lost and undone for ever, as well as lost out of this world; it must needs raise many melancholly reflections, and set very heavy and uneasy upon his mind. I shall point out the method of procedure, and the principles, in nature and scripture, from whence the proper relief must be drawn. To begin with the lowest,

§ 1. WE must consider whether we have sufficient reason to conclude them *wicked*, and that they lived and died under reigning guilt and final impenitence. For if we should mistake the matter, we wrong the memory of the dead, and displease our selves without a cause. This may require some niceness of consideration, and admits a latitude of construction; for tho' we must judge *uprightly*, and by the best appearance of things, yet we must judge *charitably* of others, and in the most favourable sense. We must be careful of forming rash and peremptory judgments of the final state of others, tho' we must be severe in judging of our own, as we best know our selves; lest we should be found to damn those whom God has saved,

saved, and think them miserable who are among the blessed; which would be a very injurious and unworthy thought, tho' it should proceed not from prejudice and ill-will, but only from ignorance and mistake of the case.

Now then let us suppose that our departed relation or friend *had* been a wicked person, and lived in ignorance of God, and neglect of duty; or run into sinful excesses, and open and notorious crimes; perhaps they were long deaf to the calls of God, and the admonition and counsels of their friends, and proved long irreclaimable by all the methods of mercy, and were a *grief of heart to their* godly friends, and caused *great thoughts of heart* about them; yet we are to consider, if there were no marks and evidence of true repentance, and change of heart. Were they never brought to a kindly sense of sin, and deep humiliation of soul; to a *godly sorrow which worketh repentance*, and to a hearty surrender and subjection to God thro' the mediator, to quit the love of sin, and take God for their Lord and portion? Were there no observable intervals, no appearance of serious self-reflection; no secret retirements for solemn devotions; no alteration in the frame and habit of their minds, and their course and life, some time before their death? *Manasseh* after great impiety, idolatry, and cruelty, *bumbled himself greatly before God, and prayed unto him, and he was entreated, and heard his supplication.* 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12. And the famous *Earl of Rochester* was thought a great instance, in later times, of a sincere repentance,

penitance, after a long course of licentious wickedness.

OR, at least, what were the appearances of things upon a *dying* bed, and in the *last* sickness? I know this is often fallacious and deceitful, and carries at best, but a weak and uncertain evidence of sincerity, either to the sinner's soul, or to those about him. 'Tis easy to mistake, and 'tis very rarely real, after a long course and strong habits of sin. Nevertheless I think, it cannot warrantably be concluded, that 'tis never sincere, or will not be accepted where it is. If the heart be thoroughly changed, and the bent of the soul set right, if it is broken off from the dominion of sin, and rightly disposed towards God, and it would appear in proper fruits, and discover itself, if further time were allowed; which the great God only knows, but we cannot: I see no reason to think that it will not be construed favourably, and be graciously accepted, tho' that can be no pretence for an uncertain and hazardous delay. Sickness and death, as well as other afflictions, may sometimes work kindly, and be effectual; especially a long lingering sickness, which gives the greater opportunity for it. Why, if there is any *probable* ground of a real change, tho' not a *certain* one; if it appear with some degree of *likelihood*, that they were brought home to God, tho' in the latter part of life, and in the close of their days; there will be a proportionable ground of hope, and degree of comfort, and we must be content with such measures of them as the case will admit,

admit, and be glad of any relief and allay, under the fear and trouble of our minds.

§ 2. If they were unquestionably wicked, and we can have no reason to doubt it, we are next to consider, whether we were *faulty* and wanting in our care and endeavour for their good. This makes a great difference in the case, and ought in reason to affect us differently. For now suppose that we have *not* been wanting to them, in some good and reasonable measure: Let me ask you here to this purpose, Have you made conscience of faithful endeavours, often prayed for them, and represented their case to God, perhaps never gone to your knees in a more solemn retirement without an hearty and affectionate remembrance of them; have you often warned them, by all the authority you had over them, of their danger, from time to time; represented to them the greatness and aggravation of their guilt, the natural tendency and certain consequence of a course of sin? Have you put good books into their hands, suitable to their case, and recommended the daily study of the bible, and brought them under the ordinary means of grace? Have you often beseeched them with bowels of kindness, to consider and bethink themselves, shewed them their obligations and engagements to God, and the grounds of encouragement and hope? In short, have you taken all the proper steps in order to their recovery, which a sense of duty did oblige, or an hearty affection and concern could direct and prompt you to? Why, in
this

Acts xx.
26.

this case we may be comforted that we did our best to promote their good; that they did not perish through our neglect. It was not our fault, who did every thing in our power to prevent it. They *destroyed themselves*, and *sin lies at their own door*, and *their blood will not be required at our hands*. We may say with the Apostle, *I am pure from the blood of all men*. And 'tis a great comfort in this sad case to stand clear of any *guilt*, and be free from any just charge from others, and the reproach of our own minds. I might add, That there are *degrees* of wickedness, as well as of goodness, and circumstances of *greater* and *lesser* aggravation, where the general character is the same, and which will always make a *proportionable difference* in the degrees of their misery, and the reasons of our sorrow for them.

BUT if on the other hand, we have been *wanting* to them, and sinfully negligent and defective in our duty toward them, as parents and ministers, or relations and friends, according to the measure of our authority and influence over them, and the opportunities and advantages put into our hands; if we did not frequently and seriously pray for them, and *travail in birth* for their souls, and did not heartily and zealously endeavour their reformation and amendment; if we seldom or coldly told them of their sin, and were only mild and gentle in our reproofs of the greatest miscarriages, as

1 Sam. ii.
23, 24.

Eli told his sons, Why do ye such things, for I bear of your evil dealings before all the people: Nay my sons, for 'tis no good report which I bear;

ye make the Lord's people to transgress. And his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not, or did not frown upon them, for which he was severely rebuked by God; if we have not used proper means, or been faithful in our endeavours, they will *perish in their iniquity*, but *their blood may be required at our hands*.

THIS I confess is a very sad and sorrowful state of the case, and calls for great humiliation and repentance. We should heartily bewail it before God, with deep contrition and the most afflicting grief. Their death should awaken a serious concern, and bring our sin to remembrance, and set it home with greater weight. How sad is the reflection, if we have reason to fear, that we have lost a child, or relation who was dear to us, and part of our care and charge, and that he is lost for ever, perhaps very much thro' our fault? This must needs sit heavy upon the mind, and be very grievous and distressing. In this case we must take the comfort of *repentance*, when we cannot of our faithful endeavours; and that is the only comfort the wretched case admits. We must make our peace with an offended God through Christ, and seek the mercy of forgiveness in the new covenant. And though 'tis a great and highly aggravated guilt to neglect our part towards the welfare and salvation of others, and a just reason of humble shame and sorrow all our days, and should quicken our care of those who remain; yet, blessed be God, there is *forgiveness with him*,
that

that he may be feared, and we may obtain the pardon of this sin, as well as any other, in the way the gospel prescribes. And there is no other comfort to be derived, in this circumstance of things, but from the sense of pardon, and the hopes of acceptance with God.

§ 3. WE must consider in the next place, our own *covenant state* and relation to God. If we can derive no comfort from the consideration of the state of our departed *friends*, let us consider what is our *own* state and condition with reference to God. Are we in a good state, and upon good terms with God: Can we make out our covenant interest and relation? The covenant is proposed in the gospel in this form; *I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord almighty.* And again, *This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel, in those days, saith the Lord, I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.* There is a clear discovery of God's gracious will in the Gospel, and a free offer and tender made. If we are brought to an hearty effectual consent, and actual surrender of our selves to God through the mediator, upon full conviction, and fixed purpose of heart, and without any exception or reserve; if we have *joined our selves unto the Lord in an everlasting covenant, and yielded our selves to God, and presented our selves a living sacrifice to him,* we are in a covenant state, and have a right to all covenant blessings: Then *all the promises of God are in Christ to us*
yea

2 Cor. vi.
18.

Heb. viii.
10.

yea and amen; and we are entitled to the exceeding great and precious promises of the pardon of sin, the divine favour, the gift of the spirit, and eternal life. 'Tis the highest privilege and mercy in this world to stand thus related to God, and capable of yielding the strongest consolation in the worst circumstance, and greatest affliction of life. To be able to say, The infinite all-sufficient Jehovah is ours in covenant: This God is our God. He is a sure and faithful friend, whoever deceives or forsakes us: The *Lord lives*, whosoever dies: Our chief good, and proper portion, is most secure, and does not lie at the mercy of accidents, nor is fading and uncertain, as all our lower comforts and creature-enjoyments are.

THIS was the great comfort of holy *David* in the present case. There was a great concurrence of aggravations: He had lost his eldest son *Amon* by *Absolom's* treachery: His child by *Bathsheba* was stricken with sickness, of which it died: He had been just bewailing the untimely death of his beloved *Absolom*, who was cut off in an unnatural rebellion against his father and sovereign; and he was greatly affected with it; *he was much moved and wept.* ^{2 Sam. xii.} God had broken him *with breach upon breach:* ^{22, 23.} He took away one child in its infancy, and in displeasure for sin; and another by the hand of violence in open wickedness. Now in this very afflicted and distressed circumstance we find the good man comforts himself with the consideration of God's covenant; *Although my* ^{2 Sam. xxiii. 5.}
H
house

house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, order'd in all things, and sure—tho' he make it not to grow. If this was the covenant made with *David* personally concerning the continuance of his family, and that there should not want one of his seed to sit upon his throne, and which he acknowledgés as a great favour from God; then he comforts himself with the consideration that *Adonijah* and *Solomon* were yet alive to succeed him in the kingdom; and God's faithfulness to his promise made personally to *David*, was the great encouragement and support, in the loss of his other children. But surely the covenant which was confirmed before of God in Christ, to *Abraham*, and to all true believers, his spiritual seed, and which was not only before *David's* time, but four hundred and thirty years before the giving the law, was a much greater reason of comfort in such a case, than any special promise of family-blessings; and I cannot doubt but he had at least an ultimate regard to it, as it was ultimately designed in that promise; for God had promised to raise an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant *David*. And the Apostle says, That God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit upon his throne; and this is called the sure mercies of *David*. It plainly points to the reign of the Messiah, the son of *David*, and the blessings of the gospel-state; or, in the words of the prophet, to the raising to *David* a righteous branch, who should

2 Sam. vii.
12, 19.

Luke i.
69.

Acts ii.
30.

If. lv. 3.

Jer. xxiii.
5.

reign and prosper, and whose name should be called the Lord our righteousness.

GOD may make breaches in our families, and pluck the finest flower we possess, remove a favourite and beloved relation; they may be snatched away by violence, or *die in their sins*; yet there is this consolation remaining to good men, that God's *covenant* with them *is well ordered and sure*; 'tis wise and faithful; and *this is all their salvation and all their desire*; their greatest hope of salvation and the utmost of their wishes. They stand related to God, and have a sure title to the heavenly inheritance, though some of theirs miscarry and *come short of the glory of God*. We must not overlook our own interest in God, and the grounds of our own hope, when we cannot have the comfort of others interest in him, or any ground of hope concerning them.

§ 4. 'Tis of comfortable consideration in this case too, That many of our relations and friends, we may hope *are happy, and with the Lord*. Tho' some of our friends are lost and have miscarried, yet there are others of whose happiness we cannot reasonably doubt. We may possibly be able to recollect several of our intimate acquaintance, whom we loved and conversed with in this World, who have got the start of us, and arrived to blessedness before us. They have weathered the storms of this world, and safely arrived to their desired haven. They have conquered and overcome, and are now triumphing and rejoicing; and have past the state of trial, and entered

upon a state of reward. When we speak of such and such a departed friend, we may say of them in the language of the antient *Greeks* *ὁ ἐν μακαρίτοις*, He is one among the blessed, one of the happy in the other world. Perhaps we are able to say, tho' such a one left no hope of his future welfare and everlasting blessedness, or we were greatly in the dark about his state; yet blessed be God, there are several others of whom we have great *confidence of hope*, that they are gone to the everlasting rest. I have a good father or mother now with God; such a friend or relation *walked with God and pleased God, and is not, for God took him*. They lived holy and useful lives, and made a comfortable end. They, I doubt not, are *with Christ*, and do *now inherit the promise*.

WE must turn our eyes from the dark and melancholly side, to the brighter side of the case. We must not confine our views to one point, and be always poring only on the afflicted circumstance of things; but must enlarge our views, and raise our minds to heaven. Consider what there is to balance the account, and place in the other scale. Let us entertain our thoughts with the more pleasing consideration of our happy friends in the other world, and refresh and delight our souls by often thinking of their high advancement, and unspeakable joy. Perhaps we can set down and reckon up several of them in the different stages of life, and places of abode, in the families, and churches to which we belonged, and in the neighbourhoods and vicinity where we
 have

have lived, and are able to say, such and such a one does now *behold the face* of God, with whom I was used familiarly to converse: They were *lovely and pleasant in their lives*, and tho' *divided* from us by death, they are gone to ^{2 Sam. i. 23.} the *general assembly, and church of the first-born above*: They are *absent from the body*, but *present with the Lord*. Earth is now less desirable than ever, and the other world more desirable, for their absence here, and presence there. Every one of them adds to the glory and pleasure of the place, and renders the thought of it more delightful, and is a stronger attractive of love and desire. Tho' God himself is the true centre of rest, and spring of happiness to the immortal spirit, yet 'tis certainly a reasonable comfort to good men to think over the present happiness of departed friends, and a proper lenitive under the disconsolate thought of the loss and ruin of others. The Apostle put the christians upon *remembering* their dead ^{Heb. xiii. 7.} friends for their comfort and imitation.

§ 5. CONSIDER further the *purpose* of God does stand, and his will is done however: God is the sovereign of the world, and is not obliged to give an *account of his matters* to his creatures; and may justly say, *shall I not do what I will with my own?* We are more his than we are our own, or than any thing we possess is ours. He has an higher right to the nearest relation and the dearest enjoyment of life, than any creature can have to it; for his right is original, independent, and supreme, ours only secondary, derived and subordinate; only

by his favour, and at his pleasure. We hold all we have by no greater a title than courtesy.

Dan. iv. 35. *His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation, and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; he doth his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him what dost thou?* So the Apostle says, *Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will: And, Who hath resisted his will?* The great God has an undoubted right to remove what he has given, and we hold only at pleasure.

Eph. i. 11.

Now the will of God is done in the death of wicked relations. His will takes place in whatsoever season, and circumstance it was. For tho' it is not the primary and proper will of God, or what is pleasing and acceptable to him, that any die *in their sins*; yet 'tis the will of his *purpose*, that they should die at such a time. It was his pleasure to remove and take them away, who had long borne with their neglects and disobedience: He has a right to set what limits he pleases to the exercise of his patience and mercy; and if they have not made their peace with God, and improved the means of grace, in the course of many years, he is no ways obliged to a longer continuance of life, or to indulge the further exercise of mercy towards them. The will of God is righteous and just in cutting them off, and calling them to an account. We find accordingly that good men have always resolved the matter into the divine will, and derived support

port and satisfaction from thence. When *Aaron's* sons were cut off by an immediate and extraordinary hand of vengeance, when they offered strange fire before the Lord which he commanded them not, and there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord; 'tis said, *And Aaron held his peace: He silently adored the divine judgment, and submitted to the divine will. When God foretold the terrible destruction upon those leud young priests Hophni and Phineas, the sons of Eli, notwithstanding their sacred office, and near relation to God, that he would do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one who beareth, should tingle, and judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knew, and restrained not; and that it should not be purged by sacrifice; he said, 'Tis the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good. He supported himself under this terrible denuntiation of divine displeasure, against his sons and his house, with the consideration of the divine sovereignty, and his absolute right to do his will.*

WHEN *David* was driven from *Jerusalem* by *Absolom's* conspiracy, he expresses an humble submission to the divine pleasure, in what was dearest to him in the world, the bringing him back to *Jerusalem*, and to the ark of the Lord; *If I find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation: But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him.* Holy *Job* satisfied himself with this consideration, in the disastrous death

of all his children, as well as the loss of his worldly substance, *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away, and blessed be the name of the Lord.* When the disciples besought the Apostle *Paul* not to go to *Jerusalem*, where he was to be bound, 'tis said, *When he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, the will of the Lord be done.* I might add the example of our Lord, when he foretold the treachery and ruin of *Judas*, one of his own family, who *hanged* himself and *went to his own place*, and justified his Lord's innocence, by doing justice to himself; *Those whom thou hast given me, I have kept; and none of them is lost but the son of perdition.*

Job i. 21.

Acts xxi. 14.

John xvii. 10.

THIS is a just reason for silent submission under the most grievous dispensations, and the last resort of a burdened oppressed soul. We must awe our minds with a reverence of God, and acquiesce in the divine disposal. The will of God is done in this matter: 'Tis now a decided case, and which nothing in all the world can alter. All uneasiness and dissatisfaction of mind, and murmuring and complaint, is opposition to the divine will and rebellion against the sovereign of the world; and that will always be the greatest uneasiness, as 'tis the most unnatural state of the mind. But an humble and quiet submission to the divine will, is infinitely reasonable and becoming, the most creature-like, and suitable to our dependent state: And it carries a secret satisfaction along with it, and yields the truest comfort and support. No-
thing

thing can create so great a composure and ease of mind, as nothing is more honourable to God, than to be willing to be governed by the divine will, in what is cross to nature, and difficult to be borne, and to be able to say after the example of our suffering Lord, tho' nature reluctate and recoil, *nevertheless not my will, but thy will be done.*

§ 6. IT will be for *the glory* of God at last. This is the last and highest end of all things both to God, and to the creatures. The glory of God in the display of his perfections, is the highest end to the great God: He is his own end, because there is nothing higher or greater to be an end to him; as the Apostle says, *He* Heb. vi. *swore by himself, because he could swear by no* ^{13.} *greater. He made all things for himself, and* Prov. xvi. *the wicked for the day of wrath; and for his* ^{4.} *pleasure they are, and were created; and of him* Rom. viii. *and thro' him, and to him, are all things; to* ^{36.} *him be glory: i. e. for the exercise and display of his sovereignty and dominion, and of all his moral perfections. And 'tis infinitely reasonable that what is the highest end to God, should be so to his creature, and what he is to propose to himself in every thing. Whether we* 1 Cor. x. *eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do* ^{31.} *all to the glory of God; and endeavour that God in all things may be glorified by us thro' Jesus* 1 Pet. iv. *Christ. This is the center of all our desires,* ^{11.} *and the aim to which they must be directed, and where they must meet at last.*

Now if it shall appear that this is for the glory of God, and will be a means to promote it,

it, it ought to carry great weight with it, and weigh down every other consideration. To understand this we must consider, that God has declared his gracious will concerning sinners salvation, with the greatest solemnity, and assurance of sincerity; *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but that he turn and live.* He invites every one to come, *and him who cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out; he will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth;* and is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He proclaims his gracious nature and good will to men, and provides sufficient means for their recovery in the gospel. He sent his son into the world, and established a new covenant in his blood, appointed the proper means of grace, and orders his providential dispensations, with a direct tendency and design of their good; and exercises much patience and long-suffering towards them. Upon these accounts we find that sinners destruction is every where imputed to themselves, and charged upon their own neglect and refusal.

Prov. i. 24. *Why will ye die? O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself: you would none of me: I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded—you would none of*

Joh. v. 40. *my reproof.* Our Lord says, *Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life.* Many who were invited to the gospel-feast, *made light of it.* Men refuse him who speaketh to them from heaven, and neglect the great salvation. And what can all this amount to, in the most obvious construction, less than this, that they perish thro' their

their

their own fault, and notwithstanding the means of their recovery?

Now the final destruction of impenitent sinners will turn to the glory of the divine holiness and justice, and of the redeemer's vengeance and wrath. God will be honoured in the ruin of his enemies, and the destruction of obstinate irreclaimable rebels, though his mercy will not be glorified in their salvation: he will appear with the majesty of a righteous judge when he shall say, *As for those my enemies who would not* Luke xix. *that I should reign over them, bring them forth* ^{27.} *and slay them before me.* The Apostle says, *The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with* ¹ Theff. i. *his mighty angels in flames of fire, taking ven-* ^{7.} *geance on them who know not God, and obey not the gospel, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in them who believe.* His more direct and eminent glory will be in the admiration of believing saints, but it will be a secondary glory which will arise from the vengeance and destruction of the ignorant and disobedient world; for they will be destroyed when he comes to be glorified; and this is all the glory he can have by them, or which the case admits. So the Apostle speaks again; *What if God willing to shew his wrath,* Rom. ix. *and make his power known, endured with much* ^{22.} *long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory, on the vessels of mercy which he had before prepared unto glory.* He will shew his
wrath,

wrath, and make his power known, towards the vessels of wrath, fitted; not by any positive decree which should make it necessary, for he endured them with much long-suffering, in order to their recovery; but by their own wickedness, for future destruction, as he will the riches of his grace to the vessels of mercy prepared for glory.

WHAT reason is there to be satisfied with what tends to the glory of God, how much soever it may be the matter of private resentment, and personal grief to us? If we should prefer *Jerusalem*, or the interest of God in the world, to our chief joy, should we not much more rejoice in the glory of God, in our greatest sorrows? The consideration of the divine glory should have greater weight with us, than the welfare of any particular person; the reason is, that the honour of the divine perfections is a greater good in it self, and more to be valued and regarded by us, than the welfare of the whole creation; and the salvation of men is chiefly valuable upon this account, that 'tis the greatest display and advancement of the divine glory. With what force should it come upon our minds, that the destruction of the wicked will consist with the honour of divine mercy, and be a glorious exercise of all his other perfections? Yea, the salvation of finally impenitent and disobedient sinners, would not stand with the honour of God, but be a blemish to the glory of all his perfections, and his righteous government of the world. And shall the great God wrong himself, and injure his own honour,

honour, to gratify me? shall he spare a wilful sinner, only to please me, and cross the settled course of his dispensations, and violate the eternal laws of righteousness and truth, in meer complaisance to his creatures, and to humour their unreasonable desires? Is that fit for him to do, or reasonable for us to expect? I only add,

7. 'Tis considerable in this case too, that good men will *acquiesce* in the righteous judgment of God, and concur in the sentence which will pass upon them. Let us consider, how grievous soever it is to us now, what will be our judgment of the case then, and what reason we shall have for it. Every good man will approve the sentence of the last day, and reverence and adore the divine holiness and justice, which will be displayed in it, and be everlastingly glorified; for he will *judge the world in righteousness*, and without *respect of persons*; with impartial justice according to the *equity* of the gospel, and the true *state* of every man. It will appear to them reasonable and necessary, and the strong conviction of mind, will gain a full consent: they will heartily join in the heaviest sentence upon the nearest relation and dearest friend in the world.

So the Apostle teaches us to conceive of the matter: *Do you not know that the saints shall* 1 Cor. vi. *judge the world?* i.e. the wicked world. The righteous will be first judged themselves, as they will be first raised, and then sit in judgment with, and become assessors with him. *This honour have all his saints*, to sit in judgment with
Christ

Christ the judge upon the wicked world. And will not they concur in the righteous sentence he will pass upon them, and approve so great a display of the glory of his perfections? Tho' the darkness and weakness of our minds at present, and foolish tenderness towards them now, make us blind to their faults, and partial in our regards to them, yet in that clear and enlightened state, and perfect rectitude of soul, a superiour regard to God above all, will strongly dispose them to despise every interest inconsistent with his glory, and make them easy and pleased, in his wise and righteous, tho' never so severe and terrible, determination, wherever it lights and falls. All fond regards arising from natural instinct, present relation, and partial considerations, will cease; and every soul will be filled with the love of God, who will be *all in all*, and swallowed up in a constant regard to the divine will. And why should we differ so much from *our selves*, and be inordinately grieved for that at present, which we shall see reason to be fully satisfied, and well pleased with hereafter?

'Tis an instance of *christian heroism* in a good woman, who is reported to have said, to a beloved but incorrigible son, whom she had often admonished and reprov'd, and prayed and mourned over in vain; "Well, God will be glorified in thy eternal ruin; and since all endeavours and hopes are disappointed, I resign thee up to the righteous judgment of God, and shall rejoice in the sentence of condemnation at last." And 'tis said to have been with a good effect. To

To conclude; Let us learn from the consideration of this case to *cease from man*, and be less fond of present relations, especially from external considerations, since their wickedness and miscarriage is so very grievous: let us live more entirely upon God, who will never fail and disappoint us, and be better to us than our highest hopes: take the comfort of present mercies, under all your sorrows, especially of good relations and friends, who are left, and be more solicitous and careful for their welfare: and think more of the heavenly state where all will be well, and there will be no disappointment or sorrow for ever.





S E R M O N IV.

Consolations in the death of
infants.

M A T T. ii. 18.

In Ramah was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Chap.
xxvi. 15.

lii.

TH E S E words were originally spoken by the prophet *Jeremiah*, concerning the lamentations of the people of *Jerusalem*, at the several captivities prophesied of in another chapter, under the moving representation of a tender mother bewailing her dead children. The scene is laid in *Ramah* in the land of *Benjamin*, which is not far from *Jerusalem*, and in which part of it stood; and so *Rachel*, the mother of *Benjamin*, is fitly introduced upon this occasion, and made the chief mourner. But 'tis applied here by the Evangelist

Evangelist to another purpose; the destruction of the children of *Bethlehem*, which was near *Jerusalem* too, by the cruel jealousy of *Herod*, at the tidings of the birth of the *king of the Jews*, by the *wise men from the east*. This prophecy is said to be *fulfilled* in this event; not only accommodated to it, but the true sense of the prophecy, and which only had its literal and full accomplishment in it.

I shall consider the case of the death of *infants*, and the comforts which may be drawn from the scriptures to sorrowful parents upon that account. This is a case which very frequently happens, and to most persons at some time or other of their lives. And a tender case it commonly is, especially to the weaker sex: several circumstances often concur to render it grievous and compassionate; as where it is the child of our *youth*; the *hopes* of the family; an *only*, or a *lovely* child; endeared by little tenderesses of *affection*, and early buddings of *reason* and *wisdom*. And this is sometimes carried to great excess: indulgent *mothers* are apt to grieve, as they are to love, to degrees of inordinacy; and like *Rachel*, *mourn for their children because they are not, and refuse to be comforted*. The dear image is always before my eyes; methinks I see and hear it wherever I go: I can't put the thoughts of it out of my mind: but, O! the grief —

I shall propose the proper grounds of support, and method of relief, in this case.

§. 1. Consider the *sovereignty* and dominion of the great God. This is always funda-

mental in every instance of this general case, the superiour right of the great God, to our own right, and every other, in what is most our own, our persons and our lives. We our selves are more *his* than we are *our own*, and

Psal. c. 3. more entirely at his disposal: *We are his people, for he hath made us, and not we our selves.*

1 Cor. vi. 20. *And we are not our own, for we are bought with a price.* We are absolutely his upon the highest claims, of creation and redemption, as his *creatures*, and his *purchase*. So we often find that God challenges a propriety in the lives of his

Deut. xxxii. 39. *See now that I even I am he, and there is no God with me: I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal.* Yea, the prophet repre-

Ezek. xviii. 4. *sents his right in the souls of his creatures; Behold all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine.*

THIS must reasonably hold with greater strength, in the case of every enjoyment of life, as the nearest relation, and the best possession of this world. Holy *Job* acknowledges the sovereignty of the great God in the present case, and comforts himself with this consideration, when all his worldly substance was destroyed, and his whole family was cut off, by a hand of violence, and with all the circumstances of horror. The last message brought him was

Job i. 18. *this, Thy sons and daughters were eating and drinking, in their elder brother's house, and a mighty wind from the wilderness smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead. Upon this he rent his garments, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground,*
and

and worshipped; expressions and posture of reverence, as well as grief: he appeared as a worshipper as well as a mourner, upon this extraordinary affliction, and express his devotion and grief together, in this humble acknowledgment, *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, Job i. 21. and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord.* The consideration of the divine sovereignty or absolute right to all his creatures is a silencing thought, which ought to satisfy and support. He has taken away, who first gave them to us, and who retained the highest right to them all along. There is no ground of challenge and complaint, or any pretence of injury and wrong, in the wise and righteous sovereign of the world, in what lies most cross, and is most grievous to our minds. Hereupon,

2. CONSIDER the *righteousness* of the divine dispensation herein. Tho' God is an *absolute* sovereign, and has a right to do what he pleases with his own creature; yet he is a *wise* and *righteous* sovereign, who never acts with arbitrary will, or unreasonable pleasure. He is always bound by his own perfection, though not subject to any superiour; and can no more act *unreasonably*, than he can *unjustly*: 'tis as necessary that he act with wisdom, as with righteousness. Now 'tis the just sentence of the broken law, and the natural effect of our fallen state, that we become *mortal*. If man had never sinned, he had never died, but had been immortal. The original sentence, founded upon the greatest

reason, was immediately executed, in our subjection to death. *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* And 'tis the righteous appointment of heaven, for 'tis appointed to men *once to die*: they must die some time or other. This is founded in reason, and justice, and has been absolute and universal to the whole race, excepting only in two instances, by an extraordinary favour, and for special purposes. But now the season and circumstances of our death, the kind and manner of it, in what stage of life, or period of time; is a reserve of *wisdom*, and matter of pleasure, and lies in the breast of the sovereign disposer and lord of life.

UPON this foot 'tis easy to account for the righteousness of his conduct in the death of *infants*; for they are under the common sentence of death, and born mortal and subject to death: they are a part of the spoils and triumph of death in this world. The Apostle says, *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, in whom all have sinned*; which holds true of all men. He is thought by good interpreters to have some reference to the case of infants in that expression in a following verse; *Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*: i. e. either before any positive law was given which threatened death; for *until the law, sin was in the world*: or who had not sinned in their own persons, as *Adam* did, but only as descendants of sinful *Adam*, and the posterity of mortal creatures. And then God has done

done us no wrong, or acted an unrighteous thing, when he snatches a beloved child from the tender mother's embraces, or gathers a blooming flower, and nips it in the blossom; tho' it just opens as a flower to the heat of the sun, and shuts again at night, when the warm influences retire; or shrinks and withers by a cold frost, or blasting wind. 'Twas a noble saying of one of the antients, upon the tidings of his son's death, "I knew that I begat a mortal." *Novi me genuisse mortalem.*

3. CONSIDER that they are in *covenant* with God, and we have reason to believe well of their *future* state. It would be a melancholly thing if we had reason to think that they were lost, or perish, when they die out of this world, or we were altogether in the dark about their future state. And though 'tis true the scriptures don't speak much of the state of infants, because it does not so immediately concern us to know it; they are written for the adult, who are only capable of using them, and designed to instruct us in the great and important truths which relate to our present duty and future hopes; not to gratify a vain curiosity, or amuse us with unconcerning speculations: yet there are some principles laid down, and intimations given, which are sufficient to support such apprehensions, at least, as to the infants of good men.

INDEED some have thought that all infants dying baptized are certainly saved*. And a

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very

* It is certain by God's word, that children who are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved.
Rubrick after the office of baptism.

very learned and accurate person has lately contended for the salvation of all infants †, whether of christians or heathens; and that by the addition of the whole *infant world*, the number of the saved will be greater than that of the damned. But I doubt we cannot easily be certain of this, how desirable soever it may appear to be true, and that 'tis saying more than we have any sufficient ground in the scripture to support. Nor dare I venture to deny it neither, or say absolutely that it is not so: it may be so for ought I know, and 'tis certainly a very agreeable thought, if it could be made good. But I think we should not be *wise above what is written*, or pretend to greater *certainty* in the matter than we have sufficient means to come at.

BUT now with respect to the infant-seed of *good men*, the case seems more plain: for they are in covenant with God with their believing parents, and 'entitled to pardon and life upon that ground. This was the tenour of God's

Gen. xvii. *covenant with Abraham; I will establish a covenant between me, and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generation, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee.* And the token of the covenant was

—11, 12. *the circumcising the flesh of the foreskin, and that at eight days old.* This was a visible mark of distinction from others, and of separation and devotedness to God. The Apostle says,

Rom. iv. *that Abraham received the sign of circum-*

11. *cision, the seal of the righteousness of faith,*
which

† Professor Simpson of Glasgow, in his answer to Mr. Webster.

which he had being yet uncircumcised, that he might be the father of them who believe. It related to him as a believer, and the father of them who believe. And he testified to every man who is circumcised, that he is a *debtor to the whole law*. The gospel-covenant extends to adult persons who heartily consent to it, and to their infant-seed, till they come to be capable of acting for themselves, and consenting in their own persons. Thus when they brought to our Lord little children, that he should lay his hands on them and pray, and the disciples rebuked them, he said, *Suffer little children to come to me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven*: i. e. such belong to my kingdom, as well as those of such a temper, and that whether you understand it of the kingdom of his grace in this world, or the kingdom of glory in the other. They are infant *disciples* and *members* of Christ, as they are infant members of the families to which they relate. The Apostle tells the convinced Jews, *The promise is to you, and to your children*, as well as to all *afar off*, and as *many as the Lord our God shall call*. And he sets it upon the plan of God's covenant with *Abraham*, and makes it extend to all the spiritual seed, or true believers. *And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*; according to the tenour of God's covenant with *Abraham*, that he would be his God, and the God of his seed. They seem to be considered as *parts* of their parents, and one with them in a moral consideration, and to stand upon the same foot with them by virtue

of God's covenant with them ; and therefore the Apostle represents them as the *branches* of a tree, and says, *If the root is holy, so are the branches ;* and he says, *the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband ; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy ;* which I understand of *relative holiness*, or a covenant-relation to God.

Rom. xi.
16.

1 Cor. vii.
14.

THIS is a great consolation to a good man, that his departed child is accepted of God, and in covenant with him ; that he is owned as an adopted child of God, and entitled to the heavenly inheritance. They have reason to believe, that he is now with God, and received by the favour of men, and lover of little children. If he would not have them kept from him here, he will not reject them hereafter. If they belong to the kingdom of his grace, they shall not be excluded the kingdom of heaven. And it must needs be very uncomfortable, if it were otherwise with them.

WHAT the happiness of an infant will be in the other world, we cannot certainly tell ; but only that it will have all the happiness it is capable of, and perhaps with great improvements to their present state. 'Tis certain all the time of life which was wanting to them in this world, will be made up with great advantage in the other ; and 'tis probable at least that their *rational powers*, which are now limited and clogged by the indisposition of the *bodily* organs, will be set free from present restraints, and be enlarged and improved ; that they will arrive to the proper perfection of the reasonable nature,
and

and a capacity of enjoying the supreme good : as the light and influence of the Sun presently darts into any place when the obstruction is once removed.

4. THEY have answered the *ends* of their creation, and the purposes for which God sent them into the world. Indeed they make a short stay, and are less significant : they have lower capacities and feebler powers, than those of longer continuance, or grown up to maturity. They are not capable of actual choice, or active service. But they serve to display the perfections and providence of God, and are so many instances of the divine power and wisdom, and goodness, in the wonderful formation of their bodies, and *covering them in the mother's womb*, where they were *fearfully and wonderfully made, and curiously wrought in the lower parts of the earth*; in all the nice circumstances of their birth, and the tender care watching over them in their infant state; or of his righteousness and faithfulness in executing the sentence of death; perhaps of punishment and rebuke to over-indulgent parents, to try their faith and patience, or teach them submission and resignation to the divine will.

'Tis plain however that God has served his own purposes by them, and whatsoever he intended by their appearing in the world. And every thing is to be valued but in proportion to its end, and the purpose for which it was made. 'Twere well if it could be said of most who die in more advanced years of life, that they had as truly answered the ends of their creation,

creation, as they who die in their infant state. 'Tis peculiar to their case that they have committed no actual sin. They are not chargeable with sinful failings, which require a capacity of moral government, and suppose their own consent. It could not be said they did any thing amiss, though they were not capable of much actual knowledge, or any active service; and it may be said of them, what is said of *Jacob* and of *Esau*, *The children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil.* So that how short soever their continuance in this world was, and how few purposes soever they were any way capable of serving, they have notwithstanding fully reached the design of God concerning them here, and in this respect have the advantage of the adult, that they stand under less guilt, tho' they have done less service.

Rom. ix.
11.

5. WE know not what they might have proved, if they had lived. Fond parents often please themselves, with fair appearances and future prospects; of seeing them blessings in the world, and *erving their generation according to the will of God*; and of becoming like *arrows in the hands of the mighty man*, for their defence; or like *olive-plants round about their table*, for delight: *Their sons as plants growing up in their youth, and their daughters as corner-stones polished after the similitude of a palace.* 'Tis natural to raise their expectations from children early ripe, of quick apprehensions, and well disposed; and yet nothing is more common than to find themselves mistaken, and

Psal.
cxxvii. 4.
cxxviii. 3.
cxliv. 1 2.

after all the exercise of tender care in their younger days, all the expence of education and furniture for service; all their prayers and endeavours for their good; yea, and it may be, after promising appearances, and hopeful beginnings too; to see them deceive the most reasonable expectations, and make ill returns to all their kindness. 'Tis a very rare and singular blessing to have all prove truly good, where there are several, and no one miscarry among them.

SOMETIMES by natural weakness and an infirm constitution, or by accidental evils thro' carelessness and neglect, by falls and distempers in their younger years, they contract deformities, and are disabled for the service of life: So *Mephibosheth*, *Jonathan's* son, was lame ^{2 Sam. iv.} in his feet at five years old, by a fall from his ⁴ nurse's arms, when she fled away in a fright. Or else, which is a worse circumstance of things, prove wicked and rebellious. How often do we hear the groans and complaints of pious parents over their wicked children, drawn away by ill company, and evil inclinations, contracting ill habits, and running into open excesses! Sometimes perhaps unhappy disposals of life, unsuitable matches, and unsuccessful affairs, whether by their own rashness, or misfortune of others, prove a heart-breaking to tender and concerned parents. When *Esau* married a daughter of the *Hittites*, 'tis said, *Which thing* ^{Gen. xxvi.} *was a grief of heart to Isaac and to Rebecca.* It ^{35.} was a bitterness of heart to them both, instead of being any comfort and joy. And *Rebecca* tells

Chap.
xxvii. 46.

tells *Isaac*, *If Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as they who are the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me? I shall have no comfort in either of them, or in any thing I have.* A beautiful and beloved *Ab-salom* raised an open rebellion against an indulgent father in his old age, set himself at the head of a powerful faction, drove him from *Jerusalem*, and put him in danger of his life, tho' it proved in the issue fatal to his own. The prodigal son, who had been long entertained in his father's house, with a bountiful and indulgent care, demands the *portion of goods which fell to his share*, departs from his father's house, goes into a far country, spends his substance in riotous excess, and reduces himself to the utmost distress.

Luke xv.
12.

WERE it not better to be without children, or to follow them early to their graves, than to have undutiful and rebellious ones, or even unhappy and miserable ones? How unreasonable is indulgence to intemperate passion for the loss of so uncertain a blessing; and what may possibly prove the greatest affliction of life, and embitter all the other comforts of it? Perhaps a kind and gracious providence designs your good by this evil, and to prevent a greater trouble and mischief. And then how ungrateful is the return? Shall we repine at his goodness? I have been informed by them who knew the case, of the inconsiderate rashness of a fond mother, who passionately prayed for the life of a sick child, *whatever it cost her:*

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She had her desire; but he lived to come to an untimely end, and to break her heart.

6. PERHAPS you have *other* children remaining. If God takes away a beloved child in its infant state, which is like blasting the flower in the blossom, or nipping a tender bud; if he makes a breach in your family, and lessens the number of it; yet 'tis a great comfort in that case, that we are not quite destitute, and cannot say in the language of the holy Patriarch, *If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.* Gen. xliii. 'Tis a proper consolation in such a ¹⁴ case, that there are others left, in whom we may take comfort. So we find *Eve* comforts her self upon the death of *Abel*. *Adam knew his wife again, and she bare a son, and called his name Seth; for God, saith she, hath appointed me another son, instead of Abel whom Cain slew;* that is, to be head of the holy seed. And *Lamech* comforts himself with the prospect of a son, the heir and hopes of the family. *And Lamech called his name Noah, saying, this same shall comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which God hath cursed;* and so under any other effect of the curse, for the same reason. Gen. iv. 25. — V. 29.

God sometimes removes a favourite child, the *darling*, perhaps the *idol* of our heart, which is very commonly the case; he rebukes the excess of their regard, or prevents a greater mischief another way: but then if he continues others to us, or raises up others in their room, 'tis certainly a very reasonable comfort in the loss of any who are taken away. We should

should not overlook remaining mercies, when some others are removed. Look upon the surviving offspring with thankfulness: Take the comfort of them who are spared. *Rejoice with the wife of thy youth*, and in the children of thy youth too, in the *fruitful vine by the side of thy house*, and the *olive-plants around thy table*. Is it not a great comfort to have healthful and lovely children, a wife and dutiful offspring, hopeful and promising, tho' all are not spared which God *had given us*, and that we are not *wholly bereaved*, tho' our *house is not so with God*, as it has been, and he *makes it not to grow*.

7. SUPPOSE the worst circumstance, That
- Job i. 18. 'tis an *only child*, or that *all* are removed from us. *Job's* sons and daughters were all cut off, by one sudden and violent stroke. 'Tis said, when our Lord came to the gates of the city of *Naim*, *behold there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow*. The great comfort and support of a desolate widow. Why, in this case, which is indeed tender and compassionate, we are to consider, That we *received an only child from God*, and every one of our children, for *children are an heritage of the Lord*, and the fruit of *the womb his work*. 'Tis *the Lord who gave, that taketh away*. They are his gift to us; as *Jacob* told his brother *Esau*, when he met him with his children, *These are the children which God has graciously given me*. And *Joseph* told his father *Jacob*, when he presented *Ephraim* and *Manasseh* before him, *These are*
- Pfal. cxxviii. 3.
- Luke vii. 12.
- Pfal. cxxvii. 3.
- Gen. xxxiii. 5.
- xlvi. 9.
- are

are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place. But then his right to them remains, and they are more his than they are ours; for he is the *father of their spirits*, and we only the *father of the flesh*. He is the sovereign proprietor, and *all our times are in his hands*. ^{Heb. xii. 9.} And may he not do what he will with his own? Has he not the right of disposal of what he has freely given? Must he ask our leave to remove his own, or we complain of injury or unkindness?

BESIDES, Have we not *devoted* all we have to him, our *lives* and our *souls*, as well as our *children* and *possessions*? Have we not made a covenant-surrender of all we have to God, without exception and reserve? Do not we stand obliged by solemn engagements to an hearty devotedness to his interest, and resignation to his will? Have we not given up our children to God, *in baptism*, and owned his absolute right, quitted all propriety, and hold only under him? The Sense of the baptismal covenant is plainly this; “ I give up my child
“ to God, the giver and rightful owner of it:
“ I solemnly acknowledge God’s right to it,
“ and devote it to his service and disposal.” Can we be supposed to mean any thing less by this solemn transaction? And shall we be grieved or displeas’d, if he sees fit at any time, to take us at our word, and try the sincerity of our heart; to exercise the right he justly claims, and the power we have freely given him? It was the great commendation of *Abraham’s* faith, that he readily obeyed the di-
vine

vine will in the greatest difficulty, and upon the shortest notice, and against the strongest reluctance of nature. He was ready to offer up his only son, dearly beloved, and the son of the promise, in whom *all the nations of the earth were to be blessed*, at the plain command of God. This was the noblest exercise of faith, and so highly pleasing to God, that he had the honour, upon this occasion, to be called the *father of the faithful*, and the *friend of God*. How much easier is it to part with a child, tho' an only child, by the stroke of death, from the hand of God, than to offer up an only child with one's own hands, and present it, in a literal sense, *a living sacrifice* to God? We are ready to say, Who can support under so heavy a stroke? Nature sinks and faints, so sorely oppressed: True, but faith in God can reconcile us to the greatest difficulties, and satisfy the mind without indecent excess either of grief, or complaint.

BUT above all, consider the unequalled love of God, who gave his *own* son, his *only* son, for us: *God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son; the only begotten son who lay in the bosom of the father; and of whom he gave*
 John iii. 16. i. 18. *this testimony from heaven, This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased; and who is the*
 Matt. iii. 17. *brightness of the father's glory, and express image of his person.* He gave him up as a sacrifice, or sin-offering, to the stroke of death. *He spared not his own son, but freely gave him up for us all: He did not withhold, or deny him to us, when it became necessary for our*
 Heb. i. 2. *good;*

good; and he did not favour him in the least degree, upon that account. *He laid on him the iniquity of us all; and it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief; thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.* Iſa. liii, 6, 10. How much greater thing has God done for us, from the freest love, than we can do in duty to him? He parted with more upon our account, than we can part with for him. How great is the disproportion in the highest instance of our obedience, to his unparalleled love? What is the life of a child of ours, to the blood of the son of God; and why should we shew so much reluctance and grief, when he acted with so free and forward a kindness to us?

8. CONSIDER YOUR OWN *covenant-state* however. Your covenant-interest is secure, whatsoever he removes from you: God is yours, and all the gracious promises of the new covenant. *The eternal God is your refuge: the unchangeable God is your friend and portion. Christ the son of God is yours, and all the purchase of his blood: All things are yours, if you are Christ's.* 1 Cor. iii. This was the great consolation of holy *David* 22. in the close of his days, and under great breaches and disappointments in his family; *Altho' my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, this is all my salvation and all my desire though he make it not to grow.* q. d. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. This is my great relief in the death of my children, and misfortunes of my family, that tho' it is not now as it once was, and instead of flourishing and increasing, it decays and declines;

clines; yet God's covenant-promise stands good, and will be fulfilled. This is my great support and comfort under all my family-losses and sorrows. But I have spoken of this more fully before.

Vide
Serm. III.

IF God say concerning you, as he does in the prophet concerning *Jeconiah*; *Write ye this man childless, a man who shall not prosper in his way*: the expression denotes the certainty and importance of the thing. This was the punishment and judgment upon *Jeconiah*, that in him the direct line of the *Jewish* kings, down from *Solomon*, should fail, and the crown should descend to a collateral branch. If you are without children, who were dear and desirable, you are not *without God*, and *without Christ in the world*: not deprived of your best friend, and chief good. If you stand related to God, and have him your father and friend, you have something greater and more valuable than all the friendships, or any blessings of this world. 'Tis a greater mercy to have God our father, than to have the dearest child of our own; and to be our selves the children of God, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance, than to have a numerous family, and the greatest prosperity of life; according to that promise, *Unto them who keep my sabbaths, and chuse the things which please me, and take hold of my covenant, unto them I will give in my house, and within my walls, a place and a name, better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, which shall never be cut off*. They shall be entitled to the privileges of God's covenant,

Jer. xxii.
30.

If. lvi. 5.

nant, though they have no children; and be *written in the book of life*, which will be a more lasting memorial of them than any posterity on earth can possibly be. In this case there is a more valuable good left behind, than any taken away; for is not God himself, and the son of God, a greater good, than the dearest child, and the nearest relation in this world; and his *loving kindness*, and covenant-favour, *better than life*, or any of the comforts and enjoyments of life?

9. WE must quickly go to them, and be with them again. 'Tis not an everlasting separation, or parting with them for good and all. They are not rent from our embraces, never to be seen any more: 'tis only a separation for a time; and the utmost distance is only the short continuance of this world. 'Tis only the distance of the two worlds and states, which is sometimes only a single *step*, for we step out of one world into another: or it may be the difference of a *breath*; for we no sooner cease to live and breathe in this world, but we are immediately in the next. Tho' the two worlds are vastly different from one another in kind, yet they lie upon the borders of one another, and are almost contiguous. And after many years of life already spent in this world, it cannot be very long before we are removed; and always the shorter a time, in proportion to the length of our continuance here. Parents may reasonably apprehend it short, when they have lived to see their children go before them, and survive their own offspring. However, the utmost

bounds of our time in this world, is no great while, in the ordinary course of nature and providence, and we are daily hastening to our *long home*, and advancing forward every moment which passes away. In a little while the *vail* which now parts the two worlds will be drawn aside, and a new *scene* of things will open. We shall find our selves agreeably surpris'd, and see them again, and enjoy them to greater advantage; and have all the entertainment and delight, which their company and presence will be able to give, without the mixture of present weakness, or fear of separation again.

So *David* comforted himself upon the death
 2 Sam. xii. of his child by *Bathséba*: *And he said, while*
 22. *the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept; for*
I said, who can tell whether God will be gracious
to me, and the child may live; but now he is dead,
wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back
again? I shall go to him, he shall not return to
me. I shall soon be with him in the grave,
and in the other world; for the dust returneth
to the dust, and the spirit returneth to God who
gave it. It must, in all reason, be so understood as to be fit to minister a proper ground of comfort and support. Thy tender infant, or beloved child, has only got the start, and is gone a little before. Prepare to follow, instead of grieving immoderately: turn the stream into the right channel; dry up the tears from thy eyes, and refuse not to be comforted; for thou shalt see them again in the other world, and be with them for ever. In the mean time,
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there is this consolation left, that though thou hast brought forth children for the grave, yet they are brought forth for God and for heaven too; and though thou hast never a child left in this world, there are so many more gone before thee to heaven.





S E R M O N V.

Consolations in the death of
aged christians.

JOB v. 26.

Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in, in his season.

THE words are part of *Eliphaz's* discourse to *Job*, in which he represents the happiness of good men though afflicted: *Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth, therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Lord*; that is, who submit to divine corrections, and comply with the design of them; and don't neglect, or slight them, as unreasonable, or insignificant. There is a promise of present *personal* blessings, of preservation and deliverance in the various troubles and calamities of life: and of blessings in their families and affairs; *Thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace, and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin*; and of blessings upon their

—17.
—18, 24.
—24.

their *seed* and posterity after them; *Thou shalt* —25. *know also that thy seed shall be great, and thy offspring as the grass of the earth*; numerous and flourishing. In this verse there is the promise of a comfortable *death*, as the close of the description and foot of the account; *Thou shalt* —26. *come to thy grave in a full age*; with freedom of mind, and without reluctance, satisfied with life, and waiting for a release; and at full maturity, arrived to the utmost bounds of human life, as *Abraham died in a good old age, an old* Gen. xxv. *man, full of years*: not by a violent, or un-^{8.} timely death, but dropping kindly like ripe fruit, or like as a *shock of corn cometh in, in its season*; as a stack of corn fully ripe is gathered into the barn, or storehouse, at the time of harvest.

WHAT I propose is to consider the death of *aged* christians; and though this is a case which seems least to need comfort of any, because 'tis agreeable to the order of nature, and all reasonable expectation concerning them: they must needs leave the world, who have lived long in it, and that, one would think, can be no surprize to any, or any great occasion of grief. And yet we often find, that great personal worth and usefulness, long endearments of mutual affection, the nearness of relation, or special obligations; where our esteem of them runs high, and affection, by length of time, has taken a deeper root, make parting with them at last, no very easy matter, and sometimes sufficiently grievous and afflicting. I shall propose the following considerations more

briefly, as proper to this case, and as *reasons* of comfort and support.

§ 1. CONSIDER that they lay under the *common sentence* of death all their days. The original curse stands *unreversed*, and in full force, and will be executed sooner, or later, upon every fallen creature. *Death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* And 'tis appointed to men once to die. 'Tis the great *statute law* of heaven, and a standing mark of the divine displeasure against sin. They were under the sentence of death, all the while they lived in this world, and a long life was only a longer *reprieve*. When any useful person dies after many years service in life, the common sentence is executed: the will of God is done towards them; his purpose and appointment takes place. This is the state of fallen nature: so died the antient patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs, and all the best men who ever lived in every age.

DID we not know our friends were *mortal*, all the while they lived with us, and expect that they must die from us? Can we be surprised to see the settled course of nature take place; any more than to see a gloomy night after a fair day; or the sun set in a cloud, and sink beneath the horizon, after the highest elevation, and the brightest glory of noon-day; or the cold hoary frost of the winter, after the summer heat?

§ 2. 'Tis comfortable to consider in this case, *how long* they were spared, and continued to us in a *useful* state. If we can say, God spared my

my dear and useful relations many years of life, and indulged me so great a blessing, a long while together; I enjoyed the great advantage of their company and care, to a considerable age of life: and was not deprived of them in early youth, before I was capable of acting for my self, or comfortably settled in the world: How many years of comfortable enjoyment, and mutual delight did we live together? How many pleasant days, and solemn seasons have we had, through the weary pilgrimage of this world? How many times have we *gone to the house of God, and taken sweet counsel together*; conferred and prayed, and performed holy duties, in private and publick? this is the more regardable still, if God spared their lives through much *weakness* and many *dangers*; and spun out the frail thread of life, and supported a weak constitution, through a course of many years, and to a competent age of life: perhaps he often raised them up from sick beds, eased their pains; added to their days, when they had *the sentence of death in themselves*, and prolonged life under all the infirmities of nature, and casualties to which it was subject, beyond all expectation.

WHAT great reason have we of thankfulness to God, who has dealt so *bountifully with his servants*, and spared the comfort of their useful lives, when great numbers have been removed, of shorter standing in life, and a firmer constitution, of greater natural strength, and much more like to live, than they. God has spared our dear relation many years under
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all the difficulties of the case, when so many others have been *bereaved*; their *father and mother has forsaken them*, and their friends and acquaintance *put into darkness*, and they left exposed to difficulties and neglect. A serious reflection upon the long enjoyment of any blessing, should make us the more thankful to God for the peculiar favour, and the more easy and resigned in parting with it at last.

LET us often *recollect* the more remarkable instances of their former usefulness, and exemplary character, while they lived. The Apostle directs the christians to this purpose ;

Heb. xiii. 7. *Remember them who had the rule over you, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.* We have not done with our departed friends when we have lodged them in the grave; but we must *remember* what was eminent and exemplary in the several stations of life, and circumstances of things thro' which they passed. Call over the many graces and virtues in which they excelled, and the more singular displays of them, upon particular occasions; the admirable patience with which they bore their afflictions; their stedfast faith and trust in God, in all the tryals of life; their zeal for his glory, and delight in his service; their watchful care over themselves, and cautious fear of sin. Recollect the several instances of faithful service, and in how many respects, God made use of them, amidst all their natural frailties, and sinful infirmities, for good to us, and others about us. What a tender care and concern for our welfare in younger life?

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What wise and faithful counsels and reproofs? How sympathizing and compassionate, in all our distress and griefs? How great an addition to all our comforts and joy? Perhaps their strict and watchful care over us, which, it may be, we then regretted, was the great means of the early impression of goodness upon our minds, of instilling the principles of vertue and religion, and preserving us from youthful follies, and dangerous snares; of fixing the fear of God, and the dread of sin upon our minds. 'Tis likely much of the comfort and improvement of life is owing to their early instruction and wise care over us.

'Tis this way we may maintain *communion* with our departed friends, and converse with them still to advantage, and is properly one branch of the *communion of saints*. 'Tis said of *Dorcas*, *This woman was full of good works, and alms-deeds which she did; and it came to pass in those days that she was sick and died; and all the widows stood by weeping, and shewing the coats and garments, which Dorcas made, while she was with them: that is, the garments they were clothed with, as the evidences of her charitable kindness to desolate widows.* 'Tis certainly a reasonable comfort in such a case, to review the many instances of usefulness and excellency in our deceased friends, while they lived.

§ 3. CONSIDER further the great *honour* put upon them who were long serviceable in this world. 'Tis a great honour and favour to arrive to a considerable age of life, and the accomplishment

complishment of a gracious promise, *Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age.* The wise man says, *The hoary head is honourable, when 'tis found in the way of righteousness.* 'Tis a remarkable prophecy concerning the felicity of some state of *Jerusalem*, perhaps of the *new Jerusalem*, which is to come down from heaven, *That there shall be no more there an infant of days, nor an old man who hath not filled up his days.* None shall die immature, or in their infant-state, or who hath not filled up the number of his days. It was a curse threatned upon *Eli's* family, *There shall not be an old man in thy house.*

1 Sam. ii.
31.

THEY have had a greater exercise of divine care over them, and a larger experience of divine goodness, in the many expressions of a gracious concern for their good, of seasonable interposure, and distinguishing favour. They have by that means greater opportunities and advantage of being useful, than those cut off in their youth, or in the midst of their days, who are confined to narrower limits, and have fewer advantages. And as doing good is the noblest pleasure and the greatest purpose of life, 'tis in consequence, a valuable blessing, to be continued many years together, especially if our capacities of service are continued too, and like *Moses* at one hundred twenty years, whose *eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated*; which was a rare felicity; and are enabled to *bring forth fruit in old age*; like a tree laden with rich fruit, when the blossoms are long dropt, and the leaves wither, and are ready to fall. What a mercy is it to our deceased friends

Deut.
xxxiv. 7.

friends to ripen by long standing, in wisdom and experience, and be successful instruments of the divine glory, and good to the world, for a great while together? 'Tis a great instance of the wisdom and goodness of providence, that amidst the multitudes who die every day, there should be always some examples of elder and more experienced persons left in the world, in every age, to season and instruct the rising generation, and train them up for usefulness, by proper counsels and cautions, in the direction and conduct of life. Otherwise the experience of former generations would be in a great measure lost, and every age must begin afresh, and set out upon their own stock, which must needs be, with great disadvantage.

§ 4. CONSIDER how much they often *out-live* their own usefulness. 'Tis no wonder if active natures and brisk spirits, long exercised in painful service, begin at length to decay: the Apostle says, *Though I spend and am spent*; ^{2 Cor. xii.} and he was ready to be *offered upon the sacrifice* ^{15.} *and service of their faith.* The more zealous ^{Philip. ii.} and industrious they are in the service of God, ^{17.} the more likely they are to find their natural strength abated; as the shaking of an antient building, which stands open to the wind, is a presage of a speedy fall. The dim eye, the feeble joints, the shaking hand, the hoary head, the short breath, are so many marks of decaying nature, and symptoms of an approaching dissolution: especially where this is hastened by accidental evils, or by frequent disorders; by chronical distempers, acute pains, or frequent

2 Sam.
xix. 35.

quent sickness; which give a mighty shock to the stoutest constitution, and impair all the delights and relish of life. As old *Barzilla* told *David* when he invited him to court, and to eat at his table; *I am this day fourscore year old, and can I discern betwixt good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat and drink? can I hear any more the voice of the singing men, and singing women?* I am dead to all the delights of a court, and the pleasure of sense. *Solomon* represents old age, as the *evil days*, and the *years wherein we shall say, that we have no pleasure.*

Eccl. xii.
4.

SOMETIMES good and useful men are disabled for service not only by the decay of the bodily nature, but the weakness of their intellectual powers. The eye of the mind grows dim, as well as that of the body: The memory is frail and unfaithful, the understanding slow of apprehensions, the affections cold and dull; the whole frame of nature is greatly impaired, and a listless inactivity runs through all their powers: They are rendered incapable of active service, and are preserved only as monuments of the divine goodness, and for the exercise and example of faith and patience. Yea perhaps they may need a great deal of careful attendance, and occasion many concerned and solicitous thoughts for their safety. In such circumstances their death in all reason ought to be less grievous, and set easier upon others, as it becomes more desirable to themselves. Why, all the ends of life are answered, and further usefulness ceases: There is only the ruins and decay of the vigorous soul, and of

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the former active and useful nature left. Perhaps the weakness and disorders of nature may sometimes affect their temper, and make them impatient and uneasy to those about them.

§ 5. CONSIDER how well *prepared* they were for death, and *ripe* for another world. I confess 'tis a melancholly and uncomfortable thought, when an aged person especially, dies unprepared, and goes out of the world, after a long state of tryal, unrenewed and unreformed. They are like an old dried stump of a tree, fit only for fewel. So the Apostle says, *But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burnt: and so a sinner being an hundred years old, is accursed.* Heb. vi. 8.

BUT now when a good man dies out of the world, prepared for death and ripe for glory, *ready for the coming of the Lord, and meet for the heavenly inheritance, waiting for his appearance, and willing to resign his departing spirit, and breathe out his soul into the Redeemer's arms: When they are prepared in the habitual temper of their minds, and a blessed composure of spirit; it may be with desires of departing; what a sensible evidence is this, of the truth of religion, and a confirmation, and satisfaction to all about them? When they can think of God and not be afraid; look upon death, without terrour; look into the other world, without dismay, and with a sensible emotion of joy; and wait their appointed change with desire and hope, only wanting leave to depart, to see them drop like fruit fully ripe, of their*

their own accord, and not snatched away with reluctance, by the violent hand of death, to *go to their grave*, and be *gathered to their fathers in peace*: And especially still, if they passed thro' our hands, or received any help or finishing from us; if we were instrumental to the forming their minds, or polishing and improving them, and contributed, in any degree, to the usefulness of their foregoing life, or of their comfortable death; to see the blessed end of their finished course, to hear their dying testimony for God, and religion; what comfortable reflections must it needs administer, and what powerful support may it well afford? My friend, or relation, is dead indeed, and gone out of the world; but he was well prepared for death, and fit for a better state.

§ 6. CONSIDER too the merciful *release* from the long fatigues and conflicts of life. They are set free from all the *burdens* of nature, which sometimes are very grievous, and all the *afflictions* of life, which often create them a great deal of trouble. All the labours of life and the difficulties of service cease. *They rest from their labour*. They were often exercised, in one kind or other, sometimes sorely prest and grieved, groaning under a heavy burden, or smarting affliction, and discouraged with the fear of an approaching or impending danger. They are delivered from the power of all their *spiritual* enemies, and set out of the reach of all their attempts; from the fear of evil as well as the reach of harm. *The wicked cease from troubling, and the*

the weary are at rest. God will cease to be angry with them for sin: They will no more struggle and complain of the *law in their members*, and *the body of death*: There will be no more any conflict with *Satan's* temptations, or need to be upon our guard, and always awake and watchful. They have *fought the good fight*, and *finished their course*: Their *warfare is accomplished*, and they have received their *discharge*.

AND how merciful a release to a burdened soul? How great a deliverance is death to a good man, after a long course of hard service, and great trial? What a kindness is it to a weary soul to be set at ease, and a confined soul at liberty? To have their shackles knocked off, to be delivered from the prison of the body, and all the uneasy and incommodious circumstances of their present habitation in it? While they were *in this tabernacle they groaned, being burdened*. And shall we regret their release, and that they have groaned their last, and are now enter'd upon a state of rest and joy? Hereupon,

§ 7. CONSIDER the *blessed state* they are enter'd upon, and the infinite advantage of a removal. They leave a state of sin and sorrow, of the burdens of nature and miseries of life, for a state of purity and peace, of liberty and enlargement, where all their burdens are removed, and their desires satisfied. They *enter into peace*, and into *the joy of their Lord*; and will be *with him in paradise*. They *rest from their labours*, and *their works follow them*: The satisfaction and reward of them. They meet with the approbation of their Lord and Judge, and they will receive a

crown of righteousness and life at last. They are joined to the general assembly, and church of the first-born above, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and will be always present with the Lord.

Psal. xvi.
ult.

THEY have gained a final decisive victory over all their enemies, and will *always triumph in Christ Jesus*. They change worlds to infinite advantage and to full satisfaction, and would not return into this *vale of tears*, for all they have left behind them, or quit their higher enjoyments, for the sake of the dearest friend, or the best comfort of life. *In his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore.* The aged and decayed will recover a new youth, and spring and flourish for ever. The spirits of the just are *made perfect*, arrive to proper perfection and maturity, the full vigour of all their powers, and enlarged capacities, and higher improvements too, suitable to the state and employment of that blessed world. How much clearer will be their light, and nearer their likenesses to God!

CONSIDER with pleasure the high advancement and honour of our deceased friends, the noble enjoyments, the pure delights, the perfect satisfaction and joy. Methinks an undue concern for the death of good men, looks a little *selfish*, and like *envying* their happiness. To be sure 'tis unsuitable to the state and temper of blessedness; they are always praising and always rejoicing, while we are grieving and weeping for their loss: And how unseemly and disagreeable is that? But rather as our Lord told the daughter of *Jerusalem*,
when

when he went to be crucified, *Weep not for me, but weep for your selves, and for your children*: Let us not weep for them whom we believe to be happy, and out of the reach of danger, but for our selves and ours, who live in a state of conflict and trial, and are exposed all the while, to danger and hazard.

§ 8. LET us think of *the nearness* of our dissolution, and how soon we shall meet together again. 'Tis but a little while and the present state will be over, and a new state of things will appear: *Yet a little while, and he who shall come, will come, and will not tarry*: *The end of all things is at hand*. We are following them apace to the other world, who are gone before, and may meet before we are aware: In a few days we may *be with them in paradise*. When we have been a little longer exercised and tried, driven and tossed about in this tempestuous sea, we shall arrive at the same port, and land on the same shore.

THIS is the more considerable, if we lived long together in this world, and are now advanced in years. It cannot be long before we receive a discharge, and have leave to go too. After many years of life already run out, there can't be a long space remaining. The number of years we lived together, with our departed friends, must be deducted from the total sum, and the remainder only brought to the foot of the account, and how little may that possibly be?

WHAT a comfort is it that we are *followers of them, who thro' faith and patience inherit the promise*, and shall quickly come to them, and

be with them where they are. If 'tis so sensible a pleasure in this world, to meet a beloved friend, after a long absence, and great distance; how great must be the satisfaction of meeting them in the other world, of seeing them again, and being with them for ever, of mutual enjoyment, in their improved state, and without any of their present defects, or any allay of weakness, or sin? Wipe the tears from thy eyes, and behold the near approach of the future blessedness: See by faith him who *is invisible*; and *Jesus sitting at the right hand of God*, and all our departed friends, lost at different times, out of this world, and whom we esteemed and loved, met together in one place, and making up one blessed society above.

§ 9. 'Tis a considerable reason of comfort, where that is the case, that there are many *surviving* relations left. If God takes away an aged parent to whom we owe the first seasoning, and the after-disposal of life: If he *take away our master from our head* as he took *Elijah* from *Elisha*, but leaves us many brethren, or gives us a *double portion of their spirit*; if he takes away the *desire of our eyes with a stroke*, and removes the old and dear companion of our lives, but leaves us several surviving children, the dear pledges of a saint in heaven, flourishing in the ways of God, useful in the world, of growing hopes and capacities of service, *increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men*; what an unspeakable allay of our sorrow, and how great an instance of tender compassion, in our heavenly father?

Luke ii.
52

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We cannot say we are wholly bereaved, or quite desolate; and there is *no greater joy than* ^{3 John 4.} *to see our children walking in the truth.* This is like so many green twigs springing from the body of an old tree, which being transplanted to a proper soil, become fruitful, when the tree from whence they were taken, decays, and is cut down. Men sometimes live in their posterity several ages.

OR if our own family and relations are cut off, and God has raised up other friends, among our acquaintance, or strangers, to shew us the *kindness of the dead*, or to *supply the lack of service to us*; as *David shewed kindness to the house* ^{2 Chron. ix. 1.} *of Saul, for Jonathan's sake*; and *a friend is born for adversity*, and there is *a friend which sticketh closer than a brother*: If he provide for us in our most desolate state, by the care of a gracious providence, and be himself a father and friend to us; if he will be the *father of the fatherless*, or *husband of the widow*, and stand himself instead of all the relations of life, who lives for ever, and will *never leave us nor forsake us*; how great is the consolation, what reason have we to mix thanksgiving with our griefs, and *to sing of mercy as well as judgment*?

CONCERNING our deceased friend, I shall say but little, for as she knew not how to *give flattering titles to any*, so the least appearance of it in others, was always disagreeable to her. I shall not draw a *picture*, but only touch the principal *features*, and distinguishing *lineaments*, by which they who were acquainted with her, will easily know her, and they who were not,

will find something instructing and exemplary. She was very *sincere* in heart, and strictly conscientious in her ordinary walk; very much under the influence of a religious education, and by the advantage of the special assistance her case afforded her. She had the testimony of all about her, as well as of her own conscience, That *in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, she had her conversation in the world.* There was an undisguised and inflexible honesty in her make, from the impressions of the fear of God, and without regarding the opinion of men; of which I reckon this a great evidence, that they who knew her most, and were most intimate with her, knew the best of her: She did not, like *painted beauties, or counterfeit ware,* appear best at a *distance,* and by the favour of a *false light.*

SHE was very *useful* in her place, by prudent management, and great activity, in her proper affairs: And God prospered her endeavours with remarkable success, in the education of a numerous family, under circumstances of disadvantage, to the great comfort of her own heart, and the service of their generation, in different ways. She was a rare example of a singular excellency: Tho' her temper was active and zealous, she employed her whole time, and confined all her care, to her proper sphere, and to her own affairs, without thrusting herself into others Families, meddling with their character, or censuring their conduct. The forward censurer of other men's faults and state,

is not always the most careful and concerned about his own; and would be more safely and profitably employed, in observing and imitating what was excellent and useful in them, and in which perhaps, notwithstanding all their faults, we may come a great deal short of them. Her behaviour in this respect, was an excellent comment upon the apostolical precepts, *Study to be quiet, and mind your own business; and not being busy-bodies in other men's matters.* This was so much her judgment and practice, that it was the only thing she desired should be said of her upon this occasion; and is therefore worthy our special notice and regard. I am sure the careful observance of this rule would tend very much to promote the peace of the world about us, and prevent a great deal of trouble and inconvenience to ourselves.

SHE was long exercised with bodily weakness, and *periodical* pains, which issued in the loss of her sight, and which to a person of a brisk and active temper could not but be some uneasiness: But as she had served her generation for many years together in the active life, to good purpose; so she shewed an exemplary patience and submission, under the burdens of nature. She was calm and composed through her last sickness, though not without the ferious workings of a concerned mind, and express a steady trust in God through the Mediator, and an unshaken firmness of mind. She was fearless and unruffled under violent pains, and gradual approaches, and even visible prospects of her great change. She died, like *Stephen,*

calling upon the name of the Lord. Her last words were those of the disciples, in a great difficulty, *Lord increase my faith.* May this subject and example help to quicken us in the present duties of life, and yield consolation and relief under all the afflictions of it; and may we *finish our course with joy, and inherit the promise at last.*





PART II.

Preparations for our *own* Death.

SERMON I.

The happy End of an useful Life.

ACTS xiii. 26.

*For David, after he had served his
own generation by the will of God,
fell on sleep.*

THE words are part of the Apostle's discourse at *Antioch*, and relate to the proof that Jesus is the true *Messiah* promis'd to the fathers, *because God raised him from the dead*: and this was evident in that he was *seen many days of them* 60
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31. who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusa-
 lem, who were his witnesses to the people. And
 33. to this the Apostle applies the expression in
 the second Psalm; *Thou art my son, this day
 have I begotten thee*; or declared thee to be my
 son. And he was raised from the dead with
 this peculiar circumstance, *Now no more to re-
 turn to corruption*: or, as he expresses it in an-
 Rom. vi. other place; *Knowing that Christ being rais'd*
 9. *from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no
 more dominion over him*: as it had in the case
 of *Lazarus*, the widow's son, and those who
 rose out of the grave, at the time of his
 resurrection: and to this he applies the
 Mat. passage of the prophet, *I will give thee the*
 xxvii. 52. *sure mercies of David*; i. e. the faithful pro-
 mises of the *Messiah*, and of the blessings of
 his everlasting kingdom, made to *David*: or
 it may be understood of *Christ* the son of *Da-
 vid*, who is sometimes so represented in the
 prophetick language. Besides, it was prophe-
 sied of him, *Thou shalt not suffer thy Holy-One
 to see corruption*: he should not continue so
 long in the grave to see corruption; as he
 should not return to it again. Now this
 could not be understood of *David*, because he
 fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and
 saw corruption: and he tells the Jews at ano-
 Chap. ii. ther time, *The patriarch David is both dead*
 29. *and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto
 this day*: but this was strictly true of *Christ*,
 37. *for he whom God raised from the dead, saw no
 corruption*.

THE words of the text contain the character and description of a good and useful man, in the person of *David*. In speaking to them I shall consider,

I. THE character of his useful life. *He served his own generation by the will of God.*

II. THE account of his happy and comfortable death: *He fell on sleep.*

III. THE relation between these two; or how the one depends upon the other.

IV. I shall apply it.

S E C T. I.

I. I shall consider the character of his useful life: *He served his own generation by the will of God.* I shall briefly open the several parts.

I. HIS life is a state of *service*. *David* had the peculiar commendation of being a *man after God's own heart*; i. e. of great sincerity, and entire devotedness to God. He was an active instrument of the glory of God, and zealous in his service. He dispatched the whole business God appointed him to do in his place; and had it in *his heart to do more*; Acts vii. for he *desir'd to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob*. 'Tis spoken directly of *David*, Psal. lxxix. tho' ultimately of Christ, *The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up*; and my zeal hath consumed me. 39. He was faithful to the interest of God in an exalted station, for many years together, in his main bent and course of life: tho' not without the allay of imperfections and faults;

like a flaw in a diamond, or a spot in the body of the sun; yet, with the clearest marks of a sound and deep repentance.

A christian's whole life is a state of service and warfare: we are to work the works of God, and contend with our spiritual enemies. In this respect it resembles the case of the Jews in the opposition they met with in building the walls of the city, after their return from the Babylonish captivity: *Every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon: for the builders every one had his sword girt by his side, and so built.* The Apostle represents this by an hearty devotedness to Christ, and engagement in his service; *whose I am, and whom I serve:* and makes it the matter of solemn appeal and thanksgiving to God; *for God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his son.* And *I thank God whom I serve from my forefathers, with a pure conscience.* This is made the end of our redemption by Christ, *that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear in righteousness and holiness all our days.* He redeems us from all iniquity—that we should be a peculiar people zealous of good works. Our Lord says, *If any man serve me, let him follow me;* and 'tis the ultimate view in all the duties of every relation, that we *serve the Lord Christ.* The Apostle makes it the opposite term of the christians conversion from their gentile state; *How ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.*

Neh. ix. 17.
 Acts xxvii. 37.
 Rom. i. 9.
 2 Tim. i. 3.
 Luk. i. 74.
 Titus ii. 24.
 Coloss. iii. 24.
 1 Thess. i. 9.

THERE must be the united exercise and force of all our powers in the service of God; and it must be the proper work and business of life. Christianity is not a state of idleness and sloth; of carnal indulgence, and careless neglect: on the contrary, we must not be *slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; and not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promise.* To this purpose 'tis observable, that the word here us'd $\epsilon\upsilon\pi\eta\rho\epsilon\tau\acute{\eta}\sigma\alpha\varsigma$ is a metaphor taken from rowers in a vessel under the direction of a pilot; and denotes hard labour in our proper place. Every one must ply his oar, and keep his rank; we must employ our capacities, and fill up our time with proper instances of service and duty in the several relations of life and circumstances of things in which we are placed.

2. HE serves his *generation*. David was of a publick spirit, and serviceable to others as well as to himself. He was useful in every capacity in which he stood, as a ruler and a prophet, to the church and to the world. 'Tis said of him, that *he fed Israel according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.* The word, we render *generation*, signifies also *age*: he was a blessing to the age or generation in which he lived: the one refers to the people among whom he lived; the other to the period of time in which he lived.

A good man is a publick good, and makes others about him the better for him. He *looks not at his own things*; $\mu\grave{\eta}\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\ \epsilon\alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\omega}\nu\ \sigma\kappa\omicron\pi\epsilon\acute{\iota}\tau\epsilon$, makes not his own concerns his *scope* and end:
but

Philip. ii. but looks at the things of others, and naturally
 4. cares for their state. The Apostle says of him-
 1 Cor. ix. self; *Tho' I am free from all men, yet have I*
 19. *made myself a servant to all—— I am made all*
 22. *things to all men, that I might by all means save*
 Rom. i. *some.* And again, *I am debtor both to the Greeks,*
 14. *and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to*
the unwise. He complied with others weakness
 and mistakes, and accommodated himself to
 every circumstance, in all lawful things, in or-
 der to the good of others.

HE is concern'd to do good to all within his reach, and to make the world the better for him. Our blessed Redeemer *went about doing good* wherever he came, to the bodies and the souls of men; and the Apostle requires to *do good unto all men, especially to those of the household of faith.* We are not to be consider'd as single, independent, individuals in the creation; as if we were made only for our selves, and unconcern'd with others: but as parts of the whole, and variously related to others, and standing in connexion with the world about us. This must give measures and direction to all our service of others; as it is the reason and ground of it. Some indeed have a larger sphere of activity than others, by a publick character, and a high station, a greater capacity, and a wider influence; but a truly good man will be as useful as he can, and extend his service in proportion to the place he holds, the furniture he possesses, and the opportunities and calls, put into his hands. He lives for others as well as for himself, and is really a blessing to the world about
 him.

him*. And for this reason the death of a good man is always a publick loss: the world loses a friend and benefactor; and the loss is as general as all the instances of his usefulness and service to it, amounted to.

3. HE is especially concerned to serve his own generation. David *served his own generation*: he was useful to the age and generation in which he lived: and tho' his service and usefulness was not confined to it, but survived his own death, and descended to after-ages; his victories, and writings, and preparations for building the temple, had a beneficial influence upon after-times; yet that which is particularly remarked to his commendation here, is, that he served *his own generation*. And we are plainly instructed by this example, that a good man must be as serviceable as he can in the generation and age in which he lives. We must *do whatsoever our hands find us to do with all our might; and work the works of him who sent us, while it is day*. We should contribute our best endeavours, and lay out ourselves to the utmost, to make the world and age in which we live the better for us.

IMPROVE your talents and trusts with faithful diligence and wise care, to every purpose of the divine glory, and all the interests of the kingdom of God in the world. Make your own hands and eyes, as much as may be, your
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* Uni quippe vacat studiisque odiisque carenti,
Humanum lugere genus,——
——Patriæque impendere vitam,
Nec sibi, sed toti genitum se credere mundo.

executors and overseers; and leave not a needless burden to the uncertain care of those who come after. Men sometimes leave large estates, to charitable uses and publick benefactions, when they can enjoy them no longer themselves; and without any proportionable improvement of them while they live: the world is more beholden to death, than to them, for all the good they do; and they rather enable others to do good, than do any good themselves. And it sometimes proves accordingly; and is either misapplied and turn'd aside from the purpose design'd; or mismanaged by unfaithfulness and neglect; and it may be, in a course of years, entirely sunk and lost. They are so careful to do good to posterity, that they have no suitable regard to their own generation with which they are more immediately concern'd. They erect stately monuments to perpetuate their memory in after-times; and suffer the living *members* of Christ, and the *temples* of the Holy Ghost, to suffer want, and lie in ruins. And tho' I would not discourage any good design for the service of posterity, and readily own the great benefit to the world of some which have been well chosen, and wisely managed; and no doubt we should extend our usefulness to as wide a compass, and long duration as we can; yet I fear there is sometimes a mixture of vanity, and pride of fame, when men are careful to do good to those who come after them, to the neglect of their own generation, and without being useful to the present age: as men sometimes starve themselves, and live in
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the meanest obscurity, to leave enormous estates to prodigal heirs. They call their houses, as well as their lands, after their own names; and posterity approve their saying. But don't we take the work out of the hands of the next generation, who are more immediately concerned to support and serve it, as we are to do our own? If every man faithfully served his own generation, and did the utmost good he could in the age in which he lived; there would be the less need to be careful about future generations, and every one would be able, in a great measure, to support it self.

4. THIS service is measured and determined by the divine will. He served his own generation by the will of God: the construction of the words admit another rendering, i. e. That in his generation he served the will of God; which makes the service to refer directly, not to the generation, but to the will of God; he served the purposes and designs of the divine will in the generation in which he lived. The reference of the will of God to his falling on sleep; i. e. that he fell on sleep by the will of God, has no pretence from the letter of the text, or propriety in the character of David; for that is common to all men, and no mark of peculiar excellence. I shall follow our own rendering, that in all his service of his generation, he was under the direction of the divine will: it may be understood in a double reference.

Ἰσὴν γενεῶν
ὁ πατριάρχης
τῆν πρὸς
θεοῦ βουλὴν.

1. To the disposing will of God. So David served his own generation according to the sovereign

vereign pleasure and disposal of his providence, in his high station, and larger sphere; and in the different capacities of a prince and prophet. We must serve our generation according to the will of the sovereign ruler of the world; in such places of abode, and stations of usefulness; in such a condition of life and circumstance of things, as he sees fit; and according to the opportunities afforded, and during the season allotted to us. We must be willing to serve God in his own way, whether it be the way we would chuse or no: if he see fit to call us upon the publick stage, and place us in open view; to engage us in difficult service, and great opposition, as the Apostle *served the Lord with many tears and temptations*: or else to cast our lot in obscurity and meanness, and confine us to a private circumstance of life, and narrower sphere of usefulness: if he sees fit to continue us long in exercise and labour, and give us many years of usefulness in the world; or to call us off more early in life, and in the midst of our days; before we have finished our undertakings, or in the eager pursuit of them; our service must be determined by his sovereign will, in the kind, and all the circumstances of it. We must readily comply with our own prayers, when we say, *Thy will be done*; and follow the example of our obedient Lord, in every thing which befalls us; *Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done*. The holy Apostle paid a profound deference to the divine will; *I will return again to you, if God will*; and, *I trust to tarry a while with*

Aët. xviii.

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1 Cor. xvi.

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with you, if the Lord permit. And he directs the christians in this case; *for that you ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this* Jam. iv. 15. or that.

We should always act under a sense of the divine disposal in the nature of our service, and every circumstance of our case: "God has fixed me here by his providence, and called me out to the duty of my place: I must not move but by his direction, and the signification of his providential will; I must not shift my station, however difficult and uneasy, without a just warrant and call;" as a centinel keeps his post, though full of hazard, till he is *relieved*, and regularly discharged. Or else,

2. To his directing and *commanding* will, as the rule and measure of our service. It is said here of *David*; *To whom also God gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, after my own heart, who shall fulfill all my will;* —22. which is explain'd by *keeping that which the Lord commanded*, in the place referred to by 1 Sam. xiii. 14. the Apostle. We every where find the marks of his high esteem and delight in the divine law; and his constant regard to it upon all occasions. The revealed will of God is the reason and rule of all our service, and sets the bounds and limits to it. We must *do the will of our heavenly father*, and *work the works of him who sent us*, and *walk according to this rule*. A good man follows the light and direction of the divine word: he consults the *lively oracles*, and makes the *law of God his counsellors*, in all the dark-

ness of his mind, and difficulty of the way. He cheerfully submits to any signification of the divine will wherever he can discern it, and firmly adheres to it, whatsoever difficulty or inconvenience may attend it. 'Tis the sincere sense of his soul as well as his outward profession, *Whatsoever the Lord our God shall say, that will we do*; and *Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth*. I own thy sovereign right to command; and profess sincere subjection to thy will.

II. I am to consider his happy and comfortable *Death*: He *fell on sleep*. The metaphor is often us'd in Scripture to signify the happy death of good men, and I think is never us'd but of them in this sense. So *David* and *Solomon*, *Jehoshaphat* and *Hezekiah*, in the old testament are said to fall on sleep. Our Lord uses it of *Lazarus* in the new; and the Apostle frequently when he is discoursing of the resurrection. Now this must not be understood of the *soul*; as if that fell asleep at our dissolution; for that is not agreeable to the nature of the soul, which is a spiritual intellectual substance; not capable of being divided into parts; or being dissolved and corrupted, like gross matter, or bodily substance. Besides, 'tis essentially vital and active: it always acts, and cannot but act, in one kind and way or other. So that to suppose the soul to sleep, or fall into a state of inactivity, is quite opposite to all we know of the nature of the soul, and the most essential properties of it. Nor does it any better agree with the *Scripture*-account of the matter, than with the reason of the thing: For a state of

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service to our generation is preferable to a state of sleep and inactivity; and the Apostle could not reasonably desire, upon this supposition, to be *absent from the body*, that he might be *present with the Lord*; or be in a strait betwixt two, Philip. i. 23. i. e. the *desire to depart and be with Christ*, which was *far better for him*: and the *continuing in the flesh*, which was *more needful for them*. The thing would admit of no competition; for a life of usefulness to the church of God, and present enjoyment of Christ, was certainly better, than a state of insensibility in the grave. And death would not be, upon this supposition, as 'tis every where represented, a gain and benefit to good men; but a great disadvantage and loss; a long interval of darkness and silence; and an interruption to all the comfortable service and enjoyment of this world. Nor would it suit the description of the heavenly state, of being *this day with Christ in paradise*, and being *present with the Lord*; and of the *spirits of just men being now made perfect*; if that refer to the future state.

IT can therefore only be understood with respect to the *bodily* life, or separation of soul and body: and so 'tis represented by *falling on sleep*, upon such accounts as these;

I. WITH respect to the *temper* of their minds, or the ease and calm of spirit with which they die. Death is no more terrible to a good man's mind, who has a clear sense of his own integrity, and of the divine favour, than lying down and taking one's repose; or shutting one's eyes, and going to sleep. The putting off the

M 3

body

Deut.

xxxii. 49

body is but like putting off one's clothes, or *being unclothed*; and lying down in the grave, like stripping and going to bed. So God said to *Moses*, with an air of familiarity, *Go up into mount Nebo, and die in the mount*: q. d. Go take thy rest, and bid the world good-night. The reason is, that death is unting, and disarmed of all its terrors: The curse is removed by the death of Christ, and good men are deliver'd from the *bondage of fear*. 'Tis a covenant friend, and does them the kindest office, which is the king of terror to other men. They wait the appointed time for their great change, and receive it with welcome and joy.

2. As 'tis a cessation and *rest* from the labour and toil of the foregoing life. As men rest from their ordinary labour, and forget the cares and sorrow of life, when they lay themselves down to sleep; so a good man, at death, *finishes* his course of service, and has *fought the good fight of faith*: his *warfare is accomplished*, and he is discharged from laborious service, and spiritual conflicts, and all the troubles and difficulty of life. There is an end of every thing which was uneasy to them here; of all the sickness and pains of body, and all the cares and grief of their minds: *There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest*: *They rest in their grave, they enter into peace; each one walking, or having walked, in his uprightness*. The blessed dead *rest from the labour* of the present state; and in the future, *God will wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying,*

Rev. xxi.

ing, nor any more pain: i. e. nothing to disturb their repose, or interrupt their happiness and joy.

3. WITH respect to their being *awaked*, and raised up at last. They are fallen asleep indeed; but they will awake again, and rise at the general resurrection. The holy Psalmist says of himself; *I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness*: and he says of wicked men; *Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed upon them: the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning*: i. e. The morning after the night of death. The prophet says, *Thy dead men shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise; awake and sing ye who dwell in the dust*. And more directly, *Many of them who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life, and some to shame, and everlasting contempt*. The prophet speaks in the person of Christ, as a glorious conqueror, *I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death*. So our Lord says of *Lazarus*; *Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep*: i. e. raise him from the dead. The Apostle speaking of the resurrection, says, *And they who sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him*. i. e. in a glorious manner, and to infinite advantage; as a man rises refreshed after a sound sleep, or in the Psalmist's expression, as the rising sun which *rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race*. They will rise with new vigour of nature, and capacities more enlarged and improved: and then the glorified body shall be joined to its soul, and both be compleatly happy, and never be parted any more.

S E C T. II.

III. I am to consider the *relation* between these two, and shew how the one depends upon the other; *i. e.* how a life of useful service is the way to a comfortable death, and will have a blessed end. I shall represent it a little distinctly.

I. 'Tis the best evidence of *sincerity* of heart or the truth of our grace. Sincerity is the comprehensive indispensable article of the new covenant; the merciful allowance of the gospel, and lowest condescension of the divine grace, in distinction from legal rigour, or sinless perfection. It runs through all the graces of the christian life, and is the essential *form* of them; 'tis sincere faith, and sincere love, &c. Now sincerity of heart, which is the inward real sense of the mind, and the prevailing bent and bias of it, in its practical choice and determination; is best evidenced by genuine correspondent actions and exercises of it, as every habit and disposition of mind is known by the ordinary course of actions. An active useful life, in an entire devotedness to God, and zeal for doing good; is a surer evidence of an upright mind, and right habit of soul, than the fairest outward profession, or the most rapturous pretensions. This shews the true make and temper of the mind, and expresses the real sense of it. And tho' particular actions of any kind, and upon particular occasions, may proceed from other causes; yet an uniform course of action, is an undeceiving evidence of the make and habit of the mind: for no man dissembles or disguises his

his *main course*, tho' he may offer violence to nature, and lay a restraint upon himself in particular actions, and for a certain time.

AND nothing is so proper, in its own place, to make death comfortable, as the sense of our own integrity: for this carries a clear conviction to our mind of our main state, and delivers us from uneasy fears and doubt, and the darkness and uncertainty which often cloud and perplex it. This plainly shews that we are truly sanctified and renewed; and have that faith which justifies when it *works by* Jam. ii. *love*, and is made *perfect by works*, i. e. entire²² and compleat in its proper fruits; and that our love is *unfeigned*, and *without dissimulation* when 'tis not in *word or in tongue*, but in *deed*^{i Joh. iii.} *and in truth*: as a tree appears to be alive in-¹⁸ deed, and in a flourishing state, when 'tis not only covered with blossoms, but laden with ripe fruit. It answers the challenges of our own mind, and the charges of hypocrisy and unfaithfulness, when we have walked uprightly, and been useful in the world. This was the comfort of the Apostle's soul when he had the *sentence of death* in himself; *This is our*^{2 Cor. i.} *rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in*⁹ *simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wis-*¹² *dom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.*

2. It entitles us to certain *promises* of the covenant. The promise of the gospel is the proper ground of our faith, and spring of our joy, living and dying: and tho' the promises of the new covenant are gracious and free, in
 opposition

opposition to worthiness and desert; for they are all founded in the *blood of Christ*, and are all *yea, and amen in him*; yet they are not promiscuous and common, but limited to a qualified subject. We can lay no claim to the blessings of the promise, but in the way in which it is promised, and upon the gracious terms of it: It would be otherwise a bold and groundless presumption, and prove a false and pernicious hope. Now there are promises made to faithful diligence and active service; and God, for Christ's sake, will graciously accept and forgive, and will own and reward a faithful soul, who has laid out himself in the service of Christ, and in doing good. They who improve their talents, and make an answerable increase, will be approved and rewarded at last: *Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*; when the unprofitable servant, the slothful and negligent, will be condemned and punished. The Apostle says, *To them, who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will render eternal life.* We must not be slothful, but *followers of them who through faith and patience now inherit the promise.* It was not by sloth, but in the way of diligence, and in the exercise of faith and patience, that they came to inherit the promise; and so it must be with us. And again, *Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence—for if you do these things, ye shall never fall; and so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom.* And, *Blessed are they who do his commandments,*

Rom. ii.
7.

Heb. vi.
11, 12.

1 Pet. i.
10.

Rev. xxii.
14.

mandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and enter in thro' the gates into the city; i. e. a right by gracious promise.

AND it cannot but be an unspeakable comfort to a dying christian to reflect upon the covenant of God, which is *well ordered and sure*, and is *all his salvation and all his desire*.

What strong consolations and living supports may be derived in his dying moments, from the consideration of his relation and interest in God? With what peace, and rest, and liberty of mind may he depart, who has the security of an everlasting covenant, and the faithful promise to plead and depend upon? How firm a foundation is this for our faith; what a spring and reason of joy?

3. IT will minister comfortable *reflections* to our mind at last. Tho' there is no pretence to desert at the hands of God in a fallen creature, or possibility of obliging the Almighty by our best service; when we have *done all, we are unprofitable servants* in that respect; and have great reason to lament our unworthiness and imperfection, and look to the great atonement for pardon and acceptance; yet, as it is an evidence of our sincerity of heart, and of our interest in the promise; so 'tis a proper matter of thankfulness to God, and comfortable reflection of mind, that we have served our generation, and been useful in life. It will set easy upon our minds, and admit a comfortable review, and yield powerful supports, under all the uneasiness of dissolving nature, and the nearest expectation of our change.

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We shall be able to look back upon a useful life with this comfortable thought; that we have, in our main course, been well employed, and in some measure answered the ends of life; that we have *done what was our duty to do*, and our governing ends and views were right. The sense of regularity and service of life will naturally excite our thankfulness and praise upon a dying bed; “Blessed be God in
 “ the midst of many defects, I have not been
 “ wholly useless and insignificant; that the
 “ business and design of life has been to please
 “ God, and do good; that by the grace of
 “ God I have laboured in his service, I hope,
 “ with faithfulness, tho’ not more abundant-
 “ ly than many others.” As on the other hand; the remembrance of sloth and neglects, of a careless and disorderly walk, will fill the mind with confusion, and breed the greatest distress.

So we find that holy men have comforted themselves in the troubles of life, and the prospects of death, with reflections upon their past usefulness. When *Hezekiah* was sick unto death, he turned himself to the wall, and said; *I beseech thee, O Lord, remember how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which was good in thy sight.* His personal integrity, and usefulness in the world, was a cordial to his fainting mind, and a living comfort under the apprehension of death: And he was not comforted by false or mistaken grounds. When *Nebemiah* reflected upon his good government,
 and

and reformation of abuses in the Jewish church; he says, *Think upon me, O my God, for good,* Neh. v. *according to all I have done for this purpose.* 19. And again, *Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the* xiii. 22. *greatness of thy mercy.* And the holy Psalmist says; *Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked* Psal. xxvi. *in my integrity; I have trusted also in the Lord,* 1. *therefore I shall not slide.* What a comfort must it be to a true believer to close his life with the words of his dying Lord; *I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work* John xvii. *which thou gavest me to do; and now, O father,* 4. *glorify thou me?*

4. IT is a good reason of our future hopes. A good man may look forward, as well as backward with comfort and peace in a dying hour, from the sense of his usefulness and service of life: for it gives him the prospect of a gracious regard from God, and a glorious reward for ever. The reward is indeed *of grace* and *not of debt*, and infinitely beyond the proportion of our service, and all pretence of desert; but we are encouraged to expect the heavenly blessedness, purchased by Christ, and promised in the gospel, after a life of faithful service. So the Apostle, in prospect of his approaching change, when he was *now ready to be offer'd up*, and the *time of his departure was at hand*, says, *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, and kept the faith; I have been faithful to my trust, and diligent* 2 Tim. iv. *in my work; and henceforth is laid up for me* 7. *a crown of righteousness, which God the right-*
teous

teous judge will give me. And he says, that they who do good, and are rich in good works
 1 Tim. iv. —lay up in store for themselves, a good found-
 18, 19. —*lay up in store for themselves, a good foundation against the time to come, i. e. an evidence of title or ground of hope, that they may lay hold on eternal life.* And he exhorts the christians, to *shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; and not be slothful, but followers, &c.* By a course of diligence we attain a confirmed hope of the future blessedness.

Heb. vi.
 11.

A good man has the prospect of rest and blessedness after all the labour of life, and loss of present good. He is leaving the world indeed, and all the comforts of life; but he is *looking for the blessed hope*; and has a joyful and lively hope of the glory of God, and of the heavenly inheritance. He can have *respect to the recompence of reward*, when the service and sufferings of life are over; and *look to the joy which is set before him*, under all the burdens of dying nature, and the sorrows and mourning of all about him. He sometimes feels his heart spring with joy under the nearer views of the final blessedness, and rejoices with a glorious and unspeakable joy, that his *salvation is nearer than when he first believed*; and his complete redemption draweth nigh. His heart is glad, and his glory rejoiceth, his flesh also resteth in hope: for God will not leave his soul in hell, or the grave; but will *shew him the path of life*: in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. Thus the righteous hath hope in his death. I proceed,

Pfal. xvi.
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IV. To apply it in some practical remarks.

I. IT reproves those who are of an opposite character to this of the text, and *don't* serve their generation: men of a narrow and selfish spirit, who only serve themselves, and *mind their own things*; but not the *things of Christ*, or the *things of others*: who confine their cares within the little circle of their private interests, or their own party; without regarding the welfare of others, and the good of the world about them: as if they were born for themselves, and all the world was made for them; instead of their being born for the good of others. They *seek great things for themselves*, in a common distress; and are not *grieved for the afflictions of Joseph*. They are satisfied to be safe, whosoever is in danger; and not concerned for the welfare of the church of God, or zealous for its interests and service: they *don't seek the welfare* of the places where they live, or *prefer Jerusalem to their chief joy*. This is directly contrary to the character and manner of a publick-spirited and useful man.

AND much more are they to be blamed, upon the same ground, who *disserve* their generation, and make the world the worse for them, and do harm to all about them: who by the advantage of superiour wit and power, or reputation and influence, spread the infection of error and vice, and corrupt the principles and manners of men. What have they to answer for, who instead of promoting the publick good, and the interests of religion in the world, in-

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ftil the principles of *faction* and *infidelity*, to the disturbance of the publick peace, and the weakening the evidence and credit of divine revelation, which is the best rule of our duty, the spring of our comforts, and surest ground of our future hope? 'Tis a melancholy reflection, that so many men of the finest parts and accomplishments, of credit and esteem in the world, and capable of serving the interests of virtue and religion with peculiar advantages, have spent their lives in recommending vice, and putting religion out of countenance. This will be so far from making death comfortable, that it will sit heavy upon an awakened mind, and render death full of terrors. They will have reason to wish they had never been *born*; or never had such talents and opportunities from God, or credit and regard from men: or that they had been born *idiots*, and lived all their days in obscurity and contempt.

2. WE should be *cautioned* from hence, that under a pretence of serving our generation, we don't *neglect* our own souls and our own affairs. Tho' this don't stand in direct opposition to the character of the text; yet, it makes it inconsistent with other duty. We must not therefore be careful of others good, and neglect our own souls; or be forward and zealous in promoting publick affairs; and in the mean time neglect our own families, and private concerns. We must not be *cumbred with serving* others, and neglect the *one thing needful*; and while we become our *brother's keeper*, forget our selves,
and

and be *keepers of others vineyards*, when our *own vineyard we have not kept*.

LET men begin at home, and lay the foundation right: look to your own souls, and your own affairs, in the first place; for we are to *love our neighbour as ourselves*, not more than ourselves, or above ourselves. See that your own souls are safe, and that you stand upon good terms with God, before you pretend to censure and reform what is amiss in others. Let no regard to the publick good make you neglect the duty of your place, or break in upon retired converses with God, and the daily care of your souls. This would bring a scandal upon our pretences to serve the publick good, and unspeakably prejudice the success of our endeavours. Whereas if we first *take heed to ourselves*, we shall serve our generation with the greater advantage; for we shall act in our proper place, and with greater effect of good.

3. LET me *exhort* every one to serve his generation by the will of God. Let your life be a state of service and doing good: act with faithfulness, and the full force of all your powers, rais'd to the highest pitch, and improved to the best advantage. *Stir up the gift and grace of God which is in you: summon all that is within you: be not slothful, but fervent in spirit: whatsoever you do, do it heartily, and with all your might: Give all diligence.* Let every one be up and doing in his proper place, and suitably employed, as those who are heartily devoted to God, and engaged in his service.

Do all the good you can to others, and don't confine your care to your own souls, and your own affairs; though they must not be neglected; we must begin there, but we must not end there too. Act always with generous views: extend your regards to all about you: lay it down as a point of duty, and propose it to yourselves as a fixed end, to be doing all the good you can, and be blessings to the world about you: that your age and generation may be some way or other the better for you; and it may never come to be said of you, "He only cumbered the ground, and took up the place of a more useful person; it had been as well for the world if he had never been born, or had any being and standing in it: or never had such capacities of nature, or possessions of life; or had died much sooner than he did; the world sustained no loss by his death." Ask yourselves often, whom have I profited, and who is the better for me? Have I done all I could for others benefit within my reach; according to the compass of my ability, and opportunities of service? Yea, and if you can, extend your usefulness beyond your own generation, and to the utmost length, as well as the greatest numbers. Let following ages reap the fruit of your diligence and care, or of your kindness and bounty to the world.

PARTICULARLY, measure all your service by the divine will. Walk and act, not at random, but according to rule; not by your own will and humour, or by the will of other men; but according to the will of God. *Prove what is the good and holy and acceptable will of God;*
search

search the scriptures for proper notices of the divine will, where the great lines of duty, as well as of truth, are made plain, that a *way-faring man shall not err*, and *he who runs may read*. Keep close to your rule, and follow its guidance wherever it leads you. Govern your whole course by the light and direction of it, and yield up every interest and inclination to it. Let a plain declaration of the divine will, in any case, weigh more with you, and weigh down every other consideration.

4. BE excited to the service of your generation, by the consideration of your *death*: This is an awful and serious thought, that death will come, and we must quickly fall on sleep. We know not how soon it may be, but we know that 'tis very certain, and daily approaching. We have so much the less time to live in this world, by all the time we have already lived in it. Who knows how soon our turn may come, or who among us shall be removed next? We may be seized with a sudden distemper, arrested by death before we are aware; struck off the stage of action at once, and disabled for service for ever. Death, whensoever it comes, puts an end to our state of present service, and all our opportunities and advantages for it. There is no *work in the grave whither thou art going*, and the *night cometh when no man can work*. In the grave there is no remembrance of him. We are now the *children of the light, and of the day*; let us *not sleep as do others: but watch and be sober*. Fill up the little space of uncertain time with faithful diligence, and proper duty. Put

not off the work of life, nor any service to others; because you know not but you may be surprized and prevented: death may stop you short in a full career, and cut you off in the midst of your designs: *His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his dust, in that very day his thoughts perish*: all thoughts of further usefulness in the world. This will make death comfortable whensoever it comes; and afford powerful supports under all the troubles which may attend it. Death will be no surprize to a prepared soul; and will lose its terror to one who is faithful. The sense of his own sincerity of heart, and of his interest in God; the present experience of the divine mercy, and the future hopes of blessedness; will make him easy under all the pressures of sinking nature; and joyful, in the prospect of eternity. Nothing will set so well upon his mind, or be so *sensible* a relief under the exigence and agonies of his last moments; as a life sincerely devoted to God, and employed for the good of the world. And faithful diligence in doing good will be followed with a *great recompence of reward*; and render the *remaining rest* desirable, as well as death comfortable. 'Tis a dangerous deceit to reckon upon peace in our end, and happiness in heaven; after a course of sin; or slothful neglects: but they who *give diligence*, will be *found of their judge in peace*; and faithfulness in present service, will meet with acceptance and approbation at last. *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*—for they *rest from their labours, and their works follow them*: i. e. The fruit

Pf. cxlvi.

4.

Heb. x.

35.

Rev. xiv.

13.

fruit and reward of them. The thoughts of the future blessedness, and final rest, will enlarge their views, and revive their hearts; raise them above the fears of death, and give them the joy of hope. Death will be only a release from a state of misery and imperfection; and an entrance into a state of glorious light and everlasting joy.

I have finished what I designed from the text; and shall proceed to speak of our deceased friend; to whom the words agreed so well in both their parts; as to the usefulness of his life, and the comfort of his death: and neither the long intimacy of acquaintance, nor great endearments of friendship, shall lead me to say any thing of him, but what I knew to be true; and believe may be honourable to the divine grace, and exemplary and instructing to others. He was born of parents who were eminently pious and useful, and had the great advantage of religious education and example: but received the first thorough impressions of serious religion in attending the evening lectures of a reverend person in this neighbourhood. He became a member of this church in his early youth, and before his settlement in the world. He began betimes with God, and was in good earnest in religion; and had that serious sense of God, and zeal for doing good in his younger years, which grew up with him, and was so conspicuous and remarkable in him all his days. He sometimes lamented the eagerness of his youth, in wrangling about difficult speculations with other

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christians,

christians, whom he had reason to believe were sincerely good, and had often a great deal to say for themselves: but was early cured of the hurtful vanity by his own experience, who found it injurious to his own spirit, and prejudicial to practical godliness and brotherly love. He faithfully followed his own light; but had a sincere good-will to those who differed from him, and in proportion to the degrees of goodness, he apprehended in them.

HE was a man of the clearest *sincerity*; and in whose *spirit was no guile*. The frankness and openness of his mind, joined with a sweetness and goodness of temper, and mixed with candour and discretion, rendered his conversation exceeding agreeable, and his friendship highly valued. He was naturally active, and had a zeal for doing good: of this, the many persons and families supported and relieved in the difficulties and distresses of life, by his help, and by his influence, are living witnesses. He was always ready to bear a part in any good design; and had an admirable skill in engaging the help of others. I never once found him backward; but have often been afraid to move him upon such occasions. He had found it the way to the divine blessing, and earnestly recommended it to those about him: and contrary to the unaccountable humour which ordinarily prevails, with the increase of wealth; he enlarged his bounty, upon all occasions, in proportion to the increase of his substance. And it was returned back into his own bosom; for God remarkably

markably prospered his diligence and dexterity; and he was as generally esteemed and beloved, as any man of his rank and condition, I have ever known; and his death as generally lamented and laid to heart.

HE retained his integrity till he died, and carried a clear and unspotted reputation thro' the world, in the midst of a great variety of business, and many snares of life. He was under an habitual sense of God, and watchfulness over himself. No man ever more constantly attended the publick worship, in the stated and occasional opportunities. Who ever saw him absent, for many years together, from the house, or the table of the Lord? and his close attention, and serious deportment, were the lively indications of the inward reverence and delight of his soul. He attended the affairs of the church, of which he was several years an officer, with an exact care, and a tender regard to the interests of the poor, and was ever forward to any service in which the welfare of it was concerned. His religion was not confin'd to the publick worship; for he constantly worshipp'd God in his family; and often instructed and called them to an account; and encouraged and directed them in the ways of God, in his private discourse. He had a great favour of divine things in his own heart; and by the advantage of a faithful memory, was able to repeat the principal parts of the sermons he heard on the Lord's days, to his family. It was very observable, that he was never known, in any hurry of business, to neglect secret duty, and retiring into his closet.

HE had a sound understanding and a quick and lively apprehension of mind; and had looked with care, as far as his leisure and opportunities allowed, into the state of religion in the world, and the workings of human nature: The effect was an humble modest sense of himself, and a love to all whom he judged sincere. His mind was entirely delivered from all intemperate zeal for any party or peculiar opinion. He firmly adhered to the great principles and duties of the christian doctrine; and acted in an entire dependence upon the divine grace in all the service he performed, and expected pardon and acceptance only thro' Christ. He was remarkably just and inoffensive in his tongue and behaviour towards other men; for he was a *lover of good men*, and a friend of mankind. He detested a rash and censorious humour, and sitting in judgment upon the hearts and the states of other men: he would no more have slander'd a fellow-christian, than he would have cheated and oppressed him. How faithful and tender he was in every relation in which he stood, as a child and a brother; as a husband and father; as a christian and a friend, is well known to all who knew him, and had the advantage of any relation to him.

HE was seiz'd with a violent disorder, which quickly run to a great height, and carried him off in a few days. He told me when I first saw him, that he blessed God, he had made it the business of his life to please him; and that he was not afraid to die, and
had

had no concern upon that account: he only feared impatience of spirit under his restless disorders. When he once apprehended himself in the agonies of death, he expressed an unshaken satisfaction of mind, and a triumphant joy; "That if it pleased God he might have his own choice, he would not return back to this world upon any account; and tho' his wife and children were very dear to him, yet being with Christ was *far better*; and that he now saw an interest in him was more valuable than ten thousand worlds." And when his friends desir'd him to forbear speaking, for fear of heightening his distemper, he said, "What, must I hold my peace when God has been so gracious to me, and manifested himself in such a manner? I am full of the manifestations of his love, and must I be silent? I know not how long Satan may be chained up." And when he attempted to speak something to every one about him, and was press'd to silence, he said! "Then a full vessel must be pent up; but I leave you all with God." He departed in silent slumbers, and after he had *served his generation, fell on sleep*. He lived usefully, and died in peace; and has left us who remain a great example of activity and zeal in the service of God; and a lively instance of the comforts and hope of the christian life. And may we all *shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; and be followers of them, who thro' faith and patience do now inherit the promise.*



S E R M O N II.

Of Readiness for the coming of the Lord.

M A T T H. XXIV. 44.

Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh.

3. **T**HE Words were occasioned by our Lord's Answer to a twofold *Question* of the disciples, in the beginning of the chapter: *Tell us when shall these things be; and what shall be the signs of thy coming, and of the end of the world?* Now, tho' 'tis probable, they thought these *two* would be together; and that he would not appear to the *destruction* of *Jerusalem*, till the *end* of the world; yet our Lord, who knew otherwise, gave a distinct *Answer* to each, and sufficiently marks out the difference to those who closely observe. He discourses concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem*, in answer to the first part of their question, from *ver. 4. to 28.* and of the end of the world, and his appearance to judgment, from

from thence to 31. And as the former gave *occasion* to the discourse of the latter, and was a remarkable *type* and representation of it; so 'tis plainly *distinguished* from it, by a distinct manner of expression. Thus he opposes *those things*, *i. e.* the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and which *Mark* explains by *those great buildings*; and his *coming* or appearing at the *end of the world*; which are expressions appropriate to his final appearance: The one, he expresses *plurally* all along, *those days*; the *tribulation of those days*; and *the days of vengeance*: The other always *singularly*; *that day*, and *that hour*; denoting some *one* great day, and which is frequently called in other places, *the day of the Lord*. The *former*, he constantly speaks of in the *second* person, and directs his discourse to them who were *present*; *take ye heed*, and *ye shall bear of wars*. Of the *latter*, he speaks in the *third* person, without particular application to any age or people, and as a thing of more *general* and extensive concern. He distinguishes between the *signs* of the one, and the other; 'tis *after the tribulation of those days*, which relate to the destruction of *Jerusalem*, that the *sun shall be darkned*, and the *moon not give her light*, and the *stars fall from heaven*. Of the former, he says expressly, *This generation shall not pass away till all these things are fulfilled*: Of the latter, *of that day and hour knoweth no man*.

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36.

AFTER this description, he proceeds to exhort them to discern the *signs* of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, which would be so visible;

42. and to *watch*, because they *knew not the time*
 43. *when the Lord would come*; as a wife householder
 would *watch if he had known the hour when the*
thief would come. And renews this advice in a
 different *form* in the words of the text: *There-*
fore be ye also ready, &c. Q. D. Since worldly
 prudence is sufficient to direct you in the *lower*
 affairs of life to secure the possessions of the
 world, and provide against a probable danger;
 how much rather should you be prepared for
 the *coming* of the Lord, which is a matter of
 infinitely *greater* concern, and the precise
 time is not certainly known?

THE Words consist of two parts.

I. THE *duty* exhorted to: *Be ye also ready.*

II. THE *reason* to enforce it, *For in an*
hour that ye think not the son of man cometh.

I shall speak distinctly to both;

S E C T. I.

I. THE *duty* to which we are exhorted.
 To be *ready*. And because this is a matter of
 greatest moment to every one, I shall endeavour
 to give you a distinct *idea* of that *readi-*
ness for the coming of Christ, which the gos-
 pel requires and makes necessary. It signifies
 in the general a *due preparation*; so 'tis said
 in the gospel feast, to denote the suitability
 and preparation of divine mercy, *All things*
are ready. It comprehends whatsoever is
 necessary to the present favour, or final ac-
 ceptance with our judge. But more particu-
 larly, this *readiness* may be distinguished into
habitual

habitual and *actual*; either as 'tis necessary to a *safe* or *comfortable* departure and appearance before him.

§ I. HABITUAL readiness. 'Tis primarily and *fundamentally* necessary, that we should be upon *good terms* with God; and because every *fallen* creature labours under the double misery of the *condemnation* and *displeasure* of a *righteous* God; and a *depravation* of nature, which renders him contrary to an *holy* God; in order to his *reconciliation* and *acceptance*, two things are absolutely necessary; the one *relative*, and respects his *state*: the other *real*, and respects the *temper* of his mind.

1. As to the relative change of *state*: and that consists in the *pardon* of sin thro' the blood of Christ. The sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ was the great *atonement* and *propitiation* for sin. We have *redemption* Eph. i. 7. thro' his blood, even the *forgiveness* of sin: and he has made *reconciliation* for the sins of the peo- Heb. ii. ple. He has made atonement to God, and pro-¹⁷ cured the divine favour upon the most gracious terms revealed and proposed in the gospel. This is the tenour of the gospel-covenant, that sincere penitent believers shall be forgiven and accepted: for *him bath God set forth to be a* Rom. iii. *propitiation thro' faith in his blood*; and *repent,* ^{25.} *and be converted,* ^{Act. iii.} *that your sins may be blotted* ^{19.} *out.* So that in order to our acceptance and favour with God, *God for Christ's sake must* Eph. iv. *forgive our sin.* Upon our sincere believing in ^{32.} Jesus, and repenting of sin, the *obligation* to punishment is remitted, and we are *discharged* from

from condemnation. Sin is no longer *imputed* to us, or *laid to our charge*; and there is now *no condemnation*, or damning guilt.

AND there is always necessarily *consequent* upon pardon, and *connected* with it *restored rights*; a right to all *purchased* benefits, and a title to the heavenly *inheritance*. We find them both joined together in that excellent scripture: *To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God; that they might receive the forgiveness of sin, and an inheritance among them who are sanctified, by faith that is in me.* And this, I take it, is the precise meaning of what the Apostle so often represents under the notion of

Act. xxvi. 18.

Tit. iii. 7. *justification: we are justified by his grace, and made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* In this way only a guilty sinner can hope to be *found of his judge in peace*; or *find mercy of the Lord at the great day.* The Apostle's great

2 Cor. v. 9.

Philip. iii. 9.

ambition was, *whether present or absent to be accepted of him, and to be found in him.*

2. As to what is *real*, or the change of nature; there must be the *renovation* of the spirit, or restoration of the divine *image*. The *frame* of depraved nature must be rectified, and the prevailing *bent* altered: we must be set to rights in *all* the powers of our souls, and in a *prevailing* degree. And this may be conceived distinctly to lie in an hearty *surrender* and entire *subjection* of soul to God thro' Christ. With respect to the former, he is represented as the *bridegroom*; one to whom we are to stand in so near a *relation*, and whom

whom we are to choose as the most suitable and desirable good. So we are said to be betrothed unto the Lord; and to be espoused unto Hof. ii. Christ as a chaste virgin; and to be married ^{19.} to him. We willingly take him as our bus- ² Cor. xi. band and head, and consent to him as the blef- Rom. vii. sed bridegroom of our souls. He is dear and ^{4.} precious to them who believe: so near a relation is esteemed the highest honour, and our happiness lies in being with him and beholding his glory. They reckon it better to be present with the Lord, tho' absent from the body, than every earthly good. Has there ever been such a solemn transaction between God and your souls, as a covenant-surrender to him, with all your heart, and without reserve? Have you been brought to give your selves to the Lord, upon a thorough conviction of his real excellence and unquestionable right; and to look upon your selves, and all that is yours, as things dedicated and devoted to him, and which cannot without the grossest sacrilege, be alienated from him?

BESIDES, there must be an entire *subjection* of soul to him; for we take him as our Lord, as well as choose him for our *portion*. The Apostle mentions both together: *whom I am,* Act. xxvii. *and whom I serve.* He is represented here as ^{23.} the Lord of the household, who appoints his servants their proper work, and gives them their ^{45.} *meat in due season.* He is a Lord to be obeyed, as well as a *portion* to be enjoyed; and we must *serve* him faithfully, as well as expect our reward from him. We must have respect
to

to all his commands, and walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless; without a single exception, or any dislike. We must cast down imaginations, and every high thing which exalteth it self against the knowledge of God; and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. As we are devoted to him, we must be employed by him; and be willing instruments of his glory; ready to serve his interests, and to be at his dispose: his will must be a sufficient reason of cheerful obedience in the most difficult instance of duty, and his glory the highest end of all we do. To us to live must be Christ; the proper business of life and the end of every action of it. It must be our earnest desire, that Christ may be magnified in our body, whether by life or by death; and that God in all things may be glorified by us thro' Jesus Christ. And thus every sincere christian is ready for the coming of Christ, and can't be utterly surprized, or found unready. But because they may not be always in a suitable frame, or right disposition of soul, therefore,

2 Cor. x.
25.

Philip. i.
21.

—20.

1 Pet. iv.
11.

§. 2. THERE is an *actual* readiness; or a suitable frame and posture of soul. And this may be considered as lying either in the performance of certain special duties; or in the exercise of certain suitable graces. And both are necessary wherever there is time and opportunity afforded; and according to the measure of our capacities and helps: I shall briefly represent them both.

I. THERE must be the performance of some special duties, which have a nearer relation to the

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the present case. As now for example: there must be a wise *improvement* of our proper talents. We are all *stewards* of several talents; the Lord of the household has committed many things to our care, and dealt forth his mercy with a kind and bountiful hand: there are *diversities of gifts, but the same spirit; and he divideth to every man severally as he will.* ^{1 Cor. xii.} Thus we have *natural* faculties and noble powers, of understanding and memory, of will and affections, and executive powers: the gifts of *common* providence, as life and time; liberty and health; convenience and comfort of life; riches, interest, reputation in the world: especially *vouchsafements* of divine mercy; the means of grace, and opportunities of spiritual advantage, and efficacious influences of the divine spirit. Now a *steward must be faithful*, if he would give a good *account* of his *stewardship.* We must *trade* with our talents *till he come, that he may receive his own with usury;* ^{Luk. xix.} and wisely improve every blessing to its respective purpose and end; to promote the *glory* of the great Lord, and serve his *interest* in the world, in all the *capacities* and *relations* in which we stand. “If any thing I possess
 “in this world, or any thing I am capable of
 “doing, may the least contribute to promote
 “his glory; I stand ready to obey his call,
 “and am willing to make the best advantage
 “of it.” And they who hide their *talents in a napkin*, as well as they who abuse and squander them away, will be *stript naked*, and severely censured at last.

AGAIN, there must be faithful *diligence* in our particular *callings*. The great Lord of all has *determined the bounds of our habitation*; and directed the circumstances of our lives: and every man must abide in the same calling where-
 1 Cor. vii. 20. in he was called, till he is called from it, by the plain voice of providence. This seems intended in the expression: *blessed is the servant whom the Lord when he cometh shall find so doing*; properly employed, in the respective duties of his place, as a wife and faithful servant under the special direction and appointment of his Lord. We must be diligent in the particular *business* of life, each one in his proper *station*, and about his proper *work*. The Apostle
 Colos. ii. 24. directs servants; *whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not as to men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ: they serve Christ in faithful doing their master's service*. And the Apostle Peter excites
 2 Pet. iii. 14. christians to be *diligent, that they may be found of him in peace*. Idleness and security, a careless and indifferent mind, is a just reproach at present, and will fall under a heavy condemnation at last. The *wicked and slothful* servant will be cast into *outward darkness*. It was an excellent saying to this purpose of the renowned Calvin, when his friends dissuaded him from immoderate study in his declining age; *that his Lord when he came, should not find him idle*.

BESIDES, there must be a cautious *watchfulness* against sin. Here lies our danger in the present state: we are surrounded with *snares* on

on every hand, and almost every object about us is capable of drawing forth our corruption, enflaming our passions, and raising some irregular or immoderate desire; or being an instrument and occasion of sin. Now there is need of continual watch over our selves, and guard against every thing about us; especially the temptations of our own *inclination* and temper; and our respective *places* and circumstances of life, that no agreeable good entangle and defile our souls; or any propensity to evil, be encouraged and indulged. Our Lord himself cautions his disciples, with reference to this case, against *violence, sensuality, and worldliness*. 'Tis said of the *evil servant who began to smite his fellow-servants, and eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him*. And more particularly in *Luke, take heed to your selves, lest at any time your heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this world; and so that day come upon you unawares*. 'Tis an ill posture of mind for the coming of the Lord to be found in the midst of *angry contention, and violent opposition to other good men* *; or to be at enmity with others, when we should be *found of our judge in peace*. And

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* A good man would not be very willing, when his Lord comes, to be found so doing, and, as it were, *beating his fellow-servant*; and all controversy, as 'tis usually managed, is little better. A good man would be loth to be taken out of the world, *reaking hot* from a sharp contention with a preverie adversary; and not a little *out of countenance*, to find himself in this temper translated into the calm and peaceable regions of blessedness, where nothing but perfect charity and good-will reign for ever. Archbishop Tillotson's preface to the sermons of *steadfastness* in religion.

fenfual *excess*, and earthly *cares*, easily insinuate and possess the mind, and strongly divert, and indispose it to any serious and spiritual purpose.

—64. FINALLY, there must be the solemn exercise of *devotion*. We must *watch and pray*, that we *enter not into temptation*; and that we may be *accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the son of man*. Our life must be a daily converse with God in a course of religious duties, with whom we hope to live and converse for ever. There must be fervent *prayer* enliven'd with the thoughts of the appearance of Christ, and its daily approach: constant *attendance* on all the parts of divine worship in private and publick, as we have call and opportunity: particularly the solemn exercise of *meditation*; the workings of holy thoughts and desires; and inward reflections and reviews of our state, and frequent tryals and *self-examination*. By conversing much with God and our selves, we come to be *transformed* into his likeness, and fit for the *appearance* of our Lord.

2. THERE is the *exercise* of certain suitable *graces*; or due dispositions of mind peculiarly suitable to it. For example: there must be a *weaned* heart from the present world; and a *willingness* to leave it at his call. The world is a *sensible* thing, and suitable to our sensible nature: 'tis always near us, and always about us, and under some or other appearance of it, smiling and grateful. 'Tis apt to *strike* powerfully upon our senses which lie outwardmost,
and

and receive the first impressi^on; and to raise too high a value in our minds, and too strong affections toward it. And nothing is so dead a *weight* upon the *aspiring* soul, or so strong a *diversion*; nothing so apt to make us, like *Lot's* wife, linger and hancker after what we must leave behind us; or ready to say with the disciple upon the mount, *'tis good for us to be here*. This earth has a *central* force, and naturally draws to it self whatsoever is *congenial* within its *sphere* of motion. And the *spirit of the world*, or an earthly mind, naturally tends towards its *center*.

Now in order to our actual readiness for the coming of Christ, we must be *mortified* to sensible good; and *crucified to the world by the cross of Christ*; and have the *victory of faith* Gal. vi. 14. 1 Joh. v. 4. which *overcometh the world*. We must be dead to the *charms* and *terrors* of a vain and flattering world; that is, so thorowly convinced of the vanity of the creature, as to renounce it as a *portion*, and set loose to all the *lawful* enjoyments of it. We must keep up an *indifference* of mind in the fullest enjoyment, and be *as though we possess it not*; and let our *moderation* be known to all men, *because the Lord is at hand*: which respects moderate cares and enjoyments of worldly good; that we may not be too eagerly *engaged* in the pursuit, or violently *rent* from it at last, and *torn* from its embraces with a grieved and *reluctant* heart. We must be *content* to leave the world at the call of Christ, and for the sake of being with him, who is our *hope*, and our *life*; and which is

far better than the dearest enjoyment, and best circumstance of life.

BESIDES, A patient *submission* under present tryals, is very proper to this case; and that not only under the present *delays* of his coming, which is sometimes an exercise to a prepared soul: they are ready to say, *why are his chariots so long a coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariots?* but especially under the *burdens* of nature, and sufferings of life, in the mean time; and whatsoever he sees fit to make their tryal in this world. If the latter end of their way is rough and uneasy to them; thick beset with difficulties; encompassed with darkness, with many pains of body, and decays of nature; with perplexities of affairs, and *trouble in their soul*; they must *possess their souls in their patience*; i. e. not be turned out of the possession of themselves, or *lie at the mercy* of any *accident* which befalls them. They must have a quiet composure under the burden of *dissolving* nature, and the greatest *affliction* of life, and be *patient until the coming of the Lord*, and in the view and consideration of it. 'Tis equally the language of *impatience* and *security* to say with the evil servant, *my Lord delays his coming*.

Luk. xxi.
19.

Jam. v. 7.

AGAIN, Humble *resignation* to the divine pleasure is peculiarly proper. We must not only be composed into *silent submission*, but *cheerful resignation* to his sovereign will: *willing* to be at his direction and disposal as to the *time* and *place*, the *manner* and *circumstances* of our departure and removal; "let him do
" what

“ what he will with me, for he has a right
 “ to dispose of his own. I am more his than
 “ I am my own, and his right to me is greater
 “ than any creature’s can be. He is my graci-
 “ ous *Redeemer*, as well as my proper *Lord*: I
 “ have given up my self to him, and chosen
 “ him as my portion: I love him more than
 “ all, and can safely *trust* him with all: *I*² *Tim. i.*
 “ *know in whom I have believed, and am per-*^{12.}
 “ *suaded, that what I have committed to him,*
 “ *he is able also to keep against that day; and*
 “ I freely resign to his holy pleasure in all his
 “ disposals of me, and am ready to yield a
 “ *willing* soul to his powerful care and faith-
 “ ful mercy; to say with my latest breath;
 “ *Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.* *Luk. xxiii.*
 “ *Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in*^{46.}
 “ *peace: And Lord Jesus receive my soul.”* *—ii. 29.*
 “ *Act. vii.*

To conclude this matter, there must be earn-^{59.}
 est *expectation* and *waiting* for him. Sincere
 christians are often described by this temper,
 they love his appearance, and wait for the Son
 of God from heaven; and look for the blessed hope
 and glorious appearance of the great God, and
 our Saviour Jesus Christ: they look for, and
 hasten to the coming of the day of the Lord. This
 is represented by a parallel *Evangelist* in figu-
 rative expressions; *Let your loins be girt, and*^{Luke xii.}
your lights burning, and you your selves like men^{35.}
who wait for the Lord: an allusion to men re-
 turning home from a wedding, and waiting
 for the bridegroom. They stand in a posture
 of expectation, welcome the distant appearance
 of his return, and are ready to fly into his arms.

They wait for the *glorious manifestation of the Sons of God*, and their compleat *redemption*; and are ready to embrace him with *open hearts* and *warm affections of soul*. This is the *next* and nearest instance of actual readiness for the coming of the Lord.

I shall only farther observe here, that this sometimes in eminent christians rises up to ho-
 1 Cor. v. ly *confidence*, and earnest *desire*: they are con-
 8. fident, and willing rather to be absent from the
 body and present with the Lord; are armed with
 christian *courage* against the terrors of death:
 Philip. i. and are *in a strait betwixt two*, having a desire
 23. to depart, and be with Christ. They are able to
 express in their dying moments, not only a
satisfaction, but *assurance of mind*; the tri-
 umphs, and *joy of faith*: tho' this is not the ne-
 cessary fruit of faith, or *essential* to our be-
 ing ready, but the rare *privilege* of those
 who are more confirmed and improved, who
 have reached to higher attainments in the chris-
 tian life, and been remarkably faithful to God.

S E C T. II.

II. I am to consider the *reason* here assign-
 ed: *for in an hour you think not, the son of man*
cometh. The coming here spoken of is, his so-
 lemn *appearance* in glorious majesty at the final
 judgment, surrounded with hosts of Angels, en-
 compassed with flames of fire: summoning all
 the world before him in one general assembly;
 entering into the merits of every particular case,
 and distributing rewards and punishments, ac-
 cording to their respective state. This is every
 where

where mention'd under the notion of his coming or *appearing*. But because our life and *time are in his hands*, as well as our *future*, and eternal state; and the one of these is so closely connected with the other; we may upon good reason *extend* the signification, and take into the case the consideration of our *death*, or removal out of the world. For death to every *particular* person is in many respects the same thing, with the general judgment to the *whole world*; death ends all the world with every man, and brings him to his determined state; and 'tis, in a manner, the same thing with him, as if the world were immediately dissolved. Our Lord concludes this discourse in *Mark*, with these remarkable words; *what I say to you, I say to all, watch.* Mar. xiii. 37.

BUT tho' the *latter* may be comprehended in the *meaning* of the expression, at least in the *reason* and design of it; yet 'tis the *former* only is expressed, as that which is more *awful* in it self, and more apt to impress our minds. Besides that, 'tis upon the account of the following judgment, that death is at all so awful. *After death, the judgment.* And *behold a pale horse, and he who sat on him was death, and hell followed.* Heb. ix. 27. If death were alone, and without a Rev. vi. 8. companion; if it were only *annihilation*, or dissolution of our being; a state of eternal *silence*, and oblivion; it would not be so *terrible* a thing: but as death *consigns* us to judgment, and is the next *step* to the *bar* of Christ; it becomes very *awful* and important, and worthy our deep and serious thoughts.

IN considering this branch of the subject, I shall, 1. Enquire, *why* God has so ordered the matter, and *vindicate* the divine conduct, in hiding from us the time of his coming. 2. Consider the *force* of the reason, or the justness of this *consequence*; from the *coming* of Christ to our being always *ready*.

§. 1. I shall enquire, *why* God has so ordered the matter; that we should not *know the hour when the son of man cometh*. Of this, some account may be given in the following particulars:

(1.) To display his *sovereignty*. 'Tis a *royalty* of the divinity, and a *reserve* of knowledge to himself: a mark of sovereign *authority*, and *distinction* from the creatures. He, who *knows all things*, has seen fit to keep this knowledge from us. And as the thing depends upon divine *pleasure*, and is an act of sovereign freedom, it cannot be known by any creature without an express *revelation*. We find the great God *glories* in this distinction, and triumphs over all the *idols* of the earth, in the knowledge of *future events*. *Shew the things which are to come hereafter; that we may know that ye are gods*. And 'tis made a grand *peculiarity* of the divine being, that he *declares the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things which are not yet done*. And if what depends upon the actions of *free agents*, is a *knowledge too wonderful for us*; how much more what *entirely* depends upon his own *pleasure*?

Now he has not revealed his will about it, but expressly assured us, that no one knows it.

This

ff. xliii.
23.

xlvi. 10.

This account our Lord here gives of it: *of that* ver. 36.
day and hour knoweth no man; no not the angels,
but my father. Neither man or angel: 'Tis
 a secret in the divine counsel, and concealed
 from the knowledge of all the world. And
 'tis highly *congruous*, there should be a sove-
 reignty of *knowledge* as well as of *goodness*, or
 any other perfection of his nature. And our
 Lord tells his disciples after his resurrection, 'tis A&t. i. 7.
not for you to know the times and seasons, which
the father hath put in his own power. It be-
 comes us to *reverence* and adore the sovereign
 majesty and unsearchable perfection of God,
 and not to be either *busy* or *bold* in prying into
 things not *revealed*; or determining times de-
 clared, *uncertain.* Secret things belong unto the
 Lord our God; but those things which are re- Deut.
 vealed, belong unto us, and to our children for xxix. 29.
 ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

(2.) 'TIS an exercise of *wisdom* and *mercy* in
 several respects. As,

1. IT would be altogether *useless* to us. It
 could signify nothing to any valuable purpose,
 to know the time. It would only gratify the
curiosity of our minds, and be a piece of *useless*
speculation; but could add no *weight* to the
 argument, or contribute any thing to our *real*
 improvement. The precise *time* when a thing
 will happen is only *accidental* to it, and an *ex-*
trinsick circumstance, which does not affect
 the *nature* of the thing: and we have suffi-
 cient evidence of the *truth* of his coming,
 though we know not the *time* of it, to en-
 gage our *present* readiness, and utmost concern.

All

All the *reasons* of readines, and motives of persuasion, would *in themselves* have the same force, and stand just as they did, whenever he should appear. Besides,

2. THERE is a manifest *inconvenience* would necessarily attend the knowledge of it. For suppose it should appear, that the coming of Christ, either by death or judgment, were a *great way off*, or at a considerable *distance* from us: there would be danger in that case of *security* and *presumption*. Men are strangely prone to grow *remiss*, and greedily catch at every *occasion*, or *excuse*. And it would be too strong a *temptation*, as they stand disposed and circumstanced, with all their appetites, and enjoyments about them, to run into *security* and neglect; and they would naturally, upon this presumption, *delay* their preparation for his coming, and think it time enough, hereafter; perhaps a little before the close of life: at least, that there could be no *danger* in a longer delay, while they have so much *time* before them. They would reckon themselves *safe* in a free enjoyment, and farther pursuits of life; in careless neglects, or indulgence to sin; and while they *put the evil day far off*, come to put it out of their mind. When the *evil* —48, 49. *servant* began to say in his heart, *My Lord delayeth his coming*; he then *smote his fellow-servants, and eat and drunk with the drunken*. And the rich man in the gospel very comfortably reckoned upon *taking his ease, and eating and drinking, and being merry*, when Luk. xii. he had said to his soul, *Thou hast goods laid up*

up for many years. We see how common a *snare* this is, notwithstanding all the *uncertainty* of his coming; and the general carelessness which prevails in the world, is a matter of daily observation and complaint. And how much more, may we reasonably suppose, must it needs be so, upon *certain* knowledge of a *greater* distance from them? and 'tis wise and merciful to most men, to keep them ignorant of what is so liable to be *abused*, and in all likelihood would increase their guilt.

OR if we should suppose, on the other hand, that the coming of the Lord were certainly *near*, and within a little while; a few days or months hence; there would be danger in that case, of an *overwhelming* concern, and *discouraging* dread. The apprehension would be too *strong* and affecting: it would be like to engage their minds *too intently*, and indispose them for every thing else: as we see the terrors of a *criminal* at a sentence of *death*, or the sight of the place of their *execution*. Men would think it reasonable upon this supposition, especially good men, to spend all the little remainder of life in *actual* preparation, and to do nothing but get ready. So near an approach would astonish and surprize; be *overbearing* to the mind, and look too much like *force*; and make their endeavours the effect of *fear*, and not of *reason* and choice. And this must necessarily interrupt all the *business* of life, and prevent all care of any farther improvement; of acquiring useful *knowledge*,

or

or contributing to the *publick good*. No man would have the heart to apply in good earnest to any business of the world, or attend to any of the concerns of it; who had a certain knowledge of a speedy *removal*, and being cut off in the midst of it: so it would be *injurious* to the present welfare of the world, and very much affect it in all its interest. And 'tis certainly right and kind, to hide that knowledge from us, which would not only signify nothing to us, but be like to do us so much *hurt*, and hinder us from doing so much *good*.

3. 'Tis best suited to the present *state*, as well as the temper of our minds. We are placed here in a *state of trial*, under the exercise of divine patience, and enjoyment of means, and with many encouragements to our endeavours and hope. We are now to act our part in order to the future state of the other world: and 'tis very suitable to such a state, to make the best use of the *means* afforded, and be in a posture of preparation: we should be always found in the way of our *duty* while we are in a state of probation, and kept under a constant sense of our *dependance* upon God: for the whole state of the other world, depends upon our present *improvement*, and preparation. And nothing is more agreeable to the nature of *faith*, which is the *distinguishing* principle of the christian life: for *We walk by faith, and not by sight*; and *faith is to us the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*.

2 Cor. v.

7.
Heb. xi. 1.

seen. Faith is instead of sight and presence, and gives a *reality* and *nearness* to things invisible and distant: *we see him who is invisible*, —26, 27. and have *respect* unto the recompence of reward. We depend upon the credit of the word of God, and are fully *persuaded* of his faithfulness and power, and *act* in believing views and apprehensions of what is to come. In the power of this principle, *Noah, being warned of God, was moved with fear, and Abraham obeyed the call of God, and went out, not knowing whither he went.* And christians *rejoice in hope of a promised glory.* 'Tis the excellence and glory of faith to *trust* God with all our concerns, and *wait* his pleasure in the disposal of them: and 'tis a proper posture and temper of mind, to be *waiting for the son of God from heaven, and looking for his second appearance without sin unto salvation.* It would be unsuitable to a *state of trial, and principle of faith,* to have sensible evidence, or proper knowledge: for then we should *walk by sight* in this world, and faith become *useless.* It would destroy the *distinction* between the two worlds, and *anticipate* the future state; for it would commence *knowledge,* and be no longer *faith.*

4. 'Tis best calculated for our *advantage*: for it naturally tends to *quicken* our diligence, and make us *constantly* ready. We know not the time when our Lord shall come, that both good and bad men may have no *pretence* or *excuse* for neglect and delay; and that both may be getting ready. It has the advantage of a powerful *motive,* of continual *efficacy*

efficacy and force; without the *disadvantage* of either of the *former* suppositions: for if we know not the hour when the son of man cometh, there can be no pretence for *presumption* or *discouragement*; but all the reason in the world for *timely* care. It must be highly unreasonable upon this supposition to *delay* a moment, and highly reasonable to be always *prepared*; and in the midst of all the cares and enjoyments of life, to attend chiefly to what is more considerable and important. 'Tis a wise artifice of providence to keep us always *waiting*, and always *watching*; and to furnish a *quicken*ing motive to *all diligence*. How careful should we always be, who continually expect the coming of the Lord? *What manner of persons*, says the Apostle, *ought ye to be?* and *seeing ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace*. But this leads me to consider more particularly the.

2 Pet. ii.
11, 14.

§ 2. THE *force* of the reason, from the *coming of the Lord*, to our being *ready*. I shall argue only from the circumstances of the text:

1. FROM the *Nature* of his coming, or the true *Design* and importance of it. He will not appear in *empty* state, only to *shew* himself to the world, and display the *ensigns* of majesty; to be *gazed* at, and beheld with wonder, and receive the *homage* of the adoring world. 'Tis not a matter of *cercmony* and *state*: his appearance is to great and weighty purposes, and is every where spoken of as a most momentous thing.

thing. And very reasonably: for the coming of Christ will put an *end* to the present *state*; to all the *means* of grace, and *mercies* of life, and the whole *state* of *tryal* and *probation*. Now God *waits to be gracious*, and *God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself*. His *spirit strives* in the hearts of men by powerful *convictions*, and kindly *motions*. The *ministers* of Christ *beseek you in his name*, and by powerful arguments *persuade* men. The opportunities of mercy are lengthened out, and there is *now a day of salvation* and an *accepted time*, and *space to repent*, and fair encouragements and hopes. We are not *far from the kingdom of heaven* under the outward dispensation of the gospel grace: nothing is wanting but hearty *willingness*, and faithful *improvement* to make you secure and safe. But the coming of the Lord will put an end to all, and shut up the present state: *when the end shall come, he will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the father*; ^{1 Cor. xv.} *i. e.* the mediatorial kingdom. The whole dispensation of *grace* will be abolished by the *second* coming of Christ, as that of the *law* was by the *first*, and there will be no one opportunity or call of mercy more to them who are found unready.

BESIDES, The coming of the Lord will *determine* our *eternal* state, and put a final issue to all our *depending* concerns: It will leave us to all *eternity* in the state in which it finds us. For he will appear in the quality of a *judge*, and call every man to account, and pass a *decisive* sentence. The Apostle tells us; *we must all* ^{2 Cor. v.} *appear* ^{10.}

all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ to receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. And he is introduced, saying; Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. Unprepared souls will be concluded under an *irreversible* doom, without any reserves of mercy, or hope of relief. There will be no opportunity of rectifying the errors of our *past* conduct, or executing the *future* purposes of our minds; of *retrieving* former neglects, or *providing* better for our souls; there will be no changing the *bent* of the heart, or altering the *state* for ever. *Time will be no more*, and the eternal world commence. And is it not of the *last* consequence to our best interests to be prepared for his coming, which will conclude the *present* state of mercy, and introduce an *unchangeable* state?

2. FROM the *certainty* of it. This is here *supposed*, and taken for granted, as 'tis often expressly asserted in other places. Be ye ready, for he will *certainly* come. The *Jews* had all along a *traditional* belief of the coming of the *Messiah* to judge the world, according to the ancient *prophecy* recorded by *Jude*: And Enoch also, the *seventh* from Adam, *propheesied* of these, saying, *behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all*. And we read in *Daniel's* vision, that *ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened*. Our Lord himself frequently assures us of it, and directs
this

Rev. xxii.
12.

ver. 14.

Dan. vii.
10.

this consideration to the *comfort* and *support* of his faithful followers under all the sufferings and tryals of life: *They shall see the son of man—*30. *coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory: and promises his disciples; I will* Joh. xiv. 3. *come again, and receive you to my self.* And he, Rev. xxii. *who testifieth these things, saith, surely I come.* 20.

The Apostles always made the *coming* of the Lord the great *argument* of persuasion to awaken *secure sinners*, and encourage christians to *moderation, patience, and joy.* He tells the *Athenians* of a day appointed to judge the world, Act. xvii. 31.

in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained. And speaks to Christians, *knowing* 2 Cor. v. *therefore the terrors of the Lord we persuade men.* 11.

The Lord *Jesus will be revealed from heaven* 2 Thess. i. *with his mighty Angels, in flames of fire.* And 7. *behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall* Rev. i. 7. *see him, and they also who pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.* And the Apostle *Peter* represents it as the foolish *scoff* of wicked men in the last days, to say, *where is the promise of his coming, for* 2 Pet. iii. *since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as* 4. *they were from the beginning of the creation?*

THERE is an absolute *necessity* of his coming upon the highest accounts, both with respect to *himself*, and to *us*; to vindicate his injured honour, and do *himself* publick right; and to fulfil his gracious *promises*, and compleat his undertaking. He will as certainly come in the clouds of heaven, as if we now saw him with our eyes; and will as surely come by death to every one, as if we were

already *dead*, wrapt in a *winding-sheet*, and actually laid in the *grave*. We pass on like busy *travellers* on the *road*, or *passengers* in a *ship*, however we are employed; and advance every *step* to our journey's end, whether we think of it or no. A few more years and sabbaths; a few more days and nights; a few more opportunities and mercies; and the *trump* will sound in our ears, the *dead* will rise to judgment; the *world* will be all on fire round about us; and the glorious *redeemer* will appear.

HE will certainly come, whatsoever state we are in, and whether we are provided or not. There is no *preventing* his appearance, or *escaping* our own. It don't depend upon thy diligence and *readiness* whether he will come or no: he will not delay a moment, because thou art not prepared. And every *day* hastens his approach: it comes toward us as fast as the *moments* fly away; and he is nearer to us now than when we first came hither. And should we not be *ready* for what is so certain to come, and impossible to be avoided? Should we venture so great a concern upon so *desperate* an issue, that all our safety should depend upon his *not* coming at all; and that, if he certainly come, we should utterly be *undone*?

3. FROM the *suddenness* of it; or *uncertainty* of our knowledge. This is particularly express'd here: *for in such an hour as you think not, the son of man cometh*: when you have no thought of it in your mind: and this is
variously

variously represented in the scripture by the liveliest *images* of suddenness and surprize. *As the light cometh out of the East, and shineth*—27. *even to the West : so shall also the coming of the son of man be ; and nothing is more instantaneous.* 'Tis compared to the times of Noah's flood ; *They knew not until the flood came, and*—39. *took them all away : so shall also the coming of the son of man be.* And to a thief in the night, who comes when no one looks for him, in the *darkness* of the night, and the *depth* of sleep : *If the good man had known in*—43. *what watch the thief would come, he would have watched.* And the Apostle says, *The day* 2 Pet. iii. *of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night.* 10. Mark speaks more particularly : *You know not* Mar. xiii. *when the master of the house cometh, at evening,* 37. *or midnight, or cock-crowing, or in the morning ; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.* And our Lord says ; *Behold I come quickly.* Rev. xxii. And by reason of this uncertainty of the time, 12. it will be a great *surprize* upon the careless world : and so 'tis compared to the days of Noah, *when they were eating and drinking, and*—38. *marrying, and giving in marriage ; and Luke* Luk. xxi. *says ; And so that day come upon you unawares,* 34. *for as a snare shall it come upon all who dwell upon the face of the earth.* The world at last will be generally *secure* ; some *quiet* and indolent ; others *active* and busy, without any fear or apprehension of mind. The terror of his appearance will strike the amazed world with silence, create a *universal hush*, and put a *stop*, and put an *end* to all the *business* and

pursuits of life, and all the *thoughts* and purposes of their hearts.

Gen. xxiii. WE know not the day of our death ; what day or year, whether *this* or the next : what *season* of life, whether *young* or *old* : in what *circumstance* and condition, whether in the hurry of business, and pursuit of pleasure ; or in a *secret* retirement, or *solemn* attendance upon God : in what *place* of the world, whether in the house, or field, at home, or abroad. You design, it may be, to think of death and judgment, hereafter, and only put it off to a *more convenient season* ; when you can find *leisure* from other things, or have lost the *relish* of them. You don't intend to live all your days in this neglect, or to be *overtaken* unprovided. But you think there is *time* enough before you, and there is no need of so great *haste* ; that a little more delay can do no great harm. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. But, thou fool, *this night thy soul may be required of thee* ; and thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. At midnight the cry may be made, behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him. 'Tis possible thou may'st not have the least warning, or room to offer up a single desire to God, or to say once, *Lord, have mercy upon me*. Thou may'st be suddenly hurried out of the world, and dragged to the tribunal above ; and snatch'd in a moment from all the mercies of life, and all the hopes of mercy for ever. Death may strike thee down unseen, and ruin all thy purposes for ever ;

Prov. vi.
10.

ever ; and *in that very day thy thoughts perish*. Thou may'st be taken away under the greatest *disadvantage*, and when thou would'st least chuse to be found ; in the midst of open *wickedness*, or *careless neglects* ; or in *profound security*, and a *treacherous peace* : *when they* I Theil.v *shall say peace and safety, sudden destruction* 3. *cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape*. He may appear in the midst of thy golden dreams, and the *midnight cry* awake thee out of thy fatal slumbers. And should we leave the matter to *infinite uncertainty*, and act so *unreasonable* a part, and so inconsistent with ourselves, to run an apparent a hazard in so grand an affair ; who are careful in every *lower interest* to provide against a *less uncertainty* ? Can we be easy and patient when our *souls* are in danger, and our *salvation* lies at stake, who express so great a concern when our *health* or *estates* are nearly affected ? And be only unconcerned in our greatest interest, who are all for certainty, and being secure in every other thing ?

4. I argue from the *consequences* of his coming, especially when 'tis sudden. And I shall represent it briefly *both ways*, and in a *different light*.

1. LET us consider the *dreadful surprize* of an *unprepared sinner*. Suppose now that *coming suddenly he find you sleeping* ; in a secure and unpardoned state. Who can conceive the horror and woe of the miserable soul, under the power of such a surprize ? When *Bel-*

shazzar saw the finger of a man's hand writing upon the plaister of the wall, in the
 Dan. v. 5. midst of all his company and mirth; *his countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him; so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.* The *midnight cry* roused the *slumbering virgins*, and made them in great confusion cry
 Matt. xxv. 8. out to the wise, *Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out*: a lively image of horror and surprize.

How will they stand *confounded* and amazed; what *paleness* will appear in every countenance; what *anguish* fill every heart? The first sight of the glorious *judge* will strike them into *silence*, and throw them into *agonies* of soul. How sad will be the ruin of their presumptuous *hopes*; how cutting the review of their past *neglects*; how hideous the noise of their fruitless cries? Lost opportunities, and despised mercy will awaken the tormenting *passions*, and every *thought* will feed and aggravate the pain.

WHY, to be hurried out of the world in a moment, and find ourselves at the bar of God; to be *surprized* into eternal misery all at once, and *encompassed* round with flames before we are aware; to fall under the dreadful sentence of the *stoltful servant*; *Cast him into outward darkness*; *cut him asunder, and appoint him a portion with the hypocrites*; to have the *worm which never dies*, added to the *fire which never can be quenched*; to fall under the weight of divine *wrath*, and the torment of eternal de-
 Matt. xxiv. 5. *stair*

spair at the same time, Lord, who can conceive the insupportable distress! Careless and stupid sinners will rouse and awake, and feel the quickest sense; they will say, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be as his*; they will see it infinitely reasonable, when they are most *impartial*, and curse their folly when 'tis too late. Those arguments and means, which could not now prevail, and were easily forgot; will then come fresh to their mind, and appear with piercing *brightness*, and irresistible *force*: they will wish ten thousand times, that they had been sooner wise, or had never been born.

2. THE *happy surprize* of a *prepared* soul. Let us view the other side of the case, and look upon it in the more *agreeable* light. We are now then to suppose the son of man appearing in the *clouds* of heaven, and sitting upon a glorious *throne*, attended with shining *hosts*, and acting as the *judge* of the world: and how *enlivening* will the glorious *appearance* be, how *joyful* the surprize to waiting souls, when the *times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord*, and their complete *redemption draweth nigh*? when he shall *wipe away all tears from their eyes*, and remove all sorrow from their hearts; when he will *know* them, and own them at last, and pass a sentence of absolution and life; when they shall have *confidence at his coming*, and *appear with him in glory*?

AND happy souls who are immediately *caught up into paradise*, and *hear unutterable things*; who leave this vale of tears, and are
surprized

surprized with glory; who quit the body, as it will be raised at last, *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye*, and find themselves among the blessed before they are aware: who never pass through tedious *sickness*, or acute *pains*, and are not exercised with the troublesome passions of *fear* or *sorrow*; the fear of their own mind, or the sorrows of those about them: who have a *ῥῆσασια* an easy passage out of life, and leave this dark and sinful world, for the *inheritance of saints in light*; the *tabernacle of clay*, in which they often groan, for the *mansions of their father's house*, and the house which is from heaven; the labour and conflict of life, to enter into rest, and into the joy of their Lord. Happy souls indeed, who only awake and die, or fall asleep on earth, and wake in heaven; who only sigh and groan, and then depart, or take wing and fly away at once: who leave the noisy and busy world to gaze, and their friends to weep, and lament alone: who are raised above the dust of this world, and the reach of all disturbance from it: who have got the start of us, loitering behind and waiting our discharge, exposed to farther dangers, and exercised with many trials of life: who are carried, like *Elijah*, as in a fiery chariot up to heaven, and receive the end of their faith, and rest in the supreme good; who burn in flames of heavenly love, and sing eternal songs of praise.

How glorious stars are they in heaven, who once shone so bright on earth? they rise in the other world, as soon as they set in this. And how

how high is the *orb* in which they move, how *bright* the lustre with which they shine? How much better *sabbaths* do they keep in heaven, than those they kept on earth, or rather one continued sabbath? with what unfainting vigour and nobler delight? how unwilling would they be to return again? how loth to leave the presence of their Lord? Blessed souls, who now *behold* their redeemer's face, and are made perfectly *like* him, who are joined to the *general assembly* above, and converse with the spirits of the *perfect just*. O sweet society! O pleasant and delightful work! O happy and joyful state!

AND what do we do here, now our *Redeemer* is ascended, and our dearest *friends* are leaving the world so fast; when what was most *attractive* of our love, the most desirable part of this lower world, is gone before us? Let this dry our tears, and raise our hearts to heaven, and comfort us in their loss, whom we had reason to believe were well prepared, and habitually, and actually *ready* for the coming of the Lord, though he came suddenly, and in an *hour which they thought not of*. And this, you will easily perceive, leads me to speak of our *deceased friend*, whose *sudden death* occasioned this discourse, and of whom I shall give you this *short, but sincere* account.

HE was *descended* of godly parents, and had the advantage of a religious *education*, and tender care: and by the blessing of God upon family and publick instructions, he became
early

early *serious*, and entered into *church communion* upon his first settlement in the world : he set out with God. He was many years a worthy *member*, and sometime an *officer* in the church to which he belonged : and how highly he was esteemed, and how greatly lamented there, I need not say. He was heartily *devoted* to God, and his interest ; and constant in his *attendance* on all the parts of divine worship in his *family*, and in the *publick* ; and sometimes greatly affected and delighted in it. He was exactly *just* in all his ways, and managed his affairs with *discretion*. As he had much experience of the goodness of God *himself*, so he was *ready to every good work*, and many ways useful to the world. He bore a part, without *vanity* and *ostentation*, in many designs of a different kind for the good of the world. He was a great *lover of good men*, and chose the company and conversation of the *saints which are in the earth*, the *excellent in whom was all his delight*. He was *exemplary* in all the *relations* of life, as a *husband*, a *father*, a *master* and *friend* : in tender *affection*, and faithful *care*, and wise *condescensions*, he far exceeded most, was rarely exceeded by any. He diligently attended, in the midst of other business and cares, the *improvements* of his mind ; and by much *reading* and *observation*, had greatly increased his *knowledge*, and formed his own *judgment* of things : he settled in a *love* of real goodness, and a noble *largeness* of soul ; large enough to *receive* all whom he had reason to believe *Christ would receive*

at last. He was *faithful* to his own light, and *charitable* in his judgment of other men. After all, his *integrity* was his glory, as 'tis the highest *excellence* of any man, whatever else he excels in; the *simplicity and godly sincerity* with which he had his conversation in the world; that open *frankness*, and hearty *cheerfulness*, and *sweetness* of temper, with which he always conversed; render'd him truly *desirable*, and greatly *beloved* by all who knew him. He was removed by a sudden *stroke*, and with astonishing *surprize*, in the *midst* of his days, and in perfect *health*, in a single moment: perfectly *well*, and perfectly *dead* in one instant.

THIS is a loud and awaking call to all who knew him, and all who hear of it. When we see others so often *drop* into the grave on every hand, and death comes near us, and round about us; when they with whom we conversed but the other day, perhaps the same day; as healthy and like to live, as useful and significant in the world, as any of us; are suddenly snatch'd away: should we not all *bethink* ourselves, and is not this a proper *reflection*; if I had died in his room, where had I now been? And what would have become of me? Perhaps some have reason to say, "I had gone directly to *hell*, devils had seized my trembling soul, and dragged me to my judge, and the infernal *prison*." Or at least; "I had died sadly *unprovided*, and in very improper circumstances; with many worldly thoughts in my mind, and many
" good

“ good designs, unfinish’d.” And should we not all be awakened to a *lively* care, by so awful an instance ; be wise and speedy in every purpose of good, and *do whatsoever our hands find us to do with all our might* : and while we look so often into other mens graves, read it written in their *dust*, as well as upon their *coffin* ; *Prepare to follow* : *Be you also ready*.





S E R M O N III.

A Christian's uneasiness in the mortal body ; and desire of the heavenly happiness.

2 CORIN. V. 2.

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.

I Shall have occasion to consider what is most remarkable in the context, in the progress of this discourse ; and shall proceed immediately to the words themselves. *In this we groan* : either in this body, while we dwell in the *earthly house of this tabernacle*, ver. 1. or else, upon this account, and for this cause, ἐν τέρψι, with which the word οἰκία will not agree. We labour under so many pressures and difficulties in this bodily state, that we cannot but be uneasy ; so ver. 4. *While we are in this tabernacle, we groan being burthened*, σενάζομεν, the same word with this

this in the text; we are streightned, and pressed with the burthen of present misery.

EARNESTLY *desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven*: the house from heaven, or of heaven, ἐκ οὐρανοῦ, of heavenly materials. It stands opposed to the *earthly house* in the former verse; and signifies the heavenly state and glory immediately upon the dissolution of the present tabernacle; and compleatly at the resurrection, when our bodies will be suitable to the heavenly state, and the glorified soul. The Apostle uses the metaphor of a *house* and *clothing* all thro' this context; the body is considered as the tabernacle and garment of the soul: And we are *clothed upon* with the heavenly house. The Apostle seems to desire in this expression, not to put off the body, but to be, as it were, clothed upon the body, or have it superinduced, ἐπενδύσασθαι; the word alludes to an *upper garment*, which is put over another, which seems favoured by ver. 3. *If so be that being clothed, we shall not be found naked*; or without any body at all, as those in the state of the dead till the resurrection. And, ver. 4. *not that we would be unclothed, divested of the body, but clothed upon*. Which is agreeable to what he says of them, who shall remain at the coming of Christ, that they shall not sleep, but shall be changed.

1 Cor. xv.
55.

AND this he *earnestly desired*: he not only groaned, but *earnestly desired*: The one respects the uneasiness under which he laboured in this mortal and bodily state; the other the *heavenly house*

house

house which he expected to be clothed with. And so it is as if he had said; in this body we labour under constant uneasiness of one kind or another, which makes us groan for deliverance and release: and we earnestly desire to be better clothed, even with the incorruptible and heavenly glory; the proper perfection of soul and body. *We groan within our selves,* Rom.viii. *waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption* 23. *of our bodies.*

THE Apostle in these words expresses the temper of a sincere christian in a double view.

I. IN their *groans* while they are in the body under present uneasiness.

II. IN their *desires* of the heavenly blessedness.

I shall a little distinctly represent them both, and briefly apply them in the close.

S E C T. I.

I. WE are to consider a christian's *groans* while he is in the body under present uneasiness. *In this we groan.* And *while we are in this tabernacle, we groan, being burthened.* There are several things which render the bodily state uneasy to sincere christians; and to which the bodily nature much contributes. I shall reduce them to two principal heads: 1. To what the body is the more immediate *seat* and subject of. 2. To what it further *occasions* to the soul.

§ 1. AS to what the body is the more immediate *seat* and subject of. Of this kind we may consider the following instances.

Q

I.

I. THE *weakness* and *disorder* of the bodily nature. It is naturally frail and mortal, and gradually decays and moulders away, tho' no disease or accident befall it. It cannot endure long by its own make, and has the principles of decay within it self. It is a *house of clay*, whose foundations are in the dust; and an *earthly vessel*, which is soon broke, tho' it have no blow, or crack: as a weak crazy building, wears out, and falls down at length, tho' it is not shattered, or blown down by a stormy wind.

BUT besides, it is liable to many *disorders*: and considering the contexture of a human body; the variety and fineness of many of its parts, and the necessary connexion and order of the whole; it is a great wonder it is not oftner out of frame, and sooner dissolved: As a single wheel or pin of a watch, out of order, disturbs the whole motion.

How many distempers is the bodily nature liable to? every member of the body is subject to its proper disease, and sometimes many of them affect us at once. How much pining and dying *sickness*, which creates loathing of proper food, fainting of spirit, sinking of nature under its burthen; which gives a disrelish to all the comforts of life, and a continual restlessness in every posture and every place? How many acute and violent *pains*, which humble the stoutest heart, and break the strongest constitution; when nature is set upon the rack, and all its powers stretched to the utmost, and ready to crack and fly? and nature grieved and
opprest,

opprest, must needs groan and complain, when it is either pining under languishing sickness, or smarting under the torment of pain. Holy *Job* was not impatient under all his miseries, till the devil obtained leave to *touch his bone and his flesh*, and *smite him with sore boils*. The disorders of the body made the *patientest* man on earth, *curse his day*. And the *Psalmist* complains upon this account: *O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed, I am weary with my groaning.* Job iii. 1.
Ps. vi. 2, 6.

2. WEARINESS of labour. The christian life is a state of *warfare*, as well as *service*, and there are many difficulties attend it in either consideration. Every christian is a listed *soldier* under the banner of Christ, the *captain of his salvation*; and stands obliged to *endure hardness*, and *fight the good fight of faith*: he must fight his way to heaven through great oppositions of his spiritual enemies. We *wrestle with principalities and powers*, as well as *with flesh and blood*, and are engaged in a close conflict, and constant contention; and must either conquer or be undone. We *run* as those in a *race*, and must *so run as that we may obtain*, and win the glorious prize. We must *forget* Phil. iii. *the things which are behind*; and *reach forth to* 13. *the things which are before*; and *press forward to the mark*: which are allusions to the *Olympick games* among the *Greeks*, and import great earnestness and contention of mind. We must *strive to enter in at the strait gate*, and *strive against sin*: we must *give all diligence to add to our graces*, and *make our calling and*

election sure; and be found in the daily performance of the difficult duties of *self-denial*, *mortification*, and *crucifying* the world; crossing and restraining bodily appetites and interest; and using, upon proper occasions, watching, and fasting, and prayer.

Now as *much study is a weariness to the flesh*, so constant labour breeds a weariness. There is the toil and fatigue of duty, as well as the comfort and refreshment of it; and tho' a christian is not weary of duty, and never says with the formal Jews, *what a weariness is it?* yet he is often weary in duty, and finds his spirits flag and faint: the *spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*, as it was with the disciples themselves; and the Apostle served the Lord with many fears and temptations which beset him; and they are said to rest from their labours hereafter, upon this account.

Mat. xxvi.
41.

Acts xx.

19.

Rev. xiv.

13.

3. THE *afflictions* and *sufferings* of life. We are liable to many accidents of evil and calamities of life, in this open state, which affect and grieve the bodily nature: The *Psalmist* complains of his *broken bones*. Many groan under the streights of poverty, or distress of want; and are glad of the meanest refreshment from others superfluities: as *Lazarus* lay at the rich man's door *full of sores, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from his table*.

Luke xvi.
20, 21.

BUT the case of this kind particularly referred to in the context is that of *persecution*: *we are troubled on every side—perplexed—persecuted—always bearing about in our bodies the dying*

dying of the Lord Jesus. This was frequently ^{Chap. iv.} the case of the first christians: the world ^{3.} hated them, because they were not of the world, but chosen out of it; i. e. of quite another spirit and design: and they felt the marks of their hatred and ill-will in various instances: *bonds and imprisonments did abide them in every place; and they were sometimes stoned, sawn asunder,* ^{Heb. xi.} *slain with the sword, wandred in sheep-skins,* ^{37.} *and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.*

AND he who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution in one kind or other from a wicked world: every christian is obliged to take up the cross and follow Christ; and to be content thro' many tribulations to enter into the kingdom. He must stand the shock of injury and violence, as well as dishonour and reproach, and be prepared in the temper and purpose of his heart, to lay down his life, as well as to suffer the loss of all. And this is a hard saying to flesh and blood; and no wonder if nature shrink and recoil under so great a pressure; tho' the power of divine grace, and extraordinary succours, have sometimes enabled them, not only to endure them with patience; but to rejoice and glory in them too.

4. THE dissolution of the bodily frame. There is a natural love in the soul to the body, arising from the close union, and long intimacy together. The body is one part of our constitution, and too often pampered and indulged; and death which is the separation of soul and body, and a rending the two parts asunder, must needs be grievous; for it is the destruc-

tion of our present nature, and *dissolving the house of our tabernacle*. And there cannot but be the *natural* horror of dying in the minds of good men, tho' they are *delivered by Christ from the bondage of sinful fear*; as old friends part with regret, who will be a great while absent from one another.

AND sometimes the *actual* dissolution is painful: It puts nature into agonies and convulsions, and extorts, in a literal sense, many deep groans; especially in vigorous youth, and strong constitutions, it is the hardest conflict of their whole lives. The struggles of dissolving nature are often terrible, and prove grievous and insupportable to standers by. The Apostle speaks of *loosing the pains of death*; the pangs and throws which death occasions, as our translators plainly understood it. Sometimes the *tenderness* of dear relations wound them deep, and make them ready to say, *what mean you to weep and to break my heart?* and this is the common lot of fallen nature, and the fixed appointment of heaven, to which the whole human race is subject, and there is *no discharge from this warfare*.

Acts.ii.24.

Acts xiii.
21.

§ 2. WHAT the body may farther *occasion* to the soul. And it several ways occasions uneasiness.

1. IT is a great *hindrance* to our spiritual attainments, and to all our improvements in knowledge and grace. Our bodies are like a dark *veil* over our souls, or a dead *weight* hanging upon them, when they aspire and ascend upward. The care of the bodily welfare, and the

the violence of bodily appetite, often divert and mislead us, and indispose for the diligent pursuit of knowledge, and the vigorous exercise of grace. When *Martha* was *cumbered with much serving, and careful and troubled with many things*; she neglected the *one thing needful*, and the *better part*, i. e. the great opportunity of saving instruction, and spiritual improvement, by the presence and conversation of Christ.

How often do the *necessities* and *pleasures* of the bodily life hinder a serious attendance on means, and a wise improvement of opportunities? how often disturb and interrupt the close attention, and retired exercise of our souls; cramp and confine our views; and check the rising motions, and noble ambition of our minds? We are apt to indulge to sloth, and *spare our selves*, and regret the necessary pains of higher improvement. We find a great deal of darkness and disorder, not only from the carelessness and inadvertence, the prejudice and prepossession of our minds; but from the working of our passions, and gratifications of sense, under all the means of knowledge, and all the helps afforded us.

By this means we are kept low in our attainments: *we know but in part* what we ought to know, and our little knowledge often *puffs us up*. We are but of *little faith*, and often *stagger through unbelief* under a difficult trial, or dark appearance of things; and find reason to say, *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief*. We *love but little*, tho' *much has been forgiven*

us. The fear of man often proves a snare, and prevails against the fear of God. We experience a weakness in our powers, and unsuitableness of temper in holy exercises; and easily lose the good impressions, and find an abatement of spiritual vigour, in the most solemn ordinances, and most composed frame. And a sincere christian who loves God with all his heart, and values his image as the greatest good; who designs his own improvement under all the means of grace, and aims at perfect conformity to God; can't but be grieved under the sense of his low attainments in the christian life, and faint resemblance of God. The weakness of their grace, and imperfection of their service, are great articles of uneasiness and complaint.

2. IT is a great occasion of *sin*, as well as of imperfection. The depravation of nature seems interwoven with the bodily constitution, and by the laws of union between the body and soul, the one is much affected by the other. The *unwieldiness* and *disorder* of our bodily nature betrays us into a great deal of guilt. We indulge to many sinful gratifications, and sinful neglects, by bodily appetite and inclination, and bodily ease and convenience; and the body is often made not only the *occasion*, but the *instrument* of sin. We yield our members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. We find a *listlessness* and weariness in holy duties; the exercise of unruly *passions* which are often troublesome, and difficultly restrained; the power of our peculiar and *special* corruption, which

which may be called *our own iniquity*; and the *sin, which does so easily beset us*; the frequent prevalence of a carnal, or worldly mind, innumerable follies and escapes of life; and sometimes grosser neglects and commission of sin. There are many workings of corruption after all the influences of divine grace, and all our watchfulness and care. And sometimes fresh occasions give a revival to a latent corruption, and renew the spiritual combat; and a good man's soul is made the seat of war, and stage of continual conflict: the *flesh* Gal. v. 17. *lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.* How often do christians complain, that they are not what they would be, and cannot do as they would? *for the good* Rom. vii. *that I would, I do not; and the evil that I* 19, 20. *would not, that I do. I find a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me.* And again; *I find a law in my members warring* —23. *against the law in my mind, and bringing me into captivity.* The body of death hangs about them, and cleaves to them, like a dead body to a living soul. The holy Apostle never complained of any of his sufferings, as he did upon this occasion: *O wretched man that I am,* —24. *who shall deliver me from this body of death!* And no wonder a sanctified soul is *weary and heavy laden* with the sense of sin, and heartily grieved and uneasy with so disagreeable a mixture.

THE *sensible* world round about us powerfully strikes our sensible natures, and proves a dangerous snare. How often are we ensnared and

and entangled by sensible good? There is something suitable to all our senses, and proper to affect us every way: the *lust of the flesh*, and the *lust of the eyes*, and the *pride of life*, are suitable baits to all the powers of the bodily nature. And how difficult does it become to preserve our integrity in the midst of perpetual snares, and to *keep our selves unspotted from the world?*

BESIDES, it gives a great advantage to the devil's *temptations*. We read of a *messenger of Satan* sent to buffet the Apostle, and it was by a *thorn in the flesh*; by which some understand some painful bodily *distemper*; and others a violent *temptation*. This reduced him to a great distress, and made him *cry thrice* to the Lord for help. The devil takes the advantage of our bodily make, whether sanguine, or melancholy; and knows how to apply himself suitably to the different *temperature* of the body, and circumstance of things about us; and is too often successful to draw us into sin, or disturb us in the performance of duty; to perplex our minds with doubts and fears, and destroy our comfort and peace.

AND this is sometimes aggravated by the *offence* to God, and the marks of his displeasure. He is provoked to suspend his gracious influence, and withhold the *light of his countenance*, and former *manifestations of himself* unto them. A thick cloud gathers round about their soul, and there appears nothing but frowns and displeasure. They groan sometimes under the sense of divine anger, as well

as departure from them : so holy *Job, the ar-* Job vi. 4.
rows of the Almighty are within me, the poison
thereof drinketh up my spirit, the terrors of the
Lord have set themselves in array against me. And
the Psalmist often complains upon this account
in a very awful and affecting manner ; thy ar- Psalm '
rows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me xxxviii. 2,
fore ; there is no soundness in my flesh because of 3.
thy anger.—I have roared because of the dis-
quiet of my heart. The anguish of his mind
disturbed all his repose, and affected his bodily
health. And again, How long wilt thou forget Pf. xiii. 1.
me, O Lord, for ever ; how long wilt thou hide
thy face from me ? He thought it exceed-
ing long ; and looked upon it as a kind of
eternity, a duration which would never end.
He speaks as one almost in despair ; Wilt thou Pf. lxxvii.
cast off for ever, wilt thou be favourable no more ; 7, 8.
is his mercy clean gone for ever ; hath God for-
gotten to be gracious ; hath he in anger shut up
his tender mercies ? And this of all other things
is most grievous to an holy soul, who loves
God above all, and places his chiefest happi-
ness in his favour. The frowns of an angry
and displeas'd father cannot but give a gloomy
sadness, and pungent grief to every child of
God.

3. IT exposes them to many *troubles*. How many calamities befall us by accident or violence ; by the hand of providence, or our own mistake ; which create us great uneasiness in this bodily state ? many difficulties rise up every step of our way, and in all the affairs of life. We are often cross'd in our best designs, and dif-

disappointed in our most pleasing hopes; things prove otherwise than we wish, after all our cares and precaution. *Man who is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble; and born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards.* This world is the element of trouble: labour and sorrow is a part of the original curse, and the proper state of fallen nature.

Job xiv. 1.

—v. 7.

AND whilst we dwell in this bodily state, and stand allied to the world about us; we cannot but be affected with the case of *others*, as well as of our *own*. The frequent disorders and disturbance in the course of *publick affairs*, in which every man's interest is concerned, often occasion *great thoughts of heart*. The case of the *Church of God*, especially under violent *persecutions*, or great *degeneracy*, is a very melancholly reflection to a good man's soul. His *heart trembles because of the ark of God*; and he is *grieved for the afflictions of Joseph*; and is sometimes ready to say, in the deep concern of his soul; *Can these dry bones live? what wilt thou do for thy great name? by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?* Lord, what will become of the rising generation? which way will God give a revival to the truiy christian interest among us? When shall there be greater light, and purity; greater truth and sincerity; greater peace and love in the christian world? How often do the weakness and follies, the rashness and mistakes of good men; the open and daring impieties of wicked men; the contempt of divine authority, and divine revelations; the formality and worldliness of mind; the careless neglects,

lects, and cold indifference; the uncharitableness and animosity, among the professors of religion; afflict their souls, and make them say in a serious retirement; *Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesheck, and dwell in the tents of Kedar?* How sensibly touched was the holy *Psalmist* with this affliction when he says; *rivers of tears run down my eyes, because they keep not thy law?* The Apostle tells the *Philippians* ^{Psal. cxix.} *weeping*, of the sensual and worldly enemies of ^{136.} *the cross of Christ*: and just *Lot vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful* ^{Philip. iii. 18.} *deeds.* ^{2 Pet. i. 8.}

WE often groan under the sense of other men's afflictions, when it may be, we have none of our own; if ever we are so happy; and are called to *weep with them who weep, and mourn with them who mourn.* The distresses of those about us, and who are dear to us, is often a sensible grief to a tender and generous soul. God himself is represented as being *afflicted in the afflictions of his people*: and the holy Apostle could say; *Who is weak, and I* ^{2 Cor. xi.} *am not weak; who is offended, and I burn* ^{29.} *not?*

BUT of all the troubles of this mortal state, nothing is more grievous than the *death* of our friends: when we are called to part with an old companion of our lives; a dear and intimate friend, in whom we placed a confidence, and took delight; where there has been a long acquaintance, and great endearment; and many ties of mutual kindness: this is a sad interruption to all our pleasures, and abates the

the relish of every other enjoyment. It is a bitter allay to all the sweets of life; and wrings many a tear from our eyes, and many a groan from our heart: we *mourn and refuse to be comforted, because they are not.* For what is the world when our *friends* are removed out of it, and we are left as it were, to converse with *strangers*?

4. THE necessary *distance* and absence from the Lord. The Apostle distinguishes and opposes these two: he sets the bodily life in this world in opposition to being with Christ, ver. 6. *Knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord;* and ver. 8. *Willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.* And he was in a *strait* upon this account, *having a desire to depart, and be with Christ.* We must depart from hence, before we can be with the Lord; and quit the body, before we can be in heaven. There is no entering within the vail till we are *unbodied*; we drop the body in the dust in our ascent to heaven; for *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven; nor corruption inherit incorruption.*

AND to them who *love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*, and place their happiness in being with him; it cannot but be an uneasiness to be long absent and separate from him. *Hope deferred makes the heart sick;* and the very posture of expectation has something uneasy in it. While they are long *waiting for the son of God from heaven, and love his appearance;* they are sometimes ready to tire and faint with the length

length of the delay, and to say with the mother of *Sisera*, *Why is his chariot so long in coming?* and with the church; *come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.* The strength of their faith, and warmth of their desire, may reduce them to an uneasy strait, especially when their capacities of service are much abated, and their opportunities more confined. The clearer prospects, and fuller assurance, and more lively foretaste of the heavenly glory, make them more heartily weary of the world, and unwillingly absent from the Lord; even when they have least trouble and suffering from it; or enjoy the greatest abundance of its blessings.

S E C T. II.

II. I am to consider a christian's *desires* of the heavenly happiness. *He earnestly desires to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven*, i. e. To be possess'd of the heavenly glory in the immediate presence of Christ; and the future glories of the resurrection. But why does a christian so earnestly desire it; and what account can be given of it?

THERE is the weight of their present *burthens*. They not only *groan*, but *desire*; and the groanings breed desires. Oppressed nature longs for rest; and tho' every christian has not all the reasons of uneasiness before mentioned, and some have much more of them than others; yet all have some, and commonly many of them: and the more of them fall to their share, and the more uneasy they are made by them; the more they desire deliverance and ease.

ease. So that all the instances of present grief which make them groan, are so many reasons of their earnest desire, and make them long the more for heaven. It would be strangely *unnatural* to suppose them easy under so many weights, and not to feel the burthen which often lies so heavy, or not desire release.

BESIDES, there is the *excellency* of the heavenly state, or the *object* of their desires. Every thing ought to be desired in proportion to its *degrees* of excellence, and what is really valuable and lovely in it. The Apostle here particularly describes it. He calls it the *house from heaven*; so it is opposed to the *earthly house of this tabernacle*. The present body is *earthly* in its original and make, and in its tendency and issue: it is a *tabernacle of clay, whose foundation is in the dust*; and will *return to the dust from whence it was*. But the other will be a *heavenly house*; a house *from heaven*, or of a heavenly make and materials; suitable to the heavenly state, and glorified soul. In the former verse, it is a *building of God*; a divine building, framed, and reared by the hand of God. He is the author and efficient of it; and the workmanship must be answerable to its author; the effect suitable to its cause; that is, most excellent and perfect in its kind; for *all his works are perfect*. And, *it is not made with hands*, like other houses which partake of the frailty and weakness of the maker, and are attended with imperfection and inconvenience. And *it is eternal in the heavens*: an house of a lasting nature, and endless duration, which will never perish and decay;

cay; and will never be dissolved and taken down. Our Lord speaks of *many mansions in his father's house*: as if every believer would have a distinct abode of rest and blessedness; or they were to be disposed of in several apartments suitable to their different state and improvement in this world.

IN verse 4, he speaks of being *clothed upon*, or covered all over with it; and *mortality being swallowed up of life*. And elsewhere, *this mortal shall put on immortality*; and *death be swallowed up in victory*: death will be utterly abolished, as an antiquated thing, quite out of date; and there will be *no more any death*, as there will be *no more any pain*. Even the mortal part, or what was before mortal of us, will become immortal.

HE represents the future state by a *presence with Christ*: *present with the Lord*. We shall be brought into the immediate presence of Christ, and sight of his glory; for *we shall be with him where he is, and behold his glory*. And the immediate sight of the glorified Redeemer will transform our souls into a perfect likeness to him, and fill them with unspeakable satisfaction and joy. *When he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*: and if now tho' we see him not, yet believing; how much more when we see him, shall we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory? And how natural is it to desire so great a good; and to long for such a state and presence, so different from our present state, and so every way desirable and excellent? It is a greater wonder,

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in a just estimate of things, that christians who have the *hope* of heaven, have no more of the *joy of hope*, and find no more warm and vigorous desires of so perfectly excellent and agreeable a good: That the *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* does not make heaven more desirable, as well as *present afflictions light*; that we can endure life so easily, and bear so long an absence with patience. Especially if we add

THE peculiar *temper* of a christian's mind with reference to it. This is particularly described by the Apostle in this noble context: I shall consider the *force* of the several expressions, and represent the genuine *temper* of a real christian with reference to the heavenly state. And tho' every one does not actually possess it, in the same *degree* the Apostle did; yet the *prevalence* of such a temper is *essential* to the christian state; and the higher measures of it, what every christian is obliged to design and aim at.

I. HE describes it by their *faith* of the heavenly blessedness. This he expresses in ver. 1. by knowledge. *We know that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God.* And again, ver. 6. *knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.* ἴδδτες: knowing or considering it. But how did he know it? not by *sight*; for it is invisible: not by any of his *senses*; for it is out of the reach of them all: but by *faith*, which

Heb. xi. 5. is the *evidence of things not seen*: there is an
evidence

evidence in faith with respect to unseen things. Faith is never unreasonable, but always the highest reason. The Apostle says, *we have* ^{1 John iv. 16.} *known and believed*: and with reference to this very case he says in ver. 7. *We walk by faith, not by sight.*

We know it by faith in the *promise* of God, which is the *reason* and *measure* of faith: and therefore the Apostle says, *in hope of eternal life* ^{Tit. i. 2.} *which God who cannot lye hath promised.* This is the true temper of a christian's mind, to believe the promise of God, and rely upon his faithfulness: *they have not seen, and yet believe*: ^{John xx.} *and whom having not seen, yet believing.* They ^{29.} ^{1 Pet. i. 8.} know there is such a glorious and excellent state, upon the foundation of the divine promise, with far greater certainty, than they believe upon credible report, there are such distant countries, which they have never seen; and which yet no man pretends to doubt of.

A christian is able upon this principle to say; "I am fully persuaded and satisfied of the *truth* of the heavenly state; and of a future happiness after death; and a glorious exchange of the body for the Lord: If I am a true believer I shall certainly *enter into his glory*, and be admitted to a state of immediate enjoyment upon the dissolution of my present frame." They desire it upon certain *knowledge*, and a firm *faith* of it; not by uncertain *report*, or mere probable *conjecture*. Hereupon,

2. THERE is their *preparation* for it. This we have ver. 5. *Now he who hath wrought us*

for the self-same thing is God, who hath also given to us the earnest of his spirit. He hath wrought us for it, *i. e.* He hath fitted us for this immortal state, framed our minds suitable to it, and given a disposition and make of soul agreeable to that glorious place, and the noble exercise and enjoyments of it. They have a heavenly mind and temper, and are *made meet to be partakers of the inheritance in light.* The form of the expression is designed to shew the greatness of the work, from the consideration of the author of it: he *who hath wrought us — is God*, *q. d.* This is the work of a God; an act of divine power. None but God is able to do so great a thing, to fit an apostate soul for heaven: It is the *working of his mighty power to us-ward who believe.*

HE adds, *who hath also given us the earnest of his spirit*, or the pledge of enjoyment. The sanctifying work of the divine spirit in preparing us for the heavenly state; and his abiding presence with us; is also an earnest of enjoyment: for why are we fitted for it at so great an expence of power; but to possess it? Shall so great a preparation be lost, and prove in vain? in this sense we are also said to be *sealed by him unto the day of redemption.* And how natural is it to a renewed soul, and one *born from above*, to tend thither, and desire to be *clothed with the house from heaven*; who both finds a *suitableness*, and possesses the *earnest* of it? who is satisfied of his *title* by his present preparation? who can say, *I am persuaded that neither death nor life—nor any other creature*

Eph. i. 19.

Eph. iv.
30.Rom. viii.
38.

creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. And I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that what I have committed to him, he is able also to keep unto that day. ^{2 Tim. i. 12.}

3. THEIR *courage*, or fortitude of mind. This is mentioned in ver. 6 *Therefore we are confident—knowing that while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.* And in ver. 8. *We are confident I say; ἄσπῆδες*, the word don't import *persuasion* or assurance of mind, as our translation would incline one to think; but plainly *courage* or boldness; an undaunted spirit, fearless of danger. It manifestly respects, as appears by the connection, the difficulty of dying, or parting with the body. The case is plainly this; death stands in the way to heaven, and we must pass thro' the grave to the mansions of glory. Death with all its terrors must be first encountered and overcome; the present *tabernacle* must be *dissolved*, and we must be *absent from the body* before we can be present *with the Lord*. Why now, says the Apostle, we have courage, and are of good heart; we don't flinch, or shrink from the danger. We have *bravery* sufficient to support our minds in the prospects and conflicts with death; we *dare* to die, rather than not *be with the Lord*.

THOUGH death is naturally frightful, and is never desirable for it self, for it is the greatest natural evil: yet it may be very reasonably so, as it stands connected with something else; and is considered by us as the necessary passage to

eternal life. So that a christian can say; “ tho’
 “ ten thousand deaths stood in the way to the
 “ presence of Christ, and enjoyment of hea-
 “ ven; I would venture through them all, ra-
 “ ther than be for ever detained, and kept
 “ from them. Tho’ I walk thro’ the valley of
 “ the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil,
 “ for thou art with me. I have got rid of the
 “ bondage of the fear of death; and am wait-
 “ ing for my appointed change, and the ap-
 “ pearance of my Lord.” Hereupon there is,

4. COMPLACENCY, or willingness. This the
 Apostle adds in ver. 8. *We are confident I say,*
and willing rather to be absent from the body,
and present with the Lord. Not only confident,
 or couragious, with respect to the difficulties in
 the way; but *willing rather*. The sense hardly
 appears in our translation: the word *εὐδοκῶμεν*
 signifies complacency, or being *well pleased*. It
 is the same word which is often used of the
good pleasure of God. The sense is; “ we have
 “ a complacency of mind, or relish of delight
 “ in the fore-thoughts of the heavenly state,
 “ and the expectation of the *house from heaven*.
 “ We prefer it to life it self; and choose rather
 “ to be *absent from the body*, that we may be
 “ *present with the Lord*. We have natural in-
 “ clinations to the body, and can’t but love
 “ what is a part of our selves: we could be
 “ content to dwell in the body as well as other
 “ men, if that would consist with our proper
 “ happiness: but now, in the present state and
 “ consideration of the case, and taking the
 “ thing as it really stands; we *rather* incline
 “ the

“ the other way, and our stronger propensity
 “ is to leave it. This is what we approve in
 “ our deliberate judgment of things: we are
 “ *willing* to die, for the sake of being with the
 “ Lord.”

AND this arose to such a pitch in the holy
 Apostle, that he was reduced to a strait: *I am* Phil.i. 28.
in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to de-
part, and be with Christ, which is far better.
 His willingness of further service to the church;
 and his desire of being with Christ, press'd
 hard on either side: only with this difference,
 that *others good* made him content to live; tho'
 his *own desires* were to depart, and that he ac-
 counted *far better*. And can they do other-
 wise than earnestly desire what is so agreeable
 and pleasing to them; and what they mani-
 festly choose and prefer? they cannot but de-
 sire what is of all other things most *pleasur-able*
 to their souls, and the proper satisfaction of
 their highest hopes. Add to this,

5. THEIR constant *endeavours*. This we
 find in ver. 9. *Wherefore we labour, that whe-*
ther present or absent we may be accepted of him:
εὐάρεστοι, well-pleasing to him, and approved
 of him. His favour is our happiness living and
 dying; in this world, and in the other. Now,
 says the Apostle, we *labour*, or we endeavour:
 “ this is our main view, and constant care in
 “ all we do; what we make the drift and de-
 “ sign of our whole lives, and to which we
 “ refer every other thing. This is the end of
 “ all our endeavours and diligence in the chri-
 “ stian life; of all our attendance on duties and

“ use of means; for this we strive, and watch
 “ and pray.” So he had said in the last verse
 of the foregoing chapter: *we look at the things*
which are not seen, for they are eternal: σκοπέειν,
 this is our *scope*; the center of our endeavours,
 and the mark at which we always aim. And
 he speaks in this sense of *seeking glory and ho-*
nour and immortality; and, *seeking another*
country, that is, a heavenly one; which plain-
 ly imports the bent and drift of their course
 and walk.

I shall only further observe, that the word
 also imports ambition, φιλοτιμέμεθα; and it is
 as if he had said; “ this is the highest *honour*
 “ of which we are ambitious, and what we
 “ propose as the proper *prize*. We esteem
 “ the favour and acceptance of God as the
 “ highest point of honour; and value his ap-
 “ probation and well-pleasèdness with us above
 “ the highest opinion of men, and the greatest
 “ worldly advancement.” The Apostle could
 1 Cor. iv. say; *But with me it is a very small thing that*
 3. *I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment*
 —*but he who judgeth me is the Lord*: “ Let
 “ me stand right in his account, tho’ all the
 “ world condemn me; let me be approved of
 “ my proper judge, and I value not the cen-
 “ sures and reproach of men.” And can they
 chuse but desire what is the *end of their faith*,
 or christian course; the very design and bu-
 siness of their whole lives to attain; and what
 they value and regard above every outward
 good?

III. I shall close this subject with two or three *practical remarks* very briefly.

1. We may learn from hence, the *nature* of the present state. It is made up, according to this account of it, of *groans* and *desires*: we groan under present burthens, and desire a future happiness. The one is the fruit of *fallen* nature, the other of the renewed nature. The one is the effect of the *curse*; the other of divine *grace*. This is the state of the christian life in this world; it is a state of trial and conflict, and of preparation and expectation. We are either groaning under our burthens, or longing and wishing for rest. So little reason have we to be fond of the *body* which gives us so much uneasiness; or to take up our rest in this *world* which is not our happiness.

2. THE *difference* between sincere christians and other men. They groan under their present burthens indeed, and have sometimes a larger share than other men: but then they have their desires too; they *earnestly desire their house from heaven*. And it is a great allay under our present burthens and sorrows, to have the hopes of the heavenly rest and joy.

BUT now wicked men have groans without desires: they groan under present burthens too; but have no desires of the heavenly state. They enjoy only the good of this bodily life and state, and that is often mixed with grief and groans; and they have no comfort under their troubles, but what this world can give them; no *desires of a house from heaven*, nor faith and fitness

fitness for the heavenly state. When they quit the body and leave the world, they lose all the good they shall ever have; for their *portion is in this life*, and they *have their reward here*. So that their case comes to this: they enjoy their present good with many *groans*, and leave it at last for *eternal sorrows*.

3. WE should look well to our *interest* in the heavenly glory. We *groan* under present burthens; this is the common lot of fallen nature, and we find it true by sad experience. But have we earnest *desires* of heaven? We must quickly be *unclothed*: I may invert the Apostle's words; *the day is far spent* with many of us, *the night is at hand*. Death will strip us of all our present enjoyments, and of our bodily nature: can we warrantably look to be *clothed upon* with the house from heaven; and to be *received into everlasting habitations*, when the present *tabernacle is dissolved*?

It infinitely concerns us to consider the state we are in, as to the immortal life of the other world; and the evidence of our interest. Why, according to the present *temper* of our minds, such is our *state*, and such the measure of our hopes. I don't mean the slight and sudden motions of mind; the risings and workings of our affections under the power of present convictions of mind, or great afflictions of life: they are fleeting and deceitful; and a very uncertain and unsafe rule of judgment: but what is the *habitual, abiding, prevailing temper* of our minds. Have we the christian frame before described, consisting in faith, preparation, courage,

courage, complacency, and endeavours? Be exceeding careful not to mistake in a matter of so great a consequence: and let me leave this important thought with answerable weight upon all your minds; that it is not *names* and *appearances* will fit men for heaven. All our privileges and enjoyments, all our knowledge and profession, will signify nothing to this purpose, without a right temper, and a heavenly make of mind. Without this we shall be found, under the greatest advantage of life, and highest confidence of mind, to have built upon a deceitful ground; and shall meet with a sad disappointment at last.

4. THE happiness of *departed* saints, who are *clothed upon with their house from heaven*, tho' the *earthly house of their tabernacle is dissolved*. They *groaned* here, *being burthened*: and they *earnestly desired* the heavenly rest. And they are now delivered from the burthen of the mortal body, and all the groans and sorrows it occasioned. It is now with them according to their desires: they have their own desire; they are where they would be. They would not change worlds back again for all the world; or return into this frail body, for all the enjoyments of life. They have the full satisfaction of their highest desires, and the perfection of their felicity and joy. And what comfort is this to *surviving* friends in such a case, to consider their release from the burthens of life, and the *clothing of the heavenly house*: that they are now at perfect ease, and

in fulness of joy; and that mortality is swallowed up of life.

AND this leads me to speak of my deceased friend and brother, the reverend Mr. *John Billingsly*; in whom both parts of the text were literally fulfilled: He *groaned* under the burthen of the mortal body; and *earnestly desired the house from heaven*. I shall give you this short account and character of him; and shall prescribe this law to my self; to say nothing but what I believe is true of him, and may be for the edification of others.

HE was born at *Chesterfield* in *Derbyshire*, and was the son of the ejected minister of that place; a person of great piety and worth; and a dear and intimate Friend of the late excellent Mr. *Matt. Silvester*. We have a particular account of him in Dr. *Calamy's* abridgment; and an handsome Latin Epitaph drawn up by his son.

Vid. p.
169. Vol.
2.

OUR Mr. *Billingsly* was first admitted a member of *Trinity-College* in *Cambridge*; and when neither his inclination, nor circumstance, allowed his longer continuance there, he was placed under the care of the famous Mr. *Reyner* of *Lincoln*; and had considerable assistance afterward from his worthy father, and his uncle *Whitlock* of *Nottingham*. He was ordained to the ministry by fasting and prayer, and imposition of hands by his father, the eminent Mr. *Robert Porter*, Mr. *John Oldfield*, Mr. *Edward Prime*, Mr. *William Cotes*, names of renown in that country; and at the same

same time with Mr. *John Oldfield*, jun. Mr. *Samuel Cotes*, and Mr. *Samuel Rose*.

HE entred upon the ministry in the darkest times of King *Charles* the second's reign, as several other of our worthy brethren also did, who yet remain among us; without any prospects of worldly advantage, or even opportunity of publick service; and under the greatest difficulties, and discouragement. His first services were at *Chesterfield*, on the Lord's-day evenings: He preached for seven years at *Selston*, to a plain but serious auditory; and afterward removed to *Kingston* upon *Hull*, where he lived ten years with as great usefulness, and reputation, as any minister in those parts.

SOON after his coming to this city, the providence of God directed his settlement in this place, with the advice and opinion of several worthy ministers his particular friends. He continued among us about fifteen years, and preached among us, as constantly as the frequent returns of bodily disorder would admit. I ever esteemed him a great blessing to the congregation; and I believe he was thought so by every one in it. We lived together through that course of time in a perfect uninterrupted friendship and endearment: His labours, and his memory, will be always precious in my account.

As to his *personal character*; he was a man of great *sincerity* and plainness of heart; as remote from guile and design as any man I ever knew so well. His spirit was deeply *serious*; and under an habitual awe and reverence of God.

God. His highest care and ambition was to please God, and be accepted of him in all he did. He was a *diligent* enquirer after knowledge, and used great application to inform his mind, and fit himself for his sacred work. He was well *furnished* with the several parts of useful *learning*, and well acquainted with the antient and modern *languages*, in which he took a particular pleasure, and was a considerable critick. He was exceeding *humble* and modest under all his attainments, and had a natural diffidence, and distrust of himself. He was always ready to receive light from the meanest hand; and paid a great deference to the judgment and reasons of other men. He had learnt of his Lord to be *meek* and *lowly of heart*, and *lived peaceably with all men* in the several places of his abode: He had a natural aversion in all affairs to any methods of violence and wrath. He was peculiarly remarkable for *tendernefs* of mind, and a scrupulous conscientiousness in all his ways. His conversation, thro' a long course, and many trials, was unblameable and exemplary. In some matters of late difference among us, which appeared at first view to have a difficulty; no man was more anxiously careful to see his way, or more thoroughly satisfied in his deliberate judgment about them.

His preaching was always *solid* and judicious; the result of mature thoughts, and great diligence. He never offered to God that which cost him nothing, or satisfied himself with sudden and loose composures; he always did

did his best in the circumstance in which he stood; and never allowed himself in idle neglects, or unguarded liberties, where he apprehended the honour of divine truth, and the welfare of the souls of men, were concerned. His manner was *grave* and serious; and sometimes upon awakening and important subjects, very solemn and awful; such as exceedingly engaged the attention, and affected the hearts of the hearers. His *subjects* were the *great things of God's law*, and the peculiar doctrines of the gospel; which he had thoroughly digested in his mind, and knew well how to represent to others. His usual *method* was to reduce his subject into *propositions*, and then apply it suitably to the various cases.

HE spent several winters in a *catechetical* evening exercise on the Lord's-day to a numerous congregation in the heart of the city; and went over in his expositions both the shorter, and larger *assemblies catechisms*, and the principal points of the *popish* controversy. Many, especially of the younger persons who attended that exercise, remember it with pleasure: God remarkably own'd and blessed his endeavours for sound instruction, and serious impressions upon the hearts of many.

HE was excellent in *prayer*, and remarkable for *pertinence* and *fulnes* of matter upon *special* occasions. The many opportunities we have had of praying together in private families, and upon particular emergencies, have

have given very affecting and instructing instances of it.

HE was tender of the *reputation* of younger ministers, and greatly delighted in their conversation. Nothing was a more agreeable entertainment than to communicate any light and direction, which his own observation and experience had furnished him with: and he greatly rejoiced in the hopeful prospects from the serious spirit, and excellent accomplishments of several of them. And younger ministers must be countenanced and encouraged, if ever we expect to keep up the interest of *christian liberty*, and *practical godliness*, among us. He had himself the singular blessing of seeing five children grown up, and disposed of in the world, who were all dutiful and religious; one of them a worthy minister, who is labouring in the vineyard with great acceptance and success.

HE laboured under the great infelicity of a *crazy constitution*, which, he used to say, he brought into the world with him; and was often exercised with weakness and pain. He has many a time gone into the pulpit, without any comfortable rest the night before, and groaning under the burthen of the mortal body. He used to repeat upon such occasions an expression he heard from the mouth of an excellent person, who was much experienced this way; "when we are sick we groan, when we are well we lust: sickness is our burthen, health is our snare." In all his long and various exercise, he always expressed a patient submission,

submission, and humble resignation, to the divine will; and was only solicitous, that his faith and patience might hold out to the end.

HIS *natural temper* was something *melancholy* and timorous. When I discoursed with him concerning his spiritual state, and future prospects, in his last sickness; he spake to this sense; "I hope my heart has been right with God: I think I have made it the business of my life to please him: I have an humble confidence in the covenant faithfulness of a gracious God; and the precious merit of the Redeemer's blood: but pretend not to transports of affection, and rapturous joys; for," says he, you know my *temper* and make."

HE had a profound reverence of the glorious majesty of God: The highest thoughts; and most ardent affection to the blessed Redeemer: his soul was full of love to all good men: And he possessed a settled peace and composure of mind: nor did his bodily weakness, or fearful temper, which ever made him cautious and humble, appear to disturb his peace, or give him uneasiness of mind.

HE had a large acquaintance among the serious and judicious part of the Town, of all the denominations among us; and possessed a general love and esteem. I believe he is thought by all who knew him a loss to the world, and to the church of God.

IT will be but a little time, and it will be said of *me*, and said of every one of *you*, "he is dead." Many of our friends are already *fallen asleep*; we are hastening apace one after another.

another. God only knows whose turn it will be next; and God grant, that whenever our turn shall come, we may be found *ready*; and may be able to leave the world without uneasy *fear*, and with the well-grounded *hope* of eternal life.





S E R M O N IV.

Finishing the Christian Course considered and argued.

A C T S XX. 24.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the Ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God.

I Think myself very unhappy this day, that the first time I am called to preach in this place, should be upon this mournful occasion.—But I must not touch this tender point too soon, lest I prevent myself in what I have further to say.

THE words are part of the Apostle's discourse to the elders of *Ephesus*, in which he declares to them his past course and manner of life, and what was the temper of his mind, and his doctrine and ministry among them;

- 19. Ye know after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations which befell me: i. e. with a great sense of his own unworthiness, which he always kept in view; and an affectionate concern for the success of his service, and with many tryals
- 20. from his enemies. And how I kept back nothing which was profitable unto you; but have shewed you and taught you publickly, and from house to house: He withheld no part of the Christian Doctrine from them, nor
- 27. shunned to declare all the counsel of God; and took all occasions to inculcate it in their publick assemblies, and in their own houses. But he kept to things profitable to them, and of great importance, and did not trouble them with impertinent curiosities, and unprofitable nicety. These he sums up in *repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*; which were absolutely necessary to the salvation of a Jew, and sufficient to save a Gentile.
- 21.

—22. HE further declares to them the prospect he had of suffering before him: *And now behold I go bound in spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things which befall me there*; i. e. by the impulse and direction of the spirit; foreseeing by the spirit, and assured by the prediction of inspired and prophetic men, which he calls in the next verse, the witnessing of the Holy Ghost; *save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me.* He testified this by some who had the spirit of prophecy, as we find particularly,

Chap. xxi. 4, II. 9. d. Tho' I don't know what my particular sufferings will be, and what the circumstances and issues of them; yet I am well assured that wherever I go, I shall meet with sufferings of one kind or another.

THE words of the text describe the temper of his mind in this state and prospect of things. They consist of two parts;

I. HIS stedfast *resolution* and firmness of mind under present tryals; *None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself.*

II. His great *desire* and aim in it; *so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord, &c.*

I shall consider them both, and apply them in the close.

I. HERE is his stedfast *resolution* and firmness of mind under present tryals. And this lies in two things.

I. THAT he was not *moved* by them: he was immoveable at the threatenng prospect. *None of these things move me, ἔθενός λόγον ποιῆμαι,* I make no account of any of them; literally, I don't make a word of them, or think them worth mentioning. The expression imports not only a fixed resolution, but a wise and rational determination of mind, upon a due weighing and comparing things together, and considering the reasons on either hand. It

was a deliberate purpose upon a certain prospect; *q. d.* I know that *bonds and afflictions abide me*, and am fully persuaded by the revelation of the spirit; but this does not shake my faith and resolution, or deter me from my duty, or discourage me in it. I am not *moved from my steadfastness* by the certain prospect of suffering; tho' I see my danger before me, I am *in nothing terrified*, or oppressed with the apprehension; neither brought to make a stand in my way, or consult my safety by a timely retreat. I find myself in full heart, and am determined with unshaken resolution to go on in my way, and stand the shock of all assaults from every quarter: I have counted the cost, and am prepared for all events.

This was the heroic courage, and undaunted bravery of the Apostle's spirit in the face of danger, and the nearest views of it. Nor was this a vain boast; for we find him steady and unmoved, preserving a firmness and composure of mind, and expressing a noble triumph and joy, in the greatest tryals he met with. He *gloried in tribulations*, and in the *cross of Christ*; took *pleasure in infirmities and distresses for Christ sake*; and reckoned the *sufferings of the present life not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed*.

2. He did not value his *life*. *Neither count I my life dear to myself*. Here the word *αἰώς* is understood, as appears by the *ὡς* in the latter clause; *q. d.* I count not my life so dear as to finish my course; I reckon that of more consequence than my life. The expression is an

hebraisme,

ebraisme, often used in the old testament. A man's life is said to be dear to him when he is careful of it, and willing to save it from danger, and loth to part with it. So the captain of the third fifty said to *Elijah*; *O man of God*, ^{2 King i.} *I pray thee let my life, and the life of these fifty*, ^{13, 14.} *thy servants, be precious in thy sight.* On the contrary, 'tis not precious, when 'tis not spared, and is ready to be laid down; so we read in the prophet, after the translation of the *Seventy*, which best expresses the sense of the *Hebrew*, *they despised their lives*; which we render obscurely, *with despiteful minds.*

Ezek.
xxxvi. 5.
ἀπὸ τοῦ
τοῦ θυγατρῶν
כַּשְׁמֵי
שָׁפְטִים

So the sense here is, I know the worst which can befall me, and the utmost my enemies can do; they can *only kill the body*, and take away my life; and I am so far from being afraid of suffering, that I am not afraid of dying. I am ready to spend or part with my life in the service of Christ, or for his cause. My life is devoted to him, and 'tis the same thing to me, to lay it out, or lay it down for him, to spend it in painful service, or lose it by violent suffering.

AND we find this was actually the case, and the temper he express'd upon the tryal. When the disciples of *Cesarea* dissuaded him from going to *Jerusalem*, upon *Agabus's* prophecy of his suffering there; he says, *What mean you to weep and to break my heart?* to move the tender passions of my nature, by your immoderate affection to me. *I am ready not to be bound* ^{Act. xxi.} *only, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name* ^{13.} *of the Lord Jesus.* He tells the *Philippians*,

Philip. i. 20. According to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness—Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death; by service, or suffering. And what a noble unconcern does he express in the views of a violent death! I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand: I am not only near it, but prepared for it, *σπένδομαι* to be poured forth as a drink-offering, alluding to the blood of the sacrifice.

2 Tim. iv. 6.

II. His great *desire* and *aim* in it, or what he proposed to himself, and had in his eye, in this resolution of mind: *That I may finish my course, &c.* This is what I would particularly consider at this time. And here it will be necessary, 1. To settle the sense of the expressions, and state the meaning of them. 2. To represent the grounds of it, or the reasons of such a desire.

§ 1. To settle the *sense* and meaning of the expressions. They are allusions to the Olympic games among the antient Greeks, to which the Apostle often refers, especially in his epistles to the Gentile christians. *To finish my course*, *τελειῶσαι τὸν δέημον*, to perfect my course, and bring it to an end; to run out my race: for the allusion is to racers who run within the lines mark'd out to the appointed goal. *And the ministry I have received of the Lord* *διακονίαν*: If this word is *agonistical*, and signified the servants who attended in the race,

the

the allusion is still preserved, and the expression the more beautiful. It plainly refers to the Apostleship, or his extraordinary ministry immediately receiv'd from Christ. *To testify the gospel of the grace of God*: To testify was proper to the Apostles, who were peculiarly the *witnesses of Christ*. They openly declared the doctrine of the Gospel to the world, and confirmed it by the miracles they wrought themselves, and by those which they testified concerning him. It was the *Gospel of the grace of God*, as it contained the greatest instance and display of the favour of God to the guilty world, and was bestowed upon any place by a special favour. *With joy*; with cheerfulness and satisfaction of mind. The sense is, That I may fully execute the extraordinary commission immediately received from Christ, and have the satisfaction of a faithful discharge of it. So that it directly relates to the *apostolical* office, and his immediate commission to his extraordinary work, and is most properly applicable to the *ministers* of the Gospel in their ordinary and standing work. Nevertheless I conceive, they may fitly be considered in a larger view, and as they respect the common *christian*, as well as the *ministerial* course; and perhaps the expressions here of *my course* and *the ministry*, may be design'd to have a distinct respect to each; as he had himself a *christian*, as well as an *apostolical* and *ministerial* course. And this will render the consideration of them the more profitable, and fit for common benefit.

Now

Now the finishing our course, whether christian or ministerial, may be consider'd to signify, either,

I. THE *entireness* and compleatness of it; or the performing every part of our proper work. The Apostle was always exceeding careful of this. He tells the elders, That he had *kept back nothing which was profitable to them, nor skinned to declare all the counsel of God.* He tells *Timothy*, That he had *kept the faith*, as well as *finis'd his course*, i. e. preserved the doctrine of the Gospel entire and uncorrupt, without any maim or mixture. He exhorts *Archippus*, *To fulfil his ministry*; and *Timothy*, *to make full proof of it*; to fill it up with proper duty, and attend to every part of it.

WE must have a proper regard to every part of the christian duty, and not dispense with the neglect of any. He cannot be said to *finish* his course, or to perfect it, who leaves any part of it untouched; as he who runs a race must go over all the ground mark'd out. In this sense we finish our course when we perform all the work which is cut out for us, and fill up the several capacities and relations of life with answerable duty, according to the circumstances of our condition, and abilities of usefulness, and opportunities of good: when we have a *respect to all his commandments*, and *walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.* So the Apostle prays for the *Thessalians*, That he might *perfect that which was lacking in their faith*: and *Ephroditus* prays for the *Colossians*, That they might

2 Tim. iv.
7.

Colos. iv.
17.
Theophyl.
p. 122.
2 Tim. iv.
5.

Pl. exix 6.
Luk. i. 6.

1 Theff. iii.
10.

might stand perfect and compleat in all the will of God; where there are both the words ἰέλθοις ἔπεπληρομένοι. We leave our course unfinished in this view of it, when 'tis defective, and we live in the neglect of any part of the christian duty, or suffer any divine command or appointment to be disregarded. Or,

2. PERSEVERANCE unto the end. He who runs a race must reach the goal, and come to the mark prescribed, before he can be said to have finish'd the course; and then 'tis most properly finished, or perfected, when 'tis brought to an end. The Apostle's meaning plainly is, that he might conclude, as well as compleat it, and continue faithful to God in the whole course of his service, thro' all the difficulties in the way to the end of his life. So he says, *I have fought the good fight—and finished my course*; he finished by fighting and overcoming. In this sense our Lord says of himself, *I have finished the work thou gavest me to do*; Joh. xvii. and cried out upon the cross, *It is finished*: 4. where the word is the same in both places. —xix. 30.

A Christian must continue in the way prescribed him to the end of it. 'Tis not enough to enter upon the christian state, or go a considerable way in it; but he must go thro' it, and reach the end of it. So we are required, *To serve the Lord without fear, in righteousness and holiness before him, all the days of our life*; Luk. i. 15. *to stand perfect and compleat—unto the end: to be stedfast and unmoveable, and bring forth fruit*, Luk. viii. 15. *and run our race with patience*; i. e. with perseverance under all tryals and dangers. The Heb. xii. 1. promise

promise is always to him who *endureth unto the end*: and is *faithful to the death*; and *overcometh and keepeth his work unto the end*. And so it stands opposed to *looking and drawing back*, to *fainting and growing weary*, to *forsaking our profession*, and *falling away*, to *failing of the grace of life*, and *coming short of the glory of God*, &c. Or else,

3. THE *cheerfulness* and pleasure which ought to attend it. The Apostle was not only concerned to hold on in his way and continue to the end, but to go on with alacrity and delight, without reluctance and despondence, or a backward and discouraged heart: And that he might have comfort upon a review, and find matter of thankfulness to God, and joy of heart in the last stage. He desired to finish his course so that he might have the comfort of it, and find that inward peace which arises from a sense of integrity, and the hopes of divine acceptance. So he says, *This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity—we have had our conversation in the world*. The testimony of a well-informed conscience to the sincerity of our hearts, is a ground of rejoicing in the close of life, and the nearest prospect of death; as 'tis the great comprehensive requirement of the gospel-covenant, and the necessary means of interest in all the blessings of it: *If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God*. So he speaks of being *filled with all joy and peace in believing, and abounding in hope thro' the power of the Holy Ghost*; and, *we are*

Matt. x.
25.
Rev. ii. 10,
26.

2Cor. i. 12.

John iii.
21.

Rom. xv.
13.

are filled with comfort, and exceeding joyful in ² Cor. vii.
all our tribulations. ^{4.}

A Christian must endeavour to go on in the christian course, with a cheerful mind, and to find a pleasure in the close of life upon the reflection on his own sincerity, and the prospect of approaching glory, without doubtfulness or distress, about the present state of his soul, or his title to the future blessedness.

§ 2. I shall consider more largely the *grounds* of it, or the reasons of such a desire and aim, in all the sufferings and troubles of life. I shall consider them as extending to the common case of christians, and represent and urge them in all the various views referred to in the scripture, the more to impress and affect our minds.

I. OUR course is by the *appointment* and will of God. The racer's course was mark'd out by the master of the race, and they were obliged to keep within the bounds and limits prescribed; which the Apostle calls *striving lawfully*. ² Tim. iii.
^{5.} If they run out of the bounds, they lost the prize, as well as if they did not reach the goal. God has prescribed the christian course, and every special and particular service in it, to every one. That I may *finish my course, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord*: His christian course was appointed by the Lord, as well as his extraordinary ministry. *He* is the master of the race, who has marked out the ground, and prescribed the length and limits of the way we are to run. He has cut out our work and service in the stated duties of the christian life, and the
special

special services in which we are engaged. He has made it our duty by the appointment of his will, who is the sovereign Lord of the creature, and has a right to prescribe, and to be obey'd. We are to consider the christian duty as *received from the Lord*, not only by the dictates of the reasonable nature, and the direction of providence, but by the appointment of his word, and the authority of his law, even when 'tis not by any supernatural and immediate conveyance, as the Apostleship was. 'Tis all mark'd out by the divine law, and the bounds and limits prescribed. So we read of the *path of his commandments*, and *walking in the ordinances and commandments of the Lord*; and *according to this rule*, and *by the same rule*: where the word *καὶ νόμῳ* signifies the lines by which the race was mark'd out. We must consider our selves as under a divine direction, and within limits prescribed us by our great Lord; and by which we are properly obliged, antecedently to any formal consent or engagement on our part. The will of a sovereign, or superior, immediately binds as soon as it is made known.

BESIDES, we are under the strongest *obligations* to God. They who are engaged in any special service, and placed in an higher station, are under special obligations of duty, and more particularly bound to faithfulness. The Apostles and Ministers of Christ were not only under the common christian obligation; but specially devoted to God, as they were specially favoured by him. But all christians are under sacred obligations to God, and actually bound

1 Cor. xi.
23.

Gal. vi. 16.
Philip. iii.

bound to the performance of the christian duty: For they are early devoted to God by their *baptism*, which, like *circumcision*, obliges to the whole christian law. We have taken the oath of allegiance, and sworn fidelity to this great Lord. And our *engagement* in his service, and acknowledgment of his authority is a standing obligation; as he who undertakes to run a race, is obliged to exert himself, and do his best to win the prize; or he who lifts himself in the service, is obliged to fight, and obey orders.

WE are not left at liberty whether to finish our course, or break it off. We stand engaged by the highest right, and by solemn oath. The *vows of the Lord are upon us*: We have *sworn*, and we must *perform it*, that we will *keep his righteous judgments*. Having entered upon the christian course, we are obliged to go on, and never to retreat or go back. Having given up our names to Christ, we have given up all right to our selves, and are obliged to follow him wherever he goes: Having *put our hands to the plough, we must not look back*. We deal *treacherously* with the Lord, and *falsely in his covenant*, if we don't continue and persevere, for the christian obligation is for perpetuity; and we can never at any period of life desist, without violating the most solemn and sacred bonds.

2. THERE is a great *favour* and grace attending it. The Apostle had not only the christian course prescribed to him, but a *ministry which he received of the Lord*, that is, the singular favour of the Apostleship: He was an extraordinary

extraordinary minister of the kingdom of Christ; and extraordinarily called and qualified, to plant the gospel in the world, and confirm it by miracles, and settle the affairs of the christian church. It was a great vouchsafement from
 2Cor.xi.5. God, that he was not *behind the chief of the Apostles*, who had been among the *chief of sinners*, and was *less than the least of all Saints*; and that he *who before persecuted the church*,
 Gal.i.23. should now *preach the faith which he once destroyed*. And he often speaks of it under this
 Eph.iii.8. notion. *Unto me—is this grace given, that I should preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable*
 Rom.i.5. *riches of Christ*. And, *we have received grace and Apostleship*. And when the glorious gospel of the blessed God was committed to him,
 1Tim.i. he *thanks Christ Jesus the Lord*, and says, *The*
 11. *grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant*. And
 —14. so is the christian ministry a great vouchsafement from God, when he *enables any, counting them faithful, putting them into the ministry*; when he calls them to this special service, and fits them for it, and enables them in it. 'Tis a special favour and trust, as well as a peculiar service and office.

BUT the christian course it self is to be considered as a favour. 'Tis a dispensation of *grace*; attended with singular privileges and great advantages, and vouchsafed to any place by special favour. So the Apostle says, *We are not*
 Rom.vi. *under the law, but under grace*. And we receive the grace of God, tho' many do it in vain.
 14.
 2Cor.vi. And he testified the Gospel of the Grace of God: of his free favour and rich goodness unto the
 1. world.

world. We have many merciful assistances of light and grace; clearer discoveries of the will of God, and more powerful influence and aids, than the religion of meer nature, or any former dispensation of God to the world. We have the outward helps of Gospel-ordinances, which are wisely fitted to reach their gracious ends, to enlighten and refresh our minds, and recruit our spiritual strength; and the inward succours of the divine presence and spirit, who *strengthen us with might in the inward man*, Eph. iii. *helps our infirmities* in our prayers and afflictions; and *sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts*, and makes us to *abound with hope*. Good men have many comfortable experiences of divine supports, and gracious assurances of favour and regard; so that tho' our work in any respect is difficult, and our tryals sometimes great, yet our aids and advantages are always proportionable to them; and extraordinary tryals, in any circumstances, are attended with extraordinary aids. *As thy day is, so shall thy strength be: my grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness*. He will not *justify us to be tryed above what we are able*; and as our *sufferings abound*, so our *consolations abound by Christ*.

Eph. iii.
16.
Rom. viii.
26.
—v. 5.
—xv. 13.
Deut.
xxxiii. 25.
2 Cor. xii.
9.
—i. 5.

AND how reasonable is stedfastness and perseverance under such encouragements and advantages! We are concerned in gratitude to God, and from a sense of kindness, to perform the christian duty, and finish our course; which is not only a wise and *reasonable service*, but made easy under all its difficulties, by divine

T aids;

aids; to *take his yoke which is easy, and his bur-*
 Matt. xi. *den which is light, and observe his commands*
 29. *which are not grievous.* This will further ap-
 1 Joh. v. 3. *pear if you consider,*

3. THE great *danger* we are in of failing and miscarrying. There cannot but be great danger under the disadvantage of our present circumstances from the inward weakness and disorders of our minds, and external temptation and assault. Our present graces and virtues are very imperfect, the appetites and passions of our natures are strong and unruly. The best Men are imperfectly sanctified, and there are great remainders of sin; the one often fails us in the tryal; the other creates us a great deal of trouble. There are many snares of sin round about us, many sensible objects, the baits of concupiscence, suitable to our various inclinations and temper of mind, and every circumstance and condition of life. The A-
 Heb. xii 1. *postle speaks of the sin which does so easily beset us, which like a loose garment clings about our legs, in running the christian race. And there is the old serpent the devil, the watchful adversary, who is always ready to deceive and ensnare us, to throw a false light upon things, to strike upon the weak side of our nature, to take the advantage of an unguarded moment, and make the best of every opportunity. And when these two things meet together, the weakness of our virtue, and the strength of a well-timed and well-managed temptation; how great must our danger be? how easily are we*
 drawn

drawn into sin, and discouraged in the christian course?

THE Apostle uses this consideration in his own case: *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly, or at random, so fight I not as one who beateth the air, brandishes his sword in the air, only for exercise and without doing any execution; but I keep under my body, and bring it into sub-* I Cor. ix. 26.
jection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away. 'Tis an allusion to boxing; *q. d.* I beat it black and blue, and use is as a slave or servant: I keep it in order and fit for service, by proper abstinence and labour. And upon this ground he often exhorts the christians to caution and watchfulness: *Let him who thinketh* I Cor. x.
he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Let us fear, Heb. iii. 1.
lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. —xii. 15.
Looking diligently lest any man sail of the grace of God, lest any roat of bitterness springing up trouble you; lest you be drawn to apostacy by the difficulties of service, or the fear of suffering. He cautions the christians, Lest Satan 2 Cor. ii.
get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant 11.
of his devices; and, Put on the whole armour of Eph. vi.
God, that you may be able to stand against the 11.
wiles of the devil; his subtlety and arts. And again, Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour; q. d. Watch, for he watches: Be upon your guard, for he is unwearied in his assaults, and cruel in his design.

4. THE *honour* of religion and of the divine grace is very much concerned in it. 'Tis the end crowns the work, and gives the glory and perfection to the whole. The skill and strength of the racer is seen in reaching the goal: When a christian finishes his course, and compleats his work, 'tis to the honour of the religion he professes at present, which has enabled and supported him, in all the steps and tryals of it; and it will be to the everlasting honour of the divine grace, which first began a good work in him, carried it thro' all difficulties, and performed it until the day of Christ. They are

Eph. i. 6. *to the praise of the glory of his grace*; and the
 1 Pet. i. 7. *faith of a tryed christian will be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearance of Jesus Christ.* It gives a credit to religion in the account of the world, to see a good man, under present weakness and disadvantage, and thro' all the tryals and suffering of life, stand his ground, and maintain his constancy to the end.

BUT now, on the other hand, when a christian *forakes* his profession, and lets go his *confidence*; when the prevalence of sin, and the power of temptation, carry him off, and he is again *entangled and overcome*; how dishonourable is it to religion, what a reflection does it cast upon the divine grace? As if all the powers of religion, and the world to come, were not sufficient to preserve and secure him; and he who was the *author*, was not able to be the *finisher* of his faith. It opens the mouth of insulting enemies, and ministers to their
 reproach

reproach and triumph, as if they had prevailed against all the succours of religion, and aids of grace: so the *name of God is blasphemed thro' them.* What an infinite dishonour to religion, and disadvantage to the gospel, to the *gentile* world, and to all after-ages, must it have been, if such a man as the Apostle *Paul* had failed at last, and not *finished his course*? a supposition which he makes himself. There is a revenue of glory to God lost for ever from one of his creatures; the honour of his finished salvation, and everlasting praise and triumph in heaven, after all which had been done in order to it. 'Tis a discouragement and stumbling-block in the way to others, whensoever it happens; and tends to lessen their esteem, abate their comfort, and discourage their hope, in the christian course. No wonder a christian is so much concerned to finish his course, when the honour of God and religion is every way so greatly affected by it, and it carries consequences in it of so high a nature, and great importance.

5. UNLESS we finish our course, all we have done in the mean time will be *lost*, and in vain. We had as good do nothing, as not to do to the purpose. He who stops short in a race on this side the goal, as certainly loses the prize, as he who never set out in it, and only loses the labour of the way he has run. 'Tis a very awful and affecting, but a most certain and undoubted truth, That tho' we have made a great profession, and done many things in religion; have gone a great way, and held out a great

while, perhaps thro' many difficulties and trials; yet if we desist and forsake it, and grow weary and discouraged, all our former labour is wholly lost, and all we have done will go for nothing. So God tells us by the prophet,

Ezek.
xviii. 24.

When the righteous man turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations of the wicked; i. e. not only falls into sin, but goes into a course and way of sin; shall he live? All the righteousness which he hath done, shall not be mentioned; in the trespass which he hath trespassed, and in the sin which he hath sinned, shall he die. i. e. He shall perish in his present course and way of sin, notwithstanding his former righteousness.

Luke ix.
62.

No man having put his hand to the plough, and looketh back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven.

Heb. x. ult.

And the Apostle tells us directly, *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him: He shall find no acceptance with God, but fall under his displeasure.* Upon this

2 Cor. vi. 1.

ground he warns the christians, *not to receive the grace of God in vain; and to look to themselves, that they lose not those things they have wrought, but that they receive a full reward.* We lose all we have been doing, as well as all we expect.

2 Ep. of
Joh. 8.

We have many examples of this kind in the Scripture: *Judas* went to his own place, when he forsook and betrayed his Lord, notwithstanding his high office, and great advantages. The young man in the gospel went away sorrowful, and miscarried at last, notwithstanding

withstanding his coming to Christ, and keeping the commandments from his youth. *Demas forsook* the Apostles thro' the love of the world, after a fair and forward profession, and long accompanying with them. The Apostle speaks of some, who *putting away faith and a good conscience, concerning faith had made shipwreck*; and of those who were *enlightened, and had tasted the heavenly gift*; and yet *fell away*; and who had *escaped the pollutions of the world thro' the knowledge of Christ, and were again entangled and overcome*. Many hopeful beginnings and fair appearances come to nothing; like fair blossoms in a forward spring, which are blasted by unkindly winds, and never come to ripe fruit. So that all we have already done depends upon finishing what remains, and holding out to the end. The last habit of a man's mind, like his last will and testament, revokes all the former, and makes the final disposition of his spiritual state. Every man is that for ever, which he is at last; not in the present *frame*, which depends very much upon bodily temperature, and accidental circumstances; but, which is constant and invariable, tho' perhaps in different degrees, in the prevailing and governing *bent* of his mind. And it must needs be so, because perseverance to the end is a necessary essential requisite in the gospel-covenant, and can only give the proper denomination: As treason and rebellion against a sovereign prince, cancels all the former loyalty and obedience, and forfeits life and honour for ever. Yea further,

6 IT will fare worse with us than if we had never begun. We shall not only lose our past labour, but fall into a worse state than we were in before: For he who falls away after good beginnings, and forsakes the profession and practice of religion, after some tryal and continuance, is in a more *hazardous* state, and of all others most difficultly recovered.

Heb. vi. 4. The Apostle says of such, *'Tis impossible to renew them again to repentance*; that is, at least, extremely difficult and very rare. And the reason is, they have baffled the convictions of their own mind, resisted and grieved the Holy Spirit of God, defeated all the succours and aids of religion, and all the hopes and prospects it gives them; and what is left to take hold of in them, or to work upon them by? They have laid waste their conscience, and are enslaved by sin, and have forfeited all friendly and gracious regards from God.

YEA, and they fall under a greater *displeasure* from God, as they have abused a greater grace. They have sinned against tryal and experience, *rebelled against the light*, and done *despight to the spirit of grace*. So much is implied in the expressions concerning such, they are *not fit for the kingdom of heaven*; and, *my soul shall have no pleasure in them*. They who are *exalted up to heaven*, and are *not far from the kingdom of God*, will fall into the lowest depths of misery, and be banished to the greatest distance from it. What disappointment and reproach, what confusion and distress, must it cause at last, to see others enter
into

into the kingdom of God, and they themselves cast out? To see other christians, perhaps of the same standing and advantages with themselves, finish their course, and receive their reward, while they miscarry and are lost for ever? Upon these accounts the Apostle represents it as a worse, and more deplorable case, than that of those who never began the christian course, or once enter'd upon it: *It* 2 Pet. ii. *had been better for them not to have known the* 21. *way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment. In that case, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning; and the last state of that man is* Mat. xii. *worse than the first. They perish under greater* 41. *aggravations of guilt and misery.*

7. 'Tis necessary to the *final reward*. He who runs a race cannot obtain the prize, till he reach the goal: He must first finish the course prescribed, before he can lay claim to the reward. He who fights in a warfare must first overcome, before he is crowned and triumphs. A christian has great experience of the divine goodness in a religious course, at present, and great assurances and security of what is to come; but yet the final blessedness and *recompence of reward* is suspended, and made to depend upon the *finishing his course*; as a servant must do his work, before he has any right to his wages: We must be *good and faithful servants*, before we can receive the approbation of our judge. So we see in the example of our Lord; *I have glorified thee on* Joh. xvii. *earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest* 41. 5.

me to do : I have performed the mediatorial undertaking here on earth : *And now, O father, glorify thou me with thy own self, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was* : He lays claim to the promised reward.

Heb. xii. 2. *And he was animated in it by this view, Who for the joy which was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame.* And in the example of the Apostle, in agonistical terms quite

Philip. iii. thro' ; *But this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto the things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus ; and, if by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.* And a-

2 Tim. iv. gain in the close of life, *I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished my course ;* my christian and ministerial course : He

— 8. adds in the next words ; *Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness* : from this time of finishing my course : When he had run his race, he reckoned upon the glorious prize.

AND so 'tis every where represented in scripture, *To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour, and immortality, he will render, eternal life.* And,

1 Cor. ix. *He who striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things, that he may overcome : now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, a garland of*

1 Tim. vi. leaves, *but we an incorruptible.* Fight the good fight and lay hold of eternal life. Be thou faithful to the death, and I will give thee a

— 26. *crown of life ; and to him who overcometh will I give the morning star.* We have no title to the

the

the final blessedness by the gracious promise of the gospel, but upon the supposition of finishing our course; and we may certainly depend upon it, when we have finished it. And how reasonable is it that we should strive and contend, and persevere and overcome; that we should *so run that we may obtain* and win the glorious prize, which will make a rich amends for all our labour, and be a *full reward*? Ep. Joh. ii.

8. I would further suggest, especially to elder christians, You are *near finishing*, and have not much of your course to run. Perhaps you have run far the greatest part of your course already, and have but a little way to go. Let me bespeak you in the words of the Apostle, *you have run well hitherto*, beware of any thing which should hinder you. Gal. v. 7. You have held out a great while, perhaps thro' many tryals of life; how sad would it be to miscarry at last! that would be like a ship richly laden, after a long and dangerous voyage, from a far distant country, suffering shipwreck, or bulging upon a rock, in the harbour's mouth.

CHRISTIAN, hold out a little longer, and thy race will be run, and thou wilt win the prize, and all the labour and the danger of life will be over. Be not weary or discouraged the little remainder of thy course, in which thou hast run so far already. The greatest difficulty of religion is over, the greatest good is to come: rather quicken thy pace, and encourage thy self by the nearer prospect; as the racer exerts all his vigour, and springs forward at the sight of the goal; and even natural bodies move swifter,

swifter, the nearer the center. The Apostle had the prospect of his change before him, and was the more desirous to finish well: *I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.—I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course.* Ministers, who have laboured many years in the vineyard, and Christians of long standing in the christian state, should be often thinking of their end, and speaking of their *decease*, which they are shortly to *accomplish*; and be the more concerned, and the more careful to finish the short remainder of their course with joy. I only add,

9. IT will make our *passage* out of the world at last, more easy, and our *entrance* into heaven joyful. To this purpose the Apostle directs the christians, *That every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that you be not slothful, but followers of them, who thro' faith and patience inherit the promise:* By diligence we arrive to a full assurance of hope, and become followers of them who inherit the promised blessedness.

Heb. vi.

11.

1 Pet. i. 10,

11.

And more directly; *Give diligence to make your calling and election sure;* more evident to others, and more firm to your selves, by the proper exercise of the christian virtues: *for if you do these things you shall never fail, and so an entrance shall be ministred to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ:* They are more secure of their present standing, and of the heavenly kingdom hereafter; and usually they have the easiest passage out of the world, who have been most faith-

faithful in it, and a finished course on earth, prepares for the perfect glory of heaven.

AND this is a great matter too; for many, we have reason to hope, get safe to heaven at last, who don't go joyfully and comfortably thither; it may be with many fears, and thro' great darkness; like a man who makes the harbour thro' cross winds, in a cloudy and tempestuous season, when he is often beat back, and in danger of being lost. But a christian who has finished his course, is *looking* and *waiting* for the *coming*, and for the *salvation* of the Lord; he passes thro' the *valley of the shadow of death*, by the divine presence with him, with much comfort, and without fear; and *enters into the joy of his Lord*, with holy confidence and triumph of soul; like a man who runs into the harbour with a fresh gale, and full sails; or one who has reached the goal, and looks with confidence for the prize.

I have no time left for application; the best improvement I can make at present, is to set before you an instance and example of the doctrine I have been considering in my dear deceased friend and brother, Dr. *Evans*; of whom I have many things to say, which, I think, may be honourable to religion, and the divine grace, and useful and instructing to others: and I desire to say nothing of him but with this view.

HE was born at *Wrexham* in *Denbighshire*, and descended from a race of ministers for four generations, and excepting one interruption, quite

quite up to the reformation. His father was ejected for his nonconformity at *Ofwestry* in *Shropshire*, in 1662. He afterwards settled with the congregational church at *Wrexham*, where he lived in general esteem among the gentlemen of that country, and was often favoured and screened by them in the troubles of those times, especially by Sir *William Williams*; and Judge *Jefferies*, who had a particular kindness for him. His Mother was the daughter of the eminent Colonel *Gerard*, who was governour of *Chester* Castle, a woman of an excellent spirit, and great understanding.

HE had his *education* first under Mr. *Thomas Row* of *London*; and afterwards under Mr. *Richard Frankland* at *Rathmill* in *Yorkshire*. He enjoyed great advantages under both, and made a great proficiency in all the parts of rational and polite literature, which he cultivated and improved all his life. He enlarged his views of several things beyond those of his education, as sincere and inquisitive minds often see reason to do.

His first *settlement* in life was in the family of Mrs. *Hunt* of *Boreatton* in *Shropshire**. He was treated with the kindness and respect of a son by that excellent Lady, and by all the family; which he always spoke of with a singular pleasure and honour. Here he enjoyed the great felicity of an agreeable retirement in a religious family, and pleasant country, with all the convenience for study and devotion, and proper diversion when he could

* She was relict of Rowland Hunt Esq; and Sister of Lord Paget, who was Ambassador to the Ottoman Court.

could be persuaded to take it. Being now in the vigour of life, and abounding with leisure, he read over entire Mr. *Pool's* Latin *Synopsis* in five large folio's, which laid the foundation of his great skill in the *Scripture criticism*, without some knowledge of which no man can throughly understand his Bible, or make the proper use of it. He read over all the christian writers of the three first centuries, under the direction of the learned Mr. *James Owen*, and made judicious extracts of what related to the doctrine and practice of the primitive church, which were of great use to him ever after.

WHILE he was in this family, he first began to *preach*, before he was quite twenty. After some time he was called to his father's congregation at *Wrexham*, but upon their refusal to join with the other congregation in the town, which became vacant, they desired he would rather settle in the other congregation than leave the town. Here he was *ordained* according to the scripture-pattern by *fasting and prayer, and imposition of hands*, by Mr. *Talents* of *Shrewsbury*, Mr. *James Owen* of *Oswestry*, Mr. *Henry* of *Chester*, and Dr. *Benion*; and lived several years with great acceptance and high esteem. He was once obliged to dispute the point of *Water Baptism* with one of the people called *Quakers*, before a select number of friends, whom he baffled by the many instances of those converted to christianity in the *Acts*, and even after their receiving the Holy Ghost,

AFTER

AFTER some time he received an invitation to settle at *Dublin*, but the judicious and sagacious Dr. *Williams*, who was so useful by the labours of his life, and so great a benefactor, at his death, to the dissenting interest, and the interest of religion in the world, tho' he was not satisfied to remove him from *Wrexham*, which was his own native town, yet rather than to let him leave the kingdom, prevented that design, by sending for him to *London*, where he was several years his Assistant; and afterwards, at his own desire, joint Pastor, and succeeded him at his death. They lived together in the greatest mutual affection and esteem, notwithstanding the disparity of years, and different sentiments in some particular matters, which they sometimes debated with great freedom, and without any offence.

HE spent a whole week in a solemn retirement, and in extraordinary exercises of devotion, when he first took the whole pastoral charge of this congregation; where he spent the principal part of his life and labours, and which he always reckoned, with great thankfulness and pleasure, was sober, judicious, and peaceable: And God owned his ministry and endeavours many ways to the good of many, younger and elder, and in some instances very singular and remarkable. He was several years concerned in the Lord's-Day *Evening-Lecture* at *Salter's-Hall*; and was chosen one of the six preachers at the *Merchants-Lecture* in that place in the room of Mr. *Jeremiah Smith*.

HE published many *Sermons* upon various occasions; and two volumes of very judicious and useful discourses upon the *Christian Temper*; a noble argument, and of standing use, and which has met with uncommon regard in the world. He was once engaged in a controversial writing with a late learned person, concerning the *Importance of scripture consequences*, which was generally allowed to be done in a masterly and christian way, with great clearness and judgment, and with great sobriety and decency.

HE had formed a design many years ago of writing *A History of Nonconformity*, from the beginning of the *Reformation* to the times of the *Civil War*; and to trace it from its first rise and spring, through the several steps, and gradual progress of it; to represent the various struggles and suffering of those who contended for a farther reformation, and the principles and methods of those who all along opposed it. He had made a vast preparation of proper materials from all quarters, with great industry, and at great expence, for several years together; and had some assistance from several gentlemen who were skilful that way, and approved the design. He had read over an incredible number of books upon that subject, he thought very few had escaped him during that period; and has filled several quire of paper with proper references under each year. He began to transcribe and finish it some years ago, and has left fairly written about a third

part of one of the two folio's he designed. But his constant employment in the ministerial work in a large congregation, the great variety of publick affairs which passed through his hands; the early decays of his constitution; and various disappointments and troubles in his own affairs; prevented the close application the nature of the work required, in the later years of his life. So the work is left unfinished, to the great loss and disappointment of the learned and curious world. Whether it may be revived and finished by other hands, I am not yet able to say. The design was noble, and would have been of great use several ways. To be sure no one was fitter for the task he had undertaken, or would have executed it with more advantage, or greater satisfaction to the world.

HE received the highest marks of respect from two learned bodies, the Universities of *Edinburgh* and *Aberdeen*, with some other of his brethren, without their knowledge, and in the most honourable manner. He sometimes presided at publick ordinations, with great gravity and wisdom, and was greatly delighted in having prayed over three persons, who were all born in this congregation, and distinguished by their piety and worth*.

HIS *character* was remarkable for many excellent *endowments*, which were very distinguishing in him, and superiour to most others. He had a great solidity of *judgment*, and uncommon capacity of distinguishing the differences of things, and discerning the true state of

* *Mr. George Smith, Mr. Thomas Newman, Mr. John Oakes.*

of a matter. There was a marvellous strength and connexion in his thoughts and expression, upon any subject, in his preaching and his conversation. His *vivacity* and quickness joined with so great a judgment, made a very rare and uncommon mixture. He had the solidity of cooler and slower minds, and the life and quickness of those of the warmest imagination. His *industry* and diligence was indefatigable: He could bear hard study, and go through a great variety of business with ease and dispatch: He was peculiarly made for the active life, and was not easily tired or discouraged by the difficulties of an attempt. His *prudence* was often seen in conducting a difficult affair, or managing a debate of consequence; in foreseeing probable difficulties, and finding out proper expedients, in which he was often singularly happy. His vigilance and care made a proper discovery, and prevented a late design in a neighbouring nation, to cramp the protestant dissenters, which was equally ungrateful and impolitick, against so great a body of zealous friends to the government, and in circumstances of so great distress in the country.

HE excelled in several *virtues* of the christian life. He had great *integrity*, and openness of mind: There was an honesty and frankness in his temper, which never suffered him to crouch or dissemble: He knew not how to flinch or flatter: You saw his heart at once, and might depend upon his word. He detested the low methods of slander, and censure, without a sufficient ground, or any proper call,

as a great wickedness. The same greatness and generosity of mind, which led him to do all manner of good to others, set him above doing the least hurt to any. He was steady and *immoveable* in what he apprehended right, and thought of importance. He knew no friend, and feared no danger, in the way of his duty; tho' no man was a truer *friend*, or had a greater zeal, or a greater pleasure in friendship; as no man was more generally loved and esteemed. I think I may be allowed to know it, and have a right to say it, after living about six and twenty years in the full confidence and endearments of friendship, in all the services and struggles of life, without the least disgust or distance: God only knows how great a share I bear in the loss, and in the affliction; and how truly I can say, *I am distressed for thee, my brother.*

2 Sam. i.
26.

His *piety* was a steady regular course of serious regard to God, in his daily walk, with great sobriety of mind, and without the least tincture or tendency to *enthusiasm*, notwithstanding some natural warmth and eagerness of temper. His religion was not confined to God, or the mere acts of worship, but extended to all his fellow-creatures: He was of a *publick spirit*, and had a zealous regard to the common good. No man among us bore a greater share in all the affairs of the dissenting interest, or what related to the welfare of his country; or was more ready to do good offices to others, to serve any worthy design, or help any case of distress; and no man ever served the

the

the interest of so many others, with greater self-denial, or less advantage to his own. Tho' he had a strange firmness of mind, and oftentimes a noble neglect of what concerned himself, yet he had a greater *tenderness* to others afflictions, than always stood with the comfort of his life, or the convenience of his circumstances. His compassionate heart to others wants and miseries, made him sometimes willing not only *to his power*, but greatly *beyond his power*. His *principles* in religion were sober and moderate, without any zeal for useless speculations, or running into any extreme: He much attended to what was *profitable*. He invariably judged the cause of *moderate Non-conformity* to be a just and a noble cause; and was strong in his sentiments of the scripture perfection, and of christian liberty, against all principles of tyranny and imposition. The *Bible* only was his religion and rule, and the great encouragement and support in all his tryals and conflicts, living and dying. He was soberly *orthodox*; and thoroughly *catholick*; disposed to think well and to honour those who differ'd from him, who appeared upright and deserving, of the several denominations among us. He knew no difference in his affection and esteem between one good man and another, but what the different degrees of their goodness made.

HIS last *sickness* was a complication of distempers, which gradually broke his constitution, tho' it seem'd built for a longer standing; and became grievous to him, not only as a

confinement from active service, which he most dreaded; but as it was sometimes very painful and distressing. He preserved however an immoveable steadiness and composure of mind through so long an exercise, with a profound submission to the divine will, and an exemplary patience under the greatest distress; and was ready to wait the event which God should allot. Indeed the long continuance of the disorder, and frequent intervals of it; the opportunities of extraordinary devotions, and the uncommon concern through the town for so eminent and useful a person among us; sometimes flattered us with hopes of recovery: But the wise sovereign of the world had determined otherwise.

His lingering illness gave the opportunity of dropping several passages which were instructing and affecting. He had the *sentence of death in himself* a considerable time, and rejoiced in the views of eternity. He would sometimes check himself in the midst of exquisite pain, “But I must not complain: God is good, and the will of the Lord be done.” He once said, “Though I cannot say, in the great expression, worthy of an Apostle, of a late venerable minister * among us, a little before his death,” [‘I have no more doubt of my acceptance with God, than I have of my own existence,’] “yet I have good hope thro’ grace, and such as I am persuaded will never make me ashamed.” Tho’ he was sensible, he said, of many failings, he could appeal

* *The very pious and learned Mr. Will. Lorimore.*

appeal to God, "That he had walked before him with integrity." When he was in acute pain, he said to his worthy friends, where he was treated with so high respect, and tender a care, "The formality and ceremony of taking down this tabernacle by degrees, is irksome and grievous; how much better were it, if it pleased God, that it might tumble all at once! but the will of God be done." When he looked upon his body, swollen with his distemper, he would often say with pleasure, "This corruptible, shall put on incorruption,—O glorious hope!" He was full of thankfulness to God for any intervals of rest: When he found himself tolerably easy, "Thank God for this." When in great pain of body, "Blessed be God for the peace of my mind."

HE told a particular friend who visited him, "That he was obliged to his friends who expressed so great a concern for his life, but it was not so much his own desire." He added, "If I might be continued for further usefulness in the church of Christ, I shall be glad to live; but if not, 'tis my earnest desire to finish at present." He said with earnestness and tears, "I have reason to thank God for an early sense of religion, and an early dedication to God: I have endeavoured to order the main part of life as before God; and have ever desired to be faithful in the ministry: I am conscious of many failings in publick and private life; but I can rest upon the gospel-covenant for mercy:

“ I am fully persuaded of the truth of it, and
“ desire no other salvation.” He said at another time, “ I die in the faith and hope of
“ the gospel I have preached, and find great
“ comfort in it.” Upon the occasion of the
hours of prayer on his account, he said, “ I
“ heartily wish that my affliction may occa-
“ sion the reviving a spirit of prayer ; I shall
“ not think much of any thing I endure, if
“ it may have that effect.” He spent whole
nights in prayer to God, when he could not
sleep, for himself, his family, his friends, and
the church of God : It was the proper breath
of his soul. He said to an old and intimate
friend, “ That the greatest difficulty he found
“ in the thoughts of leaving this world, was
“ parting from the company of his brethren,
“ whom he had always loved, and with whom
“ he had conversed with so much pleasure.”
He began to write some hints of meditation
for the use of himself and his friends, some
days before his death, with a trembling hand ;
the inscription of it was, “ What I am as a
“ creature ; as a reasonable creature ; as a sin-
“ ful creature ; as a redeemed creature ; as a
“ creature in a state of trial for eternity ; as
“ a sociable creature, and related to other be-
“ ings about me.” But it was only begun.
The last thing remarkable, while he was sen-
sible, and some of the last words he was
heard to say, were ; he lift up his hands, and
cry’d out, “ All is well, all is well.” Indeed
he had a firm undaunted spirit upon christian
principles, thro’ his long illness, and truly

finished

finished his course with joy. And O may we go and do likewise! Let the instance of the Apostle in the text, and that of your deceased friend and pastor be to every one of us, both a moving example, and an encouraging motive to do so. I conclude with the words of the Apostle to the christian Hebrews; Remem-^{Heb. xiii.}ber them who have had the rule over you, and⁷ have spoken to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.





S E R M O N V.

ACTS XX. 24.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus—

I Have already considered these words in a doctrinal way, and have represented both the stedfast *resolution* and firmness of the Apostle's mind under present trials; and his great *desire* and aim in it: I have shewed distinctly, what it is to finish our course, and upon what grounds 'tis so desirable.

WHAT I propose at present is only to consider the *practical improvement*, and various uses which may be made of it to ourselves: and because the subject is of a very serious nature, and great importance in the christian life, I shall endeavour to represent it a little distinctly, and shall reduce what is most material to the following inferences and exhortations.

I. I infer from hence, That every christian has his course of service *appointed* by God. The Apostle speaks here of *his course and ministry*; but this was not peculiar to him; for he speaks elsewhere of the *race which is set before us*. The whole compass of christian duty is the common course of every one, however otherwise distinguished. The Apostles of Christ were equally obliged to this, with the meanest christian. The special duties of our particular places, which are proper to our condition and circumstance of life, and the relation in which we stand to others, is a course proper to ourselves; so magistrates and ministers, those of publick characters and higher stations of life, and private christians of the lowest rank, and most obscure, have their proper course, and respective work, mark'd out and appointed by God. The *perfect law* of the Lord is the common rule to every one, which the Apostle calls the *royal law*, and the *law of liberty*. Heb. xii. 1.
Jam. ii. 8,
12.

It would very much contribute to raise our esteem, and dispose to a suitable regard, to consider every part of the christian duty as the will of God, and fixed by a divine direction and appointment; and the higher our apprehensions are of the divine authority and dominion, the more easily they will command our attention, and make the deeper impression upon the heart. How cheerful and ready will all our obedience be, when we are thoroughly satisfied of the right of the authority, and the reason of the command?

2. WE must be prepared and *resolved* against difficulties and tryals in our way. We may certainly know without the spirit of prophecy, or immediate revelation of the Holy Ghost, that tryals and afflictions of one kind or another, will abide us wherever we go. The christian life is a state of warfare as well as service; there are not only great difficulties in our work, but great opposition from without, and 'tis an observation which extends farther than the Apostles times, and is found true in every age, *That they who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution, or be ready to suffer it.*

WE must *count the cost* of being disciples of Christ at first setting out, and reckon upon sufferings and tryals before hand, that we may be prepared and fortified against them; and *arm our selves with the same mind* with our suffering Saviour, that we may not be *moved from our stedfastness*, and may stand all assaults, and maintain our ground. Difficulties and tryals always take us at a disadvantage, under an easy carelessness and security of mind, and when they surprize us undetermined and unprepared. Nothing is more necessary in circumstances of danger, or more likely to secure our standing, than a wisely and well resolved mind: We must *cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart*, and not be *soon shaken in mind*, if we hope to be *steadfast and unmoveable*, and not to *fall from our own stedfastness*.

3. WE must not grudge our *lives* in the service of Christ, or think much to lay them down

down for his sake. We must not count our lives too dear a sacrifice for his honour, if we are called to it, or consult our safety at the expence of it. It cannot be denied or dissimbled, that this is the standing law of the gospel to all the disciples of Christ; *He who findeth his life, shall lose it; and he who loseth his life, for my sake, shall find it.* And, *If any man* Matt. x.
cometh to me, and hateth not his own life; or as 39.
it is in Matthew, loves it more than me; he cannot be my disciple. And whatsoever appearance or pretence there may be of hardship in the case, 'tis certainly a wise and reasonable choice to *offer our lives upon the sacrifice and service of* Luk. xiv.
the faith, and to the honour of him, who is 26.
the Lord of life, and has the greatest right to it; and has greater ends of good to serve by them, more noble and lasting, than our temporal lives amount to; who gave his own life for us, and redeemed us by his precious blood; and who will give eternal life to all his faithful followers, an hundred fold in this present time, —xviii.
and in the world to come life everlasting. 30.

4. WE learn from hence, what to think of those who have not yet *begun* the christian course: Who have never heartily set about the christian life, or been in good earnest in it, but lived in ignorance and careless neglect, in a deep security, and unconcern of mind, or under governing habits and customs of sin; who are taken up with the business or vanities of life, and pursue their pleasures and interests in it; but never made a personal surrender of themselves to God, or made it their daily endeavour

deavour to do his will, or be approved of him: Who never made religion the care of their souls, or the business of their lives.

How great are the numbers of such in a christian country, and under the christian profession; who have really no more of a *christian*, than what is contained in their christian name; and are not distinguished from *beathens*, by any thing in their temper, or in their lives? How far are they from finishing their course who have not yet begun it? They have their whole race to run, and have not gone one step in it. When do you intend to begin? *When shall it once be?* If they miscarry who don't finish their course, what must their case be who never enter upon it, or ever made the tryal and attempt? Surely 'tis high time to begin, if ever you hope to finish it, and to set about it immediately, and make the utmost dispatch; *O think on your ways, and turn your feet to his testimonies; make haste and delay not to keep his commandments.*

Pfal. cxix. 59. *Let the time past of your life suffice to work the will of the Gentiles; and become obedient children, not fashioning your selves according to the former lusts in your ignorance. On the contrary; to-day while it is called to-day, hear his voice, and harden not your hearts.*

1 Pet. i. 14. *Bring your minds by close attention to a full persuasion, and a fixed point, that you may have some certain view before you, and be directed and excited by it, in all your measures and conduct of life.*

—iv. 3. *Bring your minds by close attention to a full persuasion, and a fixed point, that you may have some certain view before you, and be directed and excited by it, in all your measures and conduct of life.*

Heb iii. 7. *Bring your minds by close attention to a full persuasion, and a fixed point, that you may have some certain view before you, and be directed and excited by it, in all your measures and conduct of life.*

THE longer you continue in this state, the farther you are from your end: These two are direct

direct extremes, and stand at the greatest distance from one another, the *finishing* our course, and not *beginning* it. And what if you should *die* in the mean time, and be called off the stage of the world, while you are only considering and designing, and before you begin to act a proper part in it, or have done any thing in order to it? What if you had died in their stead who are now removed, and your careless and useless lives had gone in the room of their valuable and useful ones? What had been the state of your case, and how had you been disposed of for ever? What a figure will you make in the other world? how will you think of your selves, and be thought of by all the World? How sad an end must he make of the natural life, who has not yet made a beginning in the spiritual life? Let me call you to consider, how many uncomfortable thoughts must it necessarily administer to upon a dying bed? What foundation must it lay for future sorrow? What shame and reproach must it occasion upon a review? What anguish and distress in the prospect before you? Sinner, what a favour is it from God to be spared and continued in life after so many trifling neglects and long delays, and that it can yet be said, *Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation*; and that a *space of repentance*, and opportunity of good, the exercise of patience and mercy, are lengthened out, after so many years of provocation, and when, perhaps, many others of thy companions and acquaintance in life, are *silent in the grave*, or
in

2Cor.vi.2.

in the *place of torments*? What aggravation of thy folly and guilt, how amazing and insupportable must thy shame and condemnation be at last, if thou continuest careless and incorrigible unto the end?

5. 'Tis not enough to begin well, but we must *finish* our course too: Many begin well, and go a considerable way in the christian course, who never finish and hold out to the end. Many hopeful beginnings come to nothing, and are, in the representation of the prophet, as an *untimely birth*, or as the *morning cloud*, and *early dew*, which soon *vanisheth away*; is presently scattered and dried up by the rising sun. The Apostle tells the *Galatians*, who were for revolting from *Christianity* to *Judaism*, and mingling the law of *Moses* with the doctrine of *Christ*; *You did run well, who did hinder you, that you should not obey the truth?* And, *are you so foolish, having begun in the Spirit*; entered upon the spiritual religion of the Gospel: *are ye now made perfect in the flesh*, or by the carnal ordinances of the legal dispensation?

'Tis very sad to consider, how many have begun betimes, and set out well in religion, who have been discouraged by difficulties, or entangled by sin, and have come to forsake their profession, to grow gradually careless and wicked, and fall at last under a fuller power of the Devil; like the case represented by our Lord in the Gospel: *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, and walketh through dry places, and seeketh rest, and findeth none; then*
he

he saith, I will return to mine own house, from whence I came out; and when he cometh, he findeth it empty, swept and garnished: When the Devil is dispossessed for a while, and a man begins to be religious, and grows regular and sober; Then he goeth and taketh seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first: He returns with fresh recruits, and greater force, and if he can find admission, he takes a fuller possession, and makes him worse than he was before. We must not rest in good beginnings, tho' 'tis absolutely necessary to make a beginning; as the meer setting out right in a race will never bring a man to the end of it.

BUT now a sincere christian is much set upon *finishing* his course, and the true spirit of a christian is much seen in it. Hypocritical and formal professors of religion look no further than present things, and outward appearance; all their care is to be *seen of men*, and *approved of men*. If they can keep a fair outside, and gain the good opinion of others, and promote and secure their worldly interest and convenience; they trouble themselves no further, and are not solicitous about futurities. But a christian's eye is very much upon his *end*: His constant care and chief concern is to hold out, and finish well at last: "Let me die the death of the righteous, as I have endeavoured to live his life." "Let my *end* be peace, like the *upright* man." He matters not what tryals and troubles he meets with, so that he

may *finish his course with joy*.—Indeed finishing work is a great and difficult work, and of another kind from all the former; as the finishing any work gives the beauty and glory to the whole; and it requires the nicest care to give the finishing touches, and last hand to a curious piece. 'Tis the great *business* of life to make a good end, and we should be always doing something towards it. The christian course is not a sudden hasty work, to be done all at once, or in a short space, in a last sickness, or upon a dying bed; but it extends to the whole compass of life, and all our time in this world is little enough for it. There will be always something to do as long as we live, tho' life were extended to never so great a length, towards finishing our course, and coming off well at last. And it should be our daily endeavour, That the longer we live, the better we may be, more refined from all sinful and earthly alloy, more improved and confirmed in the divine life, and fitted for the heavenly state; that our last days, may be our

R. v. ii. 19. *best days, and our last works more than the first.*

AND *ministers* of all men are especially concerned in imitation of Christ, to *finish the work which God has given them to do*; and with the Apostle, to *finish their course and the ministry which they have received of the Lord*; for they are under special obligations, and have greater advantages; they stand more in the eye of the world; and are bound by their office, living

1 Pet. v. 3. *and dying, to be examples to the flock.*

6. How *happy* are they who have finished their course! If a christian is so much concerned, and upon so great reason, to finish his course; what a satisfaction must it be, upon the same grounds, to have finished it, or to have the end of it in view? There is a mighty pleasure in any other case, to finish our work, especially if 'tis a work of great labour and cost, which has been long bringing about, and thro' many difficulties and disappointments in the way; and if it be a matter of great moment, and in which our heart is much engaged. The great God looked with pleasure upon the finished creation; He *rested* or rejoiced in his work, and said, *It was very good.* When the foundations of the earth were laid, the *morn-*
ing stars sung together, and all the sons of God
shouted for joy. What a solemn thanksgiving and rejoicing was observed at the finishing *So-*
lomon's Temple, which was raised with so great
magnificence, and at so vast expence; and when it was rebuilt by *Zerobabel*, what *shout-*
ings were there, when the *top stone* was laid,
and crying out, *grace, grace to it?*

Gen. i. 31.

Job xxxviii. 7.

1 King. viii. beg.

Zach. iv. 7.

THE satisfaction and joy which arises in a christian's mind, upon the finishing his course, is *unspeakable* and *glorious*, and will recompence all the labour and sorrow he has met with in the way. And there is a great deal of reason for it; for when he has finished his course, he is past all danger of miscarrying, and being lost; and is placed out of the reach of temptation and snare, and every envious and malicious power. They have run the race and

won the prize, and after the battle, received the crown: They have got safe through the storm, and are laid up in the quiet harbour: They have reached their native country and proper home, after a long and wearisome passage, in a foreign land, and through a howling wilderness. What they have *sown in tears*, they will *reap in joy*; and how great is the *joy of harvest!* When they have wrought out their salvation *with fear and trembling*, they will *enter into the joy of their Lord*: And what a surprize of joy after the many fears and sorrows of life?

WHAT a blessed difference does this make in their case, from that of others! They stand safe, upon the shoar, while we are tossed in a tempestuous sea: They are crowned, and they triumph, while we are pursued by powerful enemies, and exposed to many dangers. We bear the *heat and burden* of the day, when they *rest from their labours*, and enter upon their reward; and have many assaults and conflicts to pass through which they have quite escaped.

AND what reason have we of *comfort*, and not to *sorrow as those who have no hope*, for them who have *finished their course*, and *sleep in Jesus*? We should *weep for our selves*, and *not for them*, for their *warfare is accomplished*, and they have received their discharge; while we are employed in a difficult service, and engaged in a certain conflict, and a doubtful war. I only add once more,

7. How much should it be our *concern*, that present tryals may not *discourage* us, and that

we may *finish* our course with joy? It may be we have long ago entered upon the christian course, and proceeded in it a considerable way: Perhaps, we are some of us, near finishing, and drawing to the close of it: Of what consequence is it to finish well? Let me earnestly recommend this exhortation especially to *elder* persons, ministers or christians, who have lived a considerable time in the world, in any state of service and usefulness; and are visibly hastning out of it. Have you any work for God upon your hands, or in your design? leave it not neglected or unfinished, but make all proper dispatch. Is there any part of the christian course, any ordinance of worship or duty of life, which lies neglected? see that it be immediately performed, and attended to. Are there any of the graces of the christian life remarkably defective, or any sins more than ordinary prevalent? labour earnestly to have the one strengthened and improved, and the other mortified and subdued; that what is *lacking* may be *perfected*, and that you may *strengthen* the things which *remain*.

IF any serious and concerned christian, from the consideration of the case, as I have represented it, should be ready to say, But how shall we be able to finish our course, and what is necessary in order to it, or may be useful and helpful in it? I answer briefly in the following suggestions, by way of direction.

BEGIN well, and lay the foundation right. If you mistake here, no wonder you miscarry

at last. If the foundation be not firmly laid, the building cannot stand. If we *build upon the sand*, the *building will fall* in a time of trial, and *great will be the fall of it*: But if we *build upon a rock*, the *building will stand* all assaults, and *will never fall*. And 'tis he who *beareth his sayings and doth them*, who is like to a man who *buildeth his house upon a rock*, in our Lord's representation of it: *i. e.* Who receiveth the doctrine of the gospel of which Christ is the author, and foundation, and which directs us to the great propitiation for sin, and prescribes the method of our acceptance with God, and pleasing him. Particularly, there must be a hearty *consent* to the *gospel-covenant*, and a chusing of God in Christ, for our God, and a giving up our selves entirely to him, absolutely and without reserve, to serve him as our proper Lord, and enjoy him as our chief good and last end. The governing habit and bent of the mind must be set right, taken off from all sensible good, and prevailingly set for God and heaven, against all attempts and opposition. There must be a saving change of heart in order to an interest in the blessings of the gospel, and to our continuance and overcoming in the christian state. This is the *good* Matth. vii. 24. *work begun*, and which is to be *performed* until the day of Christ.

AGAIN, Look well to your *daily standing*. We are daily employed in the christian service, and in danger from our spiritual enemies: We need daily watchfulness and care. Watch over your own spirits, and often call them to an account.

count. Carefully observe every decay of goodness and declining from God, the first motions and tendency to carelessness and neglects of life, or indifference and unconcern of mind. We grow worse, not all at once, but by gentle steps, and various slow and unheeded degrees. Retrieve a false step, check a rising disorder of heart, before it gather strength by repetition and indulgence, and grow into a habit: Be diligent in your daily work, and keep up a lively sense of God upon your minds, and a governing regard to him in all your ways. See what progress and improvement you have made in the christian life, what ground you have gained, what advances you have made, &c. Our security and standing in circumstances of perpetual danger, depend very much upon daily watchfulness and diligence; and negligence and remissness of spirit will always weaken our hands, and endanger our standing. And therefore the Apostle so oftens calls the christians to caution and fear, and diligence; to *take heed*, and *look diligently*, &c.

BESIDES, Guard against *hindrances* and discouragement. Be well apprized of the true state of things. There are various assaults from different quarters, and of very different kinds. You may be diverted and drawn off from the christian course by the cares and pleasures of life, and the entanglements and pursuit of worldly good; or terrified and discouraged by present evil, and the fear of danger. Now be always aware of the danger about you, and always upon your guard, that you may not be

taken at a disadvantage, or surprized before you are aware. Reckon upon the tryals of the christian course, that you may be prepared and fortified against them. So the Apostle exhorts the christians; *Let us lay aside every weight,* Heb. xii. 1. *and the sin which does so easily beset us, and run with patience the race which is set before us; i. e.* all encumbrance about us, which would hinder our running in the christian race, or render it more difficult to us. And again, *Ye therefore beloved, seeing you know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.* 2 Pet. iii. 17.

FURTHER, Use the proper *helps* afforded for your farther improvement in the christian life: The greater progress you make in religion, and the more confirmed the habit of your mind is, you will be more secure from falling, and the more likely to hold out to the end, as you gather greater strength, and take a deeper root. Attend upon all the ordinances of the gospel, and the means of grace, upon all proper occasions, for your greater establishment of heart, and encouragement and support, in all the difficulties of the christian course. *Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. Put on the whole armour of God, and above all, the shield of faith. Renew your strength by waiting upon the Lord, for the way of the Lord is strength to the upright, and they go from strength to strength: We grow stronger, and not more weary, the farther we go in it. Give all diligence in the duties of the christian life, to add*

to your graces, and to *make your calling and election sure*. We must grow in grace and knowledge, that we be not led away, or fall from our stedfastness. Endeavour to revive and strengthen the good impressions which have been made upon your minds, and to raise fresh and deeper impressions, by a regular serious attendance upon every appointment of the christian worship, and all the duties of the christian life. The best way to secure our standing, is to make a gradual progress, and daily improvement, as 'tis by going forward, we arrive to our journey's end. The stronger the convictions and persuasion of our minds are, the firmer the resolution and purpose of our heart, and the greater our satisfaction and joy, in the service of God, the surer will our standing be under all our tryals, and the more certain our continuance to the end.

FURTHER, Act in all you do in a constant dependence upon God. Beg the supplies of the divine grace, as well as use your daily endeavours, or else your endeavours will be without effect. Our strength will fail in the tryal, and the power of our spiritual enemies will prevail. The observation and experience of serious christians, as well as the testimony and examples of the scripture, confirm this practical truth, That a vain confidence in our selves, and presuming upon our own strength, with a neglect of God, and of divine aids, betrays our weakness, and invites our fall; as we see in the case of *Peter*. The direction therefore here is, Engage the divine presence and spirit, by prayer and dependence.

pendence. Plead the promise of *sufficient grace*, and proportionable strength to all the circumstances of the case. Engage it by dependence, as well as by prayer. Live in a daily dependence upon it, and always act in every thing, *in the name, and in the strength of the Lord*. Our continuance and preservation in all the difficulties and snares of the christian life, depends upon the divine help: *Having obtained help from the Lord, we continue to this day*; and we are kept by the power of God thro' faith unto salvation. The divine grace can be easily sufficient, under the greatest labours and conflicts, and will both support you in the way, and preserve you to the end.

Aâ.xxvi.

22.

1 Pet i. 5

Joh. xvii

3.

Heb.xii.2.

— 3.

—xi.26.

—27.

To conclude, Look to the *example and undertaking* of the Redeemer. When he had finished his work, he prayed to be glorified with the father. And the Apostle requires us, to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy which was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame; and to consider him who endureth such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be weary and faint in our minds. Eye the example of the patient and faithful Redeemer, who always did the will of God, and finished his course thro' the greatest tryals and opposition. Let us keep our end always in our eye: Set before you the *incorruptible crown*, the glorious prize for which you run, to animate and encourage you; that you may have a respect unto the recompence of reward, and endure as seeing him who

who is invisible. Should we tire or faint with such glorious hopes in our minds, and so near and certain views before us ?

AND especially look to his gracious *undertaking* : His promise and power concur ; there is inclination and ability conjunct : He is both a *merciful and faithful high priest*. He has undertaken to keep all the sincere and faithful : He stands charged with the care of them, and is accountable for them to God. He who prayed for *Peter*, That his *faith might not fail* in an hour of temptation ; and promised the Apostle *Paul*, *My grace shall be sufficient for thee*, when he was buffeted by a messenger from Satan ; has promised to all his disciples, *That he will give* Joh. x. 27, *them eternal life, and none shall pluck them* 28. *out of his hands* ; and will be able to appeal to God at last, *Those whom thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost.* The Apostle encourages himself and other christians with this apprehension, That what he had *committed to him*, he was able to 2 Tim. i. *keep to that day* ; and that he is able to keep 12. *us from falling*, and to present us Jud. 24. *faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.* Let us put our selves under the conduct of the great Redeemer, and commit our selves to his powerful care : Make a daily use of his *mediation*, looking to him for all supplies of grace, encouragements to our faith, and acceptance with God in all we do. And then we have all the reason
which

which the nature of the thing, and the promise of the gospel, can give us, that we shall
1 Pet. i. 9. not fail or miscarry at last, but shall *finish*
our course with joy, and receive the end of our
faith in the salvation of our souls.





S E R M O N VI.

Diligence in the Christian life
necessary to be found in peace.

I P E T E R iii. 14.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.

THE Apostle is speaking in the foregoing verses of the drowning the world by water, the coming of the day of the Lord, the destruction of the world by fire, and of a better state of things, in answer to the scoffers of the last days, who said, *Where is the promise of his coming? since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were.* Ver. 4. The words are an inference or conclusion from these premises; *Wherefore, beloved, since ye look for such things.* I shall have occasion to consider the context in speaking to the words. What I propose is to draw forth

forth the sense of them in the several parts of which they consist.

I. 'Tis here supposed that we must be *judged*, and that an enquiry will be made into the states of men.

II. I observe, That a christian's great concern is to be found of his judge *in peace*, and *without spot* and blame.

III. THAT in order to his being found in peace, he must be *diligent*.

IV. I shall consider the powerful *motives* and reasons to this diligence, here suggested and referred to; *Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things.* The consideration of these things will take in the full sense and strength of the words.

I. 'Tis here supposed, That we must be *judged*, and that an enquiry will be made into the states of men. This is implied in the expression of *being found in him*, i. e. by him as judge, or before him, when he shall come.

Jer. i. 20. A like expression is used by the prophet; *The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve.* The Apostle uses the same expres-

Phil. iii. 9. sion in the same sense, *And be found in him*: The term relates to the final judgment, when the great enquiry will be made, and the states

of men determined. And as the future judgment is one of the *principles* and *foundations* of the *doctrine of Christ*, so 'tis particularly represented and described in scripture: I shall give you a short view of it, to engage and affect our minds.

THE *time* of it is appointed. The Apostle here speaks of the *day of judgment*, and the *coming of the day of God*. God has settled a Ch. ii. 9. determined time for the exercise and solemnizing the general judgment, *He hath appointed a* —iii. 12. *day in which he will judge the world*. There is Acts xvii. a certain determinate day mark'd out in the divine decree, tho' kept as a secret from all the creatures, for *of that day and hour knoweth no man*; and of which we may say, what the Apostle does in another case, *the day will declare* 1 Cor. iii. *it*. It will reveal itself in the appointed season. 13.

The *Lord is not slack concerning his promise*, and He who *shall come, will come, and will not tarry*: There will not be a moment's delay beyond the appointed time, how long soever it may appear; and it will come too soon, whensoever it comes, for them who scoff at the seeming delay.

THE *judge* is ordained. This our Lord himself tells us, *The Father judgeth no man, but* John v. 22. *hath committed all judgment unto the Son*. And he hath given him authority to execute judgment Ver. 27. *because he is the son of man*. The Apostle says, *He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world—by that man whom he hath ordained, of which he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead*. The judge,

judge, as well as the day, falls under a divine ordination. And again; *He will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ*; and 'tis therefore called, *The judgment-seat of Christ*. The fallen world will be judged by the *Mediator*, not directly and immediately by the *Father*; for tho' God the *Judge of all*, and Jesus the *Mediator of the New Covenant*, are distinguished; yet he is the judge of the world, not in his own person, but through the *Mediator*, or by *Jesus Christ*. He is the judge of sinners, who is the Saviour of them; and he will be a judge in our nature, as he was a Saviour in our nature. The exercise of judgment is part of his dominion, and belongs to that *all power in heaven and earth which is given to him*, and to his universal *lordship* over all. The *appearance* of the judge will be very glorious, and with great magnificence and grandeur, for he will appear *in the clouds of heaven, with his own glory, and the glory of the Father, and of his holy Angels*.

Rom. ii.
16.2 Cor. v.
10.Heb. xii.
23.Luke ix.
26.

THE rule of judgment is fixed, or the measure of proceeding at that day. As we must stand before the *judgment-seat of Christ*, or at the *Mediator's bar*, so we must be tried by the *gospel* of Christ, and not by the law of innocence; and be dealt with, not as innocent creatures who have never offended, but as fallen creatures under methods of recovery. If he was to *enter into judgment with us*, and to be *strict to mark iniquity*, no living creature could be *justified*, or stand before him: The whole fallen world would be condemned at the *Creator's*

tor's bar, and upon the foot of rigorous justice. But we shall be judged by the gospel of Christ, and according to the gracious constitution of the new covenant. So the Apostle says, *In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel*; which may be understood, not only according to the revelation of the gospel which I have preached, but by the rule of the gospel. The Apostle James is more direct, *So speak ye, and so do, as they who shall be judged by the law of liberty*, which he also calls the *perfect law of liberty*; and which the Apostle Paul calls the *law of faith*, in opposition to the *law of works*; which accepts of true believers in Christ, or sincerity of heart, without absolute perfection, and with many imperfections. This is included in the *books which shall be opened, and by which the dead are judged*, and according to which he will judge the world in righteousness.

THE persons to be judged are the whole fallen world, or all the race of sinful man. All who died in Adam, shall be judged by Christ, as well as made alive by him; for they are raised in order to be judged. So 'tis represented by the Evangelist, *And before him shall be gathered all nations*. The Apostle says, *We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ*. The Apostle John saw the dead small and great stand before God, and the books were opened, and the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them. There will be an

universal summons to all the prisons and repositories of the dead, and a general assembly of fallen creatures in every part, and every age of the world.

THE matter of judgment, or the *cause* to be tried is express'd in the most comprehensive terms: So the wise man says; *God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* And this is the constant language of the gospel. The

Eccl. xii. 14. *every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* And this is the constant language of the gospel. The

1 Cor. v. 10. *Apostle says, that every one must receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* And when he is speaking of the *day of wrath* and the *revelation of the righteous judgment of God*, he says,

Rom ii. 6. *who will render to every man according to his*

Rev. xx. 13. *deeds.* And again, *they were judged every man according to his works.* The judge is introduced

—xxii. 12. *saying, Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.* They must be judged for all the actions of their lives, and according to the tenour and course of them, as righteous, or unrighteous, tho' not according to the proper merit of them. Particularly we shall be judged according to our *benevolence* and kindness to good men in their distress, for his sake, or our unkindness and neglect of them; as our Lord

Matt. xxv. *himself expressly represents it.* God will judge the *secrets* of men by Jesus Christ; the most retired passages of their lives, and the workings of their thoughts and desires, which lie concealed in their own breast, and fall not under the notice of others. And *every idle word which*

Matt. xii. 36. *men*

men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment; for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned: i. e. every evil word, which is either false or hurtful.

AND then there is the final issue and *event* of judgment. After the solemn appearance of the whole world of mankind at the Redeemer's bar, and the tryal of each one's case, according to the true state of things, by the gospel rule, they will be answerably dealt with and disposed of, *i. e.* rewarded, or punished. He will pass a respective sentence upon each; to the one he will say, *Well done, good and faithful servant,—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* And, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the* Matt. xxv. *kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of* 34, 41. *the world.* To the other, *Thou wicked and slothful servant,—cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth:* And, *Go ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil, and his angels.* ver. 46. The execution of the sentence will immediately follow, for *These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.* They each go to their respective state for which they are fit, and to which they are doomed, that is, a final and unchangeable state of happiness or misery; and so from the consequence of it, 'tis called, the *eternal judgment.* Heb. vi. 2.

II. I observe, That a Christian's great concern is to be found of his judge *in peace*, and without *spot* and *blameless*. Here is a double

expression used, which evidently refers to two different things of the greatest importance in their several kinds.

1. IT refers to our *justification* and acceptance with God. So we are found of him *in peace*, i. e. in a state of favour with God, and to our own advantage and felicity. There can be no peace to a fallen sinner in the day of judgment, but in the way of forgiveness. We must therefore be pardoned thro' the blood of Christ, and justified from condemning guilt; be interested by our faith in the benefit of his death, and entitled to the forgiveness of sin according to the gospel-covenant; for that is the measure of our present acceptance with God, which will be the rule of the final judgment.

Phil.iii. 9. So the Apostle says; *And be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:* which is parallel to that of the Apostle, *And by him all who believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses;* and agreeable to another remarkable passage, *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* We must be found sincere believers in Christ, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood; and there is no condemnation to them who
are

Acts xiii.
39.

Gal.ii.16.

are in Christ Jesus, and walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. Thus we are brought into a state of friendship with God, and rendered acceptable to him; for being *justified by faith*, Rom. v. 1. we have peace *with God*, and made *accepted* Eph. i. 7. *in the beloved*, or the objects of special and distinguishing favour.

THE consequence of this is peace of *mind*, or inward satisfaction in the sense of the divine favour, and the inestimable blessing of acceptance with God. And so they are found of him *in peace*, i. e. in the quiet possession of their own souls, in a composed frame of mind, without the uneasiness of doubt, or torment of fear, or dread of divine displeasure: with a blessed calm and serenity of mind arising from the *testimony of conscience* to their own *sincerity*, and the *witness of the spirit* to their interest and relation to God; they have that *peace of God which passeth all understanding*, and which none of the troubles of life, or fears of death, not the presence of the judge, or the terror of judgment, can disturb*. This the Apostle represents by having *confidence when he shall appear*, and *not being ashamed before him at his coming*; and by *having boldness in the day of judgment*. So some good Criticks connect the words *in peace*, not with *being found*, but with *looking for such things* †, or expecting them with a quiet mind, and undisturbed with fear.

Y 3

AND

* — Non quatit

Nec fulminantis magna Jovis manus.

Si fractus illabatur orbis,

Impavidum ferient ruinæ.

HOR.

† Beza in locum.

AND this will appear in a peaceable frame of mind towards *others*; or a soul full of benevolence and good-will towards men; purified from angry passions, and undue resentments, possess'd with pure and fervent love to all the children of God; doing no injury to any, taking no revenge for any injury; not living in malice and strife, or found *beating our fellow-servants*, when our Lord shall come. And this was proper to say to the *Jews* who lived among the persecuting *Gentiles*, and were often injured and provoked by them. The *peace of God ruled in their hearts, and kept their hearts and minds by Christ Jesus*; i. e. was a protection and defence from the violence of passion and unruliness of spirit. In this sense *Josiah* was gathered to the grave in peace: And the Apostle exhorts, to follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

Col. iii. 15.
Phil. iv. 7.
2 Kings xxii. 20.
Heb. xii. 14.

I shall only further observe here, that tho' every sincere believer in Christ is actually justified, and brought into a state of favour with God; yet we are most properly justified at the final judgment, when it will be most solemn and most compleat.

2. IT refers to our *sanctification* and holiness. This is the import of the other expression, *without spot and blameless* *. The allusion seems to be to the *Jewish* sacrifices, which were required to be *without blemish and spot*. The Apostle seems to reflect upon the seducers, whom he had mentioned under this character *spots they are and blemishes* †; i. e. a disgrace

—ii. 13.

* ἁπλοὶ καὶ ἀμώμητοι.

† Σπίλοι καὶ μομοὶ.

disgrace to their profession and to the christian society. He would have them take care that they be not found, like them, under the dominion of any sin, or reigning impurity of heart and life, which would be a reproach and dishonour to the christian name.

THIS may be understood to refer to our present *Sanctification*, which is called the *Sanctification of the spirit, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*; and being *renewed in the spirit of our mind*, and *after the image of God in righteousness and holiness*. The Apostle says, *He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love*; and he makes it consist in being *blameless* and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we are to shine as lights in the world*. And he speaks of keeping themselves *unspotted † from the world, and hating the garment spotted with the flesh*, where the same words are used. The sense is, that we must be free from the reigning pollutions of sin in the heart, and the practice of sin in the life, by sanctification and holiness; from greater vices, and lesser faults, which either gives offence to God, or scandal to the world; so *Zachariah* and *Elizabeth* were *both righteous before God, walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless*. And the Apostle speaks of being *sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ*: i.e. with a blameless sincerity of heart, and regularity of life, according to the grace

Eph. i. 4.

Phil. ii. 25.

Jam. i. 27.

Jude 23.

Luke i. 6.

Phil. i. 10.

Y 4

and

* ἀμώμετα.

† ἀσπιλον.

and equity of the gospel, without any reigning sin, or allowed guile.

BUT this is imperfect in this world, and not properly *without spot*; and therefore I think the expression must finally refer to Christ *presenting* us at last before God, purified from every remainder of sin, and made perfect in holiness, fitted for the divine presence, and a state of spotless purity. I find these expressions often

1 Cor. viii. 6. used by the Apostle in this reference: *Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of Jesus Christ.* He tells

Eph. v. 27. the *Ephesians*, that he might *present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blame*: The whole body entire and compleat, and every one without any blemish.

Col. i. 22. In the Epistle to the *Colossians*; *To present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in his*

1 Thes. iii. 13. *sight*: and to the *Thessalonians*, *To the end that he may establish your heart unblameable in holiness before God, even the Father, at the coming of Jesus Christ with all his Saints.* And the A-

Jude 24. *postle Jude says, Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.* 'Tis a great act of the mediation of Christ towards his members, not only to *wash them from their sins in his blood*, but to *present them pure and faultless at last*; and represent them in a full glory before the throne of God, delivered from every stain of sin, and mixture of impurity. So the compleat sense is, that we may be found such who are now sanctified by the spirit, and will

will be presented at last with perfect purity and spotless blame.

AND of what importance is this, and how just a concern to every christian? for this is represented as the great reason and end of the death of Christ, and of his whole undertaking to bring back revolted sinners to a state of subjection to God, and restore them to the divine favour, make them acceptable to him now, and approved of him at last; for he gave himself ^{Tit. ii. 14.} for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people: And Christ also bath ^{1 Pet. iii. 18.} once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. And this is the highest ambition of a christian's heart, and what he proposes to himself as the chief scope of all his service and attendance on God: all the lines of his endeavours meet in this point: This is the center of all his desires, and bounds his hopes and expectations, as to himself and others. So the Apostle speaks of himself, under the rash judgment of other men, 'Tis a ^{1 Cor. iv. 4.} small thing to be judged of you, or of man's judgment; but he who judgeth me is the Lord. He represents it as the common sense of Christians, ^{2 Cor. v. 9.} We labour, that whether present, or absent, we may be accepted of him. This was the greatest thing he could pray for others; and the best return for the greatest favours; ^{Phil. i. 10.} And this I pray, that your love may abound, that you may approve the things that are excellent, and that you may be sincere and without offence to the day of Christ. He expresses his gratitude for the singular kindness of Onesiphorus in this manner; *The Lord give*

2 Tim.iii.
16, 18.

give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus—The Lord grant to him that he may find mercy of the Lord at that day. The hope of this is the best support under the troubles and sufferings of Life; *We therefore labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God:* and 'tis absolutely necessary to the blessedness of the other; for as we are found at last, we shall fare for ever, and every man's state will be determined according to the real appearance of things at that day. 'Tis only they who are approved at last will be pronounced *blessed*, and go *into eternal life*; all who are found in an unpardoned and unholy state, will be rejected and condemned; will *depart accursed*, and go *into everlasting punishment*. But I proceed to observe,

III. THAT in order to our being found of our judge in peace, we must be *diligent*: *Be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace.* 'Tis a work of labour and care, and not to be done with idleness and sloth. Men may sit still and perish, but they must be diligent who would be saved. Here the great question is, What is that diligence which the Apostle requires, and which is necessary to be found at last in peace? The word * is of a strong and comprehensive sense, which imports great earnestness and intention of mind, and may be extended to the whole compass of christian duty. I shall represent it according to the scripture-account of it, and as far as the present limits will allow, in the following instances.

I.

* Σπουδαστε.

I. THERE must be the due exercise of our *natural* faculties, and reasonable powers. I readily own the weakness and disorder of our natures by sin, especially by long customs and habits of sin, and the need of the succours of divine grace; that we are *not sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God*. Nevertheless as we are made reasonable creatures, and under the influence of common grace and providence, we are obliged to act suitably to the nature which God has given us, and the rank and order of beings in which he has plac'd us. We must use the powers which God has given us, for he is the God of nature, as well as grace, and we dishonour him by disparaging his workmanship. We are *reasonable* creatures when we are not *holy* creatures, and can act as *men* when we cannot act as *saints*, and in order to our being such.

So *Moses* complains of the *Jews*, *They are a* Deut. xxxii. 29. *nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding: O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end,* or the proper consequence of things, the natural tendencies of obedience and disobedience. The prophet calls upon sinners, *Remember this, and shew yourselves men; bring it again to remembrance, O ye transgressors.* Another prophet charges it upon them, *That they* Hof. v. 4. *will not frame their doings to turn unto the Lord;* and calls upon them, *to consider their* Hag. i. 5. *ways.* The Apostle exhorts the Christians, *Be not children in understanding; in malice be* 1 Cor. xiv. 20. *ye children, but in understanding be ye men:*

Use

Use the understanding of men. And again,
 Philip. ii. *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling,*
 12. *for it is God who worketh in you to will and to do.* We must work, though 'tis God who worketh in us; and for this very reason, because he worketh, or is ready to help us. We must use the powers of our reasonable natures, and exercise our thoughts and our understandings, to excite a concern and endeavour, suitable to the moment of things, and the consequence which depends upon them, as you do in any affair of moment, and which greatly affects your interest in any other respect. This stands opposed to inconsideration and sloth, which naturally breed neglect, and prove the ruin of many.

2. THE improvement of the *talents* and enjoyments of life. Every man has his proper talents, besides his natural powers, tho' in a diverse degree. The blessings of providence, and mercies of life are improveable to great advantage, and must be accounted for at last. So our Lord represents the matter; *The kingdom of heaven, or the gospel-state, is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his servants, and delivered to them his goods; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to every one according to his ability: And they went and traded with them; and he said, Occupy till I come.* Such are life and health, acquired knowledge, and experience, liberty and opportunity, possessions and prosperity, interest and credit in the world, which are capable of great advantage by wise management,

Matt. xxv.
 41.
 Luke xix.
 13.

ment, and faithful diligence, for the glory of God, and the good of men. And after *a* Matt. xxv. *long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them.* He calls them to an account, and deals with them according to their different conduct, the faithful servant who by a wise improvement had gained other talents, was approved, commended, and re-ver. 21. warded; but the slothful, who had used no diligence, and made no improvement, was upbraided, stript and punished. ver. 26.

WE are only stewards of all our talents, and a *steward must be faithful*, and diligently improve his trust, as one who must *give an* Luke xvi. *account, when he must be no longer steward.* In ^{2.} this sense we must make the proper use of all the privileges and advantages of life, and improve them to the best advantage to their proper purposes, and so as may turn to a comfortable account at last. So our Lord directs in this case, *Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when they fail you may be received into everlasting habitations;* and the Apostle charges the rich, *not to trust* ver. 9. *in uncertain riches, but in the living God;* to 1 Tim. vi. *do good and be rich in good works, ready to dis- 17.* *tribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.*

3. WE must perform the proper *duties* of our place, and whatsoever is suitable to the state we are in, and the circumstances of things about us, and for which the different talents of life are a proportionable advantage and obligation.

ligation. Thus we must *do whatsoever our hands*
 John ix. 4. *find us to do, with all our might; and work*
the works of him who sent us while it is day, be-
fore the night comes when no man can work. In
 Mat. xxiv. 45. *this sense our Lord says, Blessed is the servant*
whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so do-
ing; i. e. properly imployed in the duties of
his place, and heartily engaged in the service of
 2 Pet. i. 10. *his Lord. The Apostle requires the Chri-*
stians, to give diligence to make their calling and
election sure; and adds, For if you do these things,
ye shall never fail, and so an entrance shall be
ministred to you abundantly into the everlasting
kingdom.

FAITHFULNESS in the way of duty is a good preparation for the coming of the Lord. The faithful, in the lowest stations, and with the meanest capacities, will be accepted and approved, when the wicked and slothful will be rejected, with the greatest privileges and highest pretensions. We must be careful and conscientious in all the instances of personal and relative duty; in every relation and condition of life; in our daily walk, and all our transactions in the world; in all the duties of *holiness and righteousness*, or proper expressions of reverence and love to God, and of justice and charity towards men. We must *diligently*
 1 Tim. v. 10. *follow every good work, and abound in the work*
 1 Cor. ult. *of the Lord, knowing that our labour in the Lord*
 —v. 11. *will not be in vain.* So the Apostle speaks in this chapter: *What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness**; in all

* Ἐν ἀναστροφῇ καὶ εὐσεβείᾳ.

all the various turns of life, and offices of religion.

4. THERE must be *watchfulness* against sin. 'Tis a great point of christian diligence to beware of the snares of sin, and entanglements of life, in every condition and circumstance in which we are plac'd ; to guard against the impression of surrounding evil, and resist the attempts of our spiritual enemies. So our Lord directs his disciples, in this case ; *Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts are over-³⁴charged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day overtake you unawares.* In this view he often requires watchfulness, *Watch and pray that ye enter not into^{Mat. xxvi.} temptation, i. e. avoid the occasions of sin. And, ⁴¹Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your^{—xxvi.} Lord shall come.* And again, with great so-⁴²lemnity and particular emphasis, *What I say^{Mark xiii.} unto you, I say unto all, Watch.* ^{37.}

THE Apostle abounds with exhortations to *sobriety* and *watchfulness*, or the exercise of a cautious fear of sin, of a due guard over our senses and appetites ; and a moderate enjoyment of the blessings of life, without excess or abuse. So when he speaks of the coming of the day of the Lord, he says, *Therefore let us¹ Thef. v. not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be so-⁶ber ; and let us who are of the day be sober.* 'Tis ^{ver. 8.}an awful expression of this Apostle, *The end¹ Pet. iv. of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober, and⁷ watch unto prayer.* This is otherwise represented in the Epistle to the Hebrews, *Looking^{Heb. xii.} diligently lest any man fail of the grace of life ; ¹⁵*

i. c.

i. e. be drawn off, by any temptation or danger, to sin or apostacy: And in this chapter,

ver. 17. *Beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.* And the judge is represented, saying,

Rev. xvi. 15. *Behold I come as a thief, blessed is he who watcheth and keepeth his garments.*

5. THE use of appointed means, or institutions of *worship*. These are properly *means of grace*, or instruments of spiritual good, the channels of conveying divine influence to us, as well as expressions of our homage to God, by which we are quickened and strengthened in his service, and receive direction and comfort in all the tryals of life. Thus we must be found in the daily practice of *prayer* to God for the succours of his grace, and the *supply of the spirit of Christ*. So our Lord *spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* And with relation

Luk. xviii. 1.

—xxi. 36.

to this very matter, *Pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.* We must converse with the *word of God*, which is the fountain of spiritual wisdom, and rule of the christian life; and by *daily searching the scriptures*, come to be *skilful in the word of righteousness*, and able to accommodate it wisely to every purpose, to keep up just apprehensions of God in our minds, and a due temper of mind towards him, to form our spirits, and rectify and regulate our daily course. So the Apostle says, *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things*

Heb. ii 1.

things we have learnt, lest at any time we should let them slip. And in this Epistle, *We* chap. i. 19. *have a more sure word of prophecy whereto you do well that you take heed.* And the Apostle says, That God is a *rewarder of them who diligently seek him*, or come to him in any way of worship and service. Particularly the *Lord's Supper* is a perpetual memorial not only of the *death*, but of the *coming* of Christ; for *as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we shew forth the Lord's death till he come.* We keep up the remembrance of his death, and the expectation of his coming again. This naturally tends to strengthen the faith of his appearance, and promote a conformity to him, though 'tis sadly neglected, through carelessness or fear, by many professors of the present age, to the great dishonour of the christian profession, and prejudice of their own souls. We forget that which is appointed to preserve the remembrance of him: But will not our neglect be remembered with a painful concern hereafter? Thus by frequent converses with God in the ordinances of his worship, and receiving communications from him, we are formed to a more spiritual frame and serious habit of mind, and in a nearer fitness for the coming of the Lord. Hereupon,

6. THERE must be the exercise and improvement of suitable *graces*, or proper dispositions of mind. The Apostle has an exhortation in this Epistle to this purpose; *And* 2 Pet. i. 5. *besides this, give all diligence, add to your faith vertue, to vertue, knowledge, &c.* He would
7. have

have them use diligence with respect to their graces, both as to the exercise and increase of them. He closes the Epistle with a like exhortation, *But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, as those words are generally understood.

ch. iii. 18.

Thus there must be a lively exercise of *faith*, by which we overcome the world, and look to the things which are *eternal*, and which are not seen, which represents and realizes to the mind things future and at a distance, the *invisible God*, and the *recompence of reward*. So the Apostle says, *That you be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promise*. Our Lord directs his disciples to *have their loins girt, and their lamps burning, and they themselves as men who wait for the Lord*: And the Apostle speaks of *waiting for the Son of God from heaven*. So there must be *hope*; *We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end*. And in this Epistle, *Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. We often read, as another proper exercise of mind, of *looking for his appearance*; *Looking for the blessed hope and the glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*. And *to them who look for him, shall he appear a second time without sin unto salvation*; and in the Epistle of *Jude*, *Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*; and in this chapter,

Looking

Heb. vi.
12.Luke xii.
35.1 Theff. i.
10.Heb. vi.
11.

1 Pet. i. 13.

Tit. ii. 13.

Heb. ix.
28.

ver. 21.

Looking for and hastening to the coming of the ver. 12.
day of the Lord; hastening to it by earnest de-
sires, and daily preparations for it. This is a-
greeable to what the Apostle says, And not only
they but we ourselves also who have the first-fruits
of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within our- Rom. viii.
selves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the re- 25.
demption of the body; and to the solemn wish
of the church, Even so come Lord Jesus, come Rev. xxii.
quickly. Thus we must stir up the grace of 20.
 God which is in us, and be found in the pro-
 per exercise of faith and hope, and waiting and
 desire, as an actual *meetness* for heaven, and
readiness for the coming of the Lord.

IV. I shall consider the *motives* and reasons
 of this diligence, here suggested and referred
 to. This is intimated in the words of connec-
 tion, *Wherefore, beloved, seeing you look for such*
things, i. e. the things which he had been speak-
 ing of, or the arguments of his foregoing dis-
 course. And if we look back into the context,
 we shall find these two great thoughts reign-
 ing in his mind, and governing his discourse;
 the one is the *destruction* of the present world;
 the other, the *expectation* of a better state. I
 am only concerned to consider them as argu-
 ments in the present case, and not obliged to
 enter into all the nicety of the expressions. I
 shall represent them briefly.

I. THE *destruction* of the present world.
 Whatsoever allusion the Apostle might have
 to the destruction of *Jerusalem*, I think the
 whole context plainly points to the day of judg-
 ment, and the end of the world, as our Lord

spoke of them both together in the xxivth of *Matthew*. This is here described in a magnificent and affecting manner. In the general,

ver. 7.

The heavens and earth which now are, by the same word are kept in store reserved unto fire. They

* Dilu-
vium ig-
nis, *Iren.*

will be destroyed by a *deluge of fire**, as the old world was by water, not perhaps the being and substance, but the present form and qua-

ver. 10.

lities of it. More particularly, *the earth and all the works which are therein shall be burnt up.*

The whole globe of the earth shall be set on fire, and whatsoever belongs to it, and has been infected with sin. All the inhabitants of the earth, and all the things of the earth, whether natural or artificial; all the variety of creatures with which God has replenished the earth, and which is now subject to vanity by the sin of man; all the stately buildings and proud palaces, the monuments of vanity, ambition and curiosity, which have endured for many ages, and stood the longest injuries of time; all the grandeur and glory of this world, the pageantry and shew of it, will be then destroyed and consumed to ashes, and there will be no remainder or ruins of them

Ibid.

left. The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat,

ver. 12.

and the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved; the heavens as well as the earth, not only the sublunary but the planetary and starry heavens, with all the furniture and hosts of them; the heavens and the elements thereof, as well as the earth and all the works therein, shall make a rattling noise, and crack and burst with the vehemence of the flames, and shall be

dissolved * or melted down with the fierceness of the fire, in that general tempest and wreck of nature †. So the heavens shall perish, wax old like a garment, and as a vesture be changed.

* Ποζη-
 ρδν, τυρε-
 ευρωλας
 τήκελας.
 Pſal. cii.
 8.

There will be an universal conflagration; heaven and earth will be all on fire at once, and make one burning vault, one funeral pile: It will be the funeral of the world. What will be the terror of the frightened inhabitants when they shall see the fir'd world round about them, and no flying for refuge, or escaping the general desolation, as *Lot* fled to *Zoar* from *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*. Yea the fire which will consume the world, will destroy the wicked: They will perish in the ruins and ashes of the world they loved and adored; for 'tis reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men. Now how forcible is the reason? Be diligent to be found of him in peace, when the great day of his wrath shall come: and to be accepted of him when all nature will expire, and all the visible world will be destroyed. If you would escape the destruction which awaits the ungodly world, who will be burnt with fire here, and cast into unquenchable fire hereafter; if you would be happy, when they are miserable, and find favour in the sight of the judge, when they will fall under his wrath; be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace.

Ver. 7

2. The expectation of a better state.

Nevertheless, we according to his promise look
 Z 3 for

ver. 13

† Esse quoque in factis reminiscitur affore tempus,
 Quo mare, quo tellus correptaque regia cœli
 Ardeat; & mundi moles operota laboret. *Ovid. Met. 1.*

*fer new heavens and a new earth wherein dwell-
eth righteousness.* He represents it as the
common expectation of Christians grounded
upon the promise of God: *We according to his
promise look for it, i. e. either before, or be-
sides the conflagration, as some understand it,
we expect a new heaven and a new earth; a
great and happy change in the moral world;
such a state of things here on earth before
the consummation of all things, as will make
it resemble heaven; in which there will be
a wonderful reformation of its present state,
and in which holiness and righteousness will
take place in an eminent manner, and abound
among all sorts of people; when the Jewish
nation shall be converted to the Christian
faith, and be restored to their own land,
and the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in;
which will amount to a kind of new
creation, and make a new world, like that
promised to the Jews under the same terms;
Behold I create a new heaven and earth, and
the former shall not be remembred, or come
into mind.* This is thought to be meant
by the marriage of the Lamb, and the
New Jerusalem, the binding of Satan, and
the Thousand Years Reign, in the book
of the *Revelations* *. But this could not
be a motive to diligence to those to whom
the Apostle wrote, but upon the supposi-
tion that some things of this kind were to
happen in their time, or they were to be
rais'd from the dead to enjoy it.

16, lxx.
15, 16.

OTHERS

* *Vid. Jos. Mede's Works, p. 609.*

OTHERS therefore understand it in a literal sense, and *after* the conflagration of the present material world. *We nevertheless*, i. e. notwithstanding this, and what this shall not hinder. The earth will be purified by fire and restored to its original state, free from the sin and imperfection brought upon it by the fall. Heaven and earth shall be alike, at least for a limited time, and become a glorious state, in which only righteousness and righteous persons shall dwell, after the destruction of the wicked by fire. This is supposed to be called the *regeneration*, the *times of refreshing*, and the *time of the restitution of all things*, and when the *creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God* *.

* Dr. Burnet's Theory.

BUT whatsoever was the precise thought of the Apostle in this difficult expression, 'tis certain that God was all along spoken of by all the *holy prophets* as the *God of his people*, their *portion and inheritance* and *exceeding great reward*; and that *life and immortality are brought to light* by the gospel, and promised by Christ to all his followers, and is the great object of their desires and hope; where perfect purity will always reign, and *nothing enters which does defile*. He will *raise them up at the last day*, and *give them eternal life*; and they *look for a city whose builder and maker is God*, and *desire another country, that is an heavenly one*; and are said, because of their present

Heb. xii. relation to it, to be come unto mount Zion,
 22. *the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and the general assembly and church of the first-born, who are written in heaven; to God the judge of all, the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant.* The Apostle in this
 1 Pet. i. 4. Epistle says, *We are begotten to an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, which fadeth not away, reserved in the heavens for us.*

And the expectation of such a state of things, of greater purity and improvement in the christian church, and of a state of perfection and blessedness in heaven, is the most powerful motive now, that we may not come short of the glory of God, but be fit to partake of it, and share in all the blessedness of it. Let us therefore according to our Lord's direction, *watch and pray that we may be accounted worthy to escape all these things which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.* And in the words
 Heb. iv. 11. of the Apostle, *Give diligence——so an entrance shall be ministred abundantly into the everlasting kingdom; and, Let us labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fail after the same example of unbelief.*

I have finished what I proposed from the text, and shall now speak to the special occasion of this discourse, and of my appearing at this time, in this place; the de-
 cease

cease of my reverend brother and friend, and your worthy and beloved pastor, Mr. *Daniel Mayo*.

He was the son of a worthy minister who was ejected in this town in 1662, and was afterwards well known and esteemed in *London*. He was strongly inclined to the ministry from his early youth, but was diverted from it, for some years, by the difficulty of the times. He was bred in *Holland* under the care of the very pious and learned professor *Witfius*, whom he always spoke of with honour and affection, and at the same time with several other persons of great eminence in different ways, and who made a considerable figure in life. He applied with great diligence, and made a good proficiency in useful learning. While he continued in *Holland* he published a Latin *Thesis* upon the subject of *Miracles*, as he did some occasional Sermons afterwards. He was first settled at *Westminster* as an *Assistant* to Mr. *Alsop*, and was well accepted at his first appearance in the world; but was early removed to this town, where he lived about thirty-five years, with as great usefulness and general a reputation, as perhaps any minister of his kind. He lived to see more than one whole generation go off the stage before him. He was of a strong constitution, and continued health for many years, till the last year of life, in which he gradually declined, and suddenly sunk at last.

He

HE was a man of regular *piety*, and real regard to God, which run through all his family and relative engagements, and often mixed with his ordinary conversation. He always spake of God and religion with great reverence and favour of mind. His converses with men were easy and chearful, with an openness and freedom which were very agreeable, and recommended his friendship to others.

HE had a deep concern for the interest of *religion* in the world, and the good of the *souls* of men; was constant and diligent in his proper work, preaching twice a day all his life, and was seldom ever absent. Indeed he delighted in his work: his heart and soul was in it. His *preaching* was practical and serious, with great gravity, and warm affection. He chiefly insisted, in the course of his ministry, upon the great principles and duties of religion, which tended to promote the faith and holiness of his hearers, not speculation, or party. His labours were greatly blessed, and very useful to many, not only in this town, but at *Hackney*, and *London*, where he spent some part of his last years of life.

THO' he was well satisfied in the great principles of his *dissent* from the established church, upon the foot of the rights of private judgment, and close adherence to the authority of Christ, and the perfection of the scripture-rule, in opposition to human appointments and impositions, as terms of Communion: yet he did not allow himself to judge other men,
but

but always maintained moderation of mind, lived in friendship with the ministers and people of the establishment, and scrupled not to worship with them upon any proper occasion. It were to be wish'd this temper were mutual, and that we could agree to live together as Fellow-Christians, tho' we cannot agree in some speculative opinions and external rites. He greatly disliked a spirit of jealousy and suspicion, and violence and wrath, among Christians, as disagreeable to the *genius* of the Gospel, and disserviceable to the true interest of it.

HE was *active* in business, and never spared himself to serve the publick. In the care of destitute congregations, and the service of his country and his friend, few men bore a greater share, or were more useful, in his station of life; as he had a large acquaintance, and general esteem, among all sorts of people. I wish his interest and influence, in this Town, and in the whole country, on many occasions, be not greatly missed. He was singularly *prudent* in the conduct of affairs, capable of advising in difficult matters, and ready and communicative upon all occasions.

HE seemed not so sensible, through the flattering nature of his distemper, of the *near* approach of his end, as they did who were about him; which, together with his weak state of health, much prevented the instructions and counsels to those about him, which it was so natural to him to give. He told me however, the last time I saw him here, ' That he was willing to live, if it pleased
' God,

‘ God, for further usefulness, but was ready
‘ to submit to the will of God, and was not a-
‘ fraid to die.’ The day in which he died,
sensible of the increase of his weakness he
said, ‘ He should now be confined to his
‘ chamber, and then to his bed, and then
‘ to his grave.’ A near relation present, ad-
ded, And ‘ then a happy state.’ He replied,
‘ He had had his faults and failings, but
‘ trusted, that they were all pardoned; and
‘ that he had a good hope of eternal life,
‘ without any uneasy fears and doubt a-
‘ bout it, and for which he believed he had
‘ good grounds.’ He added, ‘ And then I
‘ shall be delivered from a vain and wicked
‘ world.’

And God grant, that we who live in a mortal state, and have so many instances of mortality fresh about us, may be found *ready when our turn shall come, and found of him in peace at last: that we may give the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; and may not be slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promise.*



S E R M O N VII.

The love of Christ's Appearance the Character of a sincere Christian.

2 TIM. iv. 8.

— *And not to me only, but to all
them also who love his appearance.*

I Shall not undertake at present to enter into a particular account of this great context, the noble profession and expectation of the Apostle, upon the conclusion of his labours and prospect of his dissolution. *I have fought the good fight*: the expressions are *agonistical*, taken from the exercises among the ancient Greeks. I have contended with all my spiritual enemies, and accomplished my warfare: The allusion is to them who wrestled in the olympick games. *I have finished my course*: I am now at the last stage of my christian and ministerial course: The allusion is to those who run in a race. *I have kept the faith*: I have adhered

adhered in judgment and practice to the faith of the Gospel which I have taught and professed, without denying or betraying any part of it; I have been faithful to my trust and engagements to Christ. This is the account he gives of himself. *Λοιπὸν*, from *henceforth*, as to what remains and is before me, as to God's part, and what I further expect from him, *henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give me at that day.* Having fought and finished, nothing remains but the promised crown, the reward of those who prevailed in the combat, and reach'd the goal. He adds, *And not to me only, but to all them also who love his appearance.* It was not peculiar and appropriate to the Apostle, or the high and extraordinary attainment of a few; but enters into the character, and is descriptive of the real temper of a sincere Christian. They all *love the appearance* of Christ, and he will give to all of them a *crown of life*. This is the point I propose to consider.

IN speaking to these words, I shall,

I. OPEN this character of sincere Christians, that *they love his appearance.*

II. CONSIDER the *reasons* of it, and shew why they do so.

III. REPRESENT the *blessing* which belongs to it; that he will *give them a crown of righteousness.* And then apply it.

I. I shall *open* this character of a sincere Christian. I think I may take it for granted, that 'tis the appearance of *Christ* which is here intended, for he is the *Lord the righteous judge*; and the word here used is every where applied to *him* in the New Testament, and not to the *Father*, of whom our Lord says, *No man hath seen God at any time.* And, *Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.* Emp^αρεια. Joh. i. 18. — v. 37. And the Apostle says, *Who only hath immortality, and dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, or can see.* 1 Tim. vi. 16. The Scripture speaks of a twofold *personal* appearance of Christ, his first and second appearance. The first was in flesh and in an humble state; *the word was made flesh*, and appeared in the *likeness of sinful flesh*. He clothed himself with human nature, and conversed with men on earth. This did exactly agree in every circumstance, to the prophecies and predictions of the Old Testament; and fully answered the great ends proposed by it, to reveal the will of God to men, and become a sacrifice for sin. But this is long over, as it was long expected and waited for. He forsook the earth, and ascended to heaven. But he will appear again, and become visible at the end of the world. And this is the second appearance as distinguished from the former, and proposed here as the object of our love.

THIS is represented by several words in the New Testament with some diversity of signification. There is *παρυσια*, which signifies his making himself *present* to us, after a long absence; 1 Cor. xv. 23.

fence ;

fence; presenting himself before us. *Αποκάλυψις*, which we render the *revelation* of *Jesus Christ*, or discovering himself to us after he had been long concealed, and out of sight. *Φανερωθῆν*, being made *manifest*, and well known, as he was before *manifest in the flesh*. The word here use is *ἐπιφάνεια*, which signifies an *illustrious* appearance in distinction from the former, or his appearance in his humble state.

-i. 7.

1 John ii.
28.

I shall represent it more particularly in all the circumstances in which 'tis described in the New Testament.

I. 'Tis represented as a *certain* thing: For yet *Heb. x. 37.* *a little while, and he who shall come will come, and will not tarry.* He will certainly come, and nothing shall be able to hinder and prevent it, as he will not delay it beyond the appointed time. Indeed a long course of time has run out since the promise of his coming was given to the world. He sometimes seems to delay his coming, and to make long tarrying, to good men, especially under great afflictions and suffering; and 'tis one of the exercises of their patience and faith: And the scoffers of the last day will say, *2Pet. iii. 4.* *Where is the promise of his coming? for since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.* They see no appearance of his coming after the revolution of so many ages, no change or alteration in the state of things; but every thing goes on in the ordinary course of nature, and therefore they conclude, he will never appear, and there never will be any.

BUT now the coming of Christ is unquestionably certain. He will as surely appear the second time, as he did the first, though that was not till many ages after it was foretold. This depends upon the truth of the Christian revelation, and the promise and assurance given of it. So our Lord told his Disciples; *If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself.* ^{John xiv. 3.} And the Angel told them at his ascension: *This same Jesus who is now taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner, as you have seen him go into heaven.* ^{Acts i. 11.} The Apostles every where speak of it as a thing determined and expected. Besides, there is an absolute necessity of his coming again, to finish what he has begun, and carry on his undertaking to its final perfection. So the Apostle Peter told the Jews; *Whom the heavens must receive until the time of the restitution of all things: Till they are brought to their proper perfection and consummation.* ^{—iii. 21.} So the Arabick version reads it, and the word here ἀποκατάστασις is rendered by the Greek etymologists by τελείωσις, which signifies perfection. And the Apostle speaking of the appearance of Christ, says, *Which in his time, he shall shew, or cause to be seen, who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords:* ^{Tim. vi.} Who is therefore a greater object of fear than the greatest earthly power, and able to secure this important event against all opposition, and to the full extent of his promise.

'Tis true the precise time of his appearing is reserved as a secret in the divine breast. 'Tis one of the *Arcana imperii* of the divine government, locked up in the counsels of heaven, and wisely kept from the knowledge of men, to prevent either security or dread of mind; and to promote a perpetual readiness and preparation. The knowledge of it would be equally unsuitable and injurious, in a state of trial; and therefore *of that day and hour knoweth no man; and 'tis not for us to know the times and seasons which the Father hath put into his own hands.* But tho' 'tis unknown to us, 'tis an appointed time, exactly determined in the divine mind; for he hath *appointed a day in which he will judge the world, by the man whom he hath ordained.*

Mat. xxiv.

56.

Acts i. 7.

—xvii 31.

2. IT will be very quick and *sudden.* Tho' there will be great fore-runners and preparations in the natural and moral world, many tendencies and forebodings of it; yet thro' the great degeneracy of the negligent and careless world, his actual appearance will be a great surprize, and come upon them before they are aware. So 'tis often represented in Scripture. Our Lord caution'd his Disciples, *Left at any time their hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon them unawares; for as a snare shall it come upon all them who dwell upon the face of the whole earth.* It will be like the flood upon the old world after all the preaching and preparation of Noah: *As in the days of Noah before the flood, they were*

Luke xxi.

4

were eating and drinking, and marrying, and giving in marriage, till the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came, and took them all away: so also shall the coming of the Son of man be. 'Twill be like the lightening of heaven, or a ray of the rising of the sun, which pierces the clouds, and darts thro' the earth in an instant. 'Twill be like a man taking a journey into a far country, and commanding his servants to watch: because they knew not when he would return; for so it follows; Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at evening or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning, lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. 'Tis represented upon this account as a thief in the night, when all men are asleep, and no one expects him: If the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and not suffered his house to be broke open; therefore be ye also ready, in such an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh. The Apostle uses this figure; For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night. Not for the violence, but for the suddenness and surprize of it. 'Tis certain it will be unexpected, and a great surprize upon the unprepared world: 'twill come all at once, and find the most unprovided for it.

3. It will be most glorious and magnificent. This is the constant character of the second appearance of Christ, and by which 'tis eminently distinguished from the first. So 'tis repre-

- Mat. xxiv. 30. sented, *Then shall ye see the Son of man come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*
- Tit. ii. 15. The Apostle calls it expressly the *glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.* This may be considered distinctly with respect to the glory of his *person*, and of his *attendants*. As to the glory of his person, we read that he will appear in the *glory of his Father*, and in his *own glory.* *The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father.* The glory of the Father, as it stands here distinguished, and is designed to represent something visible and conspicuous; may probably refer to the glorious appearance, or visible symbol of the divine presence which the *Jews* call *Shecinah* or habitation of God, and is represented in the Old Testament by the *face*, the *presence*, the *glory*, and the *majesty* of God; which appeared to the patriarchs, as the *God of glory appeared to Abraham*; and to *Moses* at the giving the law; and afterwards dwelt in the tabernacle and temple; and sometimes was seen by the Prophets, so *Micaiah saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of Angels standing before him.* And *Isaiah saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple; above it stood the Seraphim.* And *Habaccuk* says, *His glory covers the heavens, and his brightness was as the light.*

HE will appear in the *form of God*: In the glory and majesty of God, which appeared at his baptism, when a *voice came immediately from heaven*; and at his transfiguration, when *his face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white*

white as the light, and a bright cloud overshadowed them. At this time the Apostle says, he received from God the Father, glory and honour 2Pet. i. 17. *when there came such a voice from the excellent glory; the eminent and surpassing glory. This appeared to Stephen, when he looked stedfastly to* Acts vii. *heaven, and saw the Glory of God: and to Paul* 55. *in his way to Damascus, when he saw a light* —xxvi. *from heaven, above the brightness of the Sun at* 13. *mid-day: and to the Apostle John, when his* Rev. xiv. *eyes appeared as flaming fire, and his countenance* 16. *as the sun shining in his strength: and is supposed to be referred to, when 'tis said, The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell* Σκηνὴ ἴα *with them; and the glory of God did enlighten* Θεός. *the new Jerusalem, and the lamb is the light thereof. He will not then appear in the* Rev. xxi. *fa-* 3, 23. *shion of a mere man, or in the form of a servant; in an humble state, and in circumstances of meanness and contempt, without any visible characters of glory to distinguish him, and raise the admiration and reverence of men; but he will appear in the glory of the Deity. The Shecinah, or glory of God, will dignify his person, and adorn the triumph of his second appearance: a glory which will exceed all created brightness, and draw the admiration of the whole creation; which will give him an inconceivable beauty, and reflect an unspeakable lustre, and render the appearance illustrious beyond all resemblance and comparison, above all the powers of expression, and capacities of thought. The loftiest flights and figures of speech, the brightest images and*

fictions of imagination, fall vastly short of the real glories of the descending Saviour.

BESIDES, there will be his *own glory*, as well as the glory of the Father; the glory of the Mediator. *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.* Not only his natural and essential glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of God; who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and express image of his person; the glory which he had with the Father before the world was; which who can tell how great it is? But his acquired glory, or what was the fruit and reward of his obedience and sufferings. He will appear in the full glory, of his humanity as well as of his divinity: 'Twill be the *glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ*; which perhaps answers to the expression, of the *Father's glory*, and his *own glory*. He will appear in the *clouds of heaven*, and sitting upon a *throne of glory*, invested with sovereign authority, and bearing the character of universal Judge. He will appear as the *exalted Prince and Saviour*, with all the ensigns of majesty, and marks of royalty and dominion, as the *Heir of the world*, and the *Lord of all*.

BUT besides all this *personal* glory, there will be the glory of his *attendants*. This is every where represented as a distinct thing from both the former: *The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him*: And he shall come in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels. The Angels are the

sons

Mat. xxv.
31.

Joh. i. 14.
Heb. i. 3.

Joh. xvii.
5.

Tit. ii. 13.

Mat. xxv.
31.

Mark viii.
38.

sons of the morning, the first-born of the creation, the highest and most excellent order of mere creatures. They are pure intelligences, bright and unperishing flames; the courtiers of heaven, who shine in holiness and excel in strength. He will *come with all the holy angels*; ^{1 Thes. i. 7.} and be *revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire*: The whole host of angels, all the several orders of the heavenly hierarchy, *angels and archangels, principalities, powers, and dominions*. He will appear with a noble retinue: His *throne of glory* will be encompassed round with shining circles of flaming Seraphim, and crouds of attending angels, the messengers and ministers of the final Judge, paying him homage, and ready to execute his will. They will all unite their several glories to grace the triumphs of the great Redeemer, and render it more magnificent and august. And he will be attended with all the *glorified Saints*: All the *spirits of just men made perfect*, and every surviving saint upon earth, will meet together, and attend the appearance of the Lord. So the Apostle tells us, he will come to be *glorified in his saints, and admired in them who believe*: And *then the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout,* ^{2 Thes. i. 10.} *with the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first;* ^{1 Thes. iv. 17.} *then we who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them, in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air*: And *when Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with him* ^{Coloss. iii. 4.} *in glory*. How vast will be the train and re-

tinue of glorified saints, when all who ever lived in every age, from the beginning of the world to the end of it; all the patriarchs and prophets under the Old Testament; the *twelve Apostles sitting upon twelve thrones*; they who followed him in the regeneration, and they who suffered martyrdom for his sake; all eminently pious and useful men, who exprest most of the life of *Christ*, and were the great ornaments and blessings of the age in which they lived; when all shall meet together in one *general assembly*, and be distinguished by marks of peculiar honour? The presence of every glorified saint will add to the glory of his appearance, and render it still more illustrious: they will shine as so many glorious *stars* round about the *sun of righteousness*. And what a glorious solemnity will it make all together, and when so many different glories will all meet and unite in one?

4. It will be *publick* and open. He will not appear to one part of the world only, as he did before; as he will not appear mean and obscure. The glory of his appearance will make him known and discover him to every one. It will be like the sudden breaking out of the sun thro' a thick cloud, visible to every eye, and seen all at once. His throne of glory will be fixed in the *center* of the heavens, and become conspicuous to all the world; it will be placed in open light and publick view, and be the common object of wonder and admiration to all men. All will appear when he shall appear, and he will be seen of all:

all: *Behold he cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see him; and all the kindreds of the earth.* Rev. i. 7.

5. IT will be awful and *important*. We may certainly conclude that all this preparation and attendance will not be for nothing, or for any mean and common purpose. There is certainly some weighty matter depending, and to be transacted at that time, as extraordinary as the appearance itself will be. And if we attend to the Scripture-account, we shall find that he will come for these great purposes, to raise the dead, and judge world. So he tells us, *The hour is coming when all who are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.* Joh. v. 28. And the Apostle says, *If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so they also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him; and at the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, the dead in Christ shall rise first.* 1 The. iv. 14. He will summon all the dead to appear, and raise them out of their graves by the power of his voice. Then the graves will be opened, which had been so long shut; and the sea shall give up her dead, which had swallowed up so many; and death Rev. xx. and hell deliver up the dead which were in them, 13. i. e. the common receptacle of the dead.

AND they are raised in order to judgment. The Apostle says, *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearance and kingdom.* 2 Tim. iv. 1. The time of his appearance will be the highest display of his regal power: He will appear most like a King when he comes to judge

judge the world. There will be an universal *col-
lection* of mankind; for there will be a *resur-
rection of the dead, both of the just and unjust;*
 Acts xxiv. 15. *and before him will be gather'd all nations;*
 Matt. xxv. 31. *and we must all appear before the judgment-seat of*
 2 Cor. v. 10. *Christ:* All mankind, good and bad, in every
 age, from the beginning of the world to the
 end of it. And there will be a *separation* and
 Matt. xxv. 32. *distinction* made; *He shall separate them one*
from another, as the shepherd divides the sheep
from the goats. Here the righteous and the
 wicked mingle together, and lie undistinguish-
 ed; the *tares* and the *wheat* grow together in
 the common field of the church: But that
 will be a day of great discrimination; every
 one of that vast multitude will be distinguish-
 ed, and duly sorted and ranged; the whole world
 will be divided into two great bodies, and plac-
 ed on each side the throne of the Judge; the
 righteous on the right-hand, and the wicked
 on the left. This will make strange discove-
 ries; many will appear, both on the right and
 on the left-hand, to the great amazement of
 all the world about them, and quite contrary
 to all expectation concerning them. He will
 proceed to *trial* and sentence, according to the
 different states of men, by the gospel-rule; for
 he will *judge the world in righteousness,* and ac-
 cording to the *gospel.* We must be *judged by the*
 Jam. ii. 12. *law of liberty.* Every plea and pretence will be
 considered and examined; all due allowances
 made for every circumstance of the case, with-
 out any partial respect of persons, any error
 and mistake of judgment, or any appeal to an
 higher

higher bar. He will act, as well as appear, in the character of a judge, and pronounce with tremendous majesty and authority the irreversible sentence, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you: Go ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* There will an answerable execution immediately follow; the rewards and punishments of the righteous and the wicked according to trial and judgment given: He will *render to every man according to his works,* and we must receive *according to the deeds done in the body: They who have done good will rise to the resurrection of life, they who have done evil to the resurrection of damnation: The faithful servant will enter into the joy of his Lord,* the wicked and unprofitable will be cast into outer darkness: The wicked will go into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. He will be revealed to take vengeance on the ignorant and disobedient, and *will come, and his reward is with him.* And these are the greatest and highest purposes in all the world.

6. It will be *final* and conclusive. The appearance of Christ will be the shutting up of the whole *scene* of providence, thro' all ages of the world, and be the last act of the divine *drama*: It will finish the plan of our redemption, and conclude his whole undertaking: It will be doing that which was never done before, and never will be done over again: 'Tis once for all. So we find his appearance will be attended with the *conflagration* of the world,

Mat. xxv.
34.

41.

Mat. xxv.

21

28.

46.

world, and the *giving up* the kingdom to the Father. The Apostle represents this amazing scene in the most awful and affecting manner; *But the day of the Lord, i. e. of his appearance, will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works thereof shall be burnt up: and the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved.* The whole visible world will be in flames at once; this great fabrick become one funeral pile; the noble structure, and every thing contained in it, all the works of nature and art will be consumed and resolved to ashes; heaven and earth mingle together in one common desolation; the elements of things, perhaps the *planetary* worlds, will melt and dissolve, and every thing split and fly asunder, by the great fervour and fury of the flames, and create a mighty noise. So there will be an end of the present world, and all the things of time.

2 Pet. iii.
10.

1 Cor. xv.
24.
28. BESIDES, the Apostle tells us, *When the end cometh he will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; and then shall the Son also be subject to him, who put all things under him, that God may be all in all.* There will be not only an end of the present state of the natural world, but of the present dispensation of grace. The mediatorial kingdom, in the present administration at least, as it is a kingdom over lost creatures in order to their recovery, will be at an end, as the design of it will be fully answered. God himself will be the center and spring of the final blessedness for ever. Whether

ther he will continue a *Mediator of fruition*, or the great medium of actual enjoyment of God, the infinite and glorious Majesty, as well as of our recovery to him, is a thing of more uncertainty, and what the Scripture gives us no plain account of. Thus there will be the final consummation of all things, and an end of the present state, in every respect and consideration of it. Having dwelt so long on this branch of the subject, I shall be obliged to be short in all the rest. I am next to consider,

§. 2. THE love of his appearance. We have seen the lovely *object*, or what our love respects; we are now to consider a little the *nature* of this love, or the temper of mind 'tis designed to describe. ἀγαπηκόςι, who have loved, for ἀγαπῶσι, by a usual enallage: Perhaps to signify the settled *bent* and habit of the mind. I shall briefly represent it according to the Scripture-account of the matter.

1. IT supposes the *faith* of it, and is grounded upon it. There must be a firm persuasion, or assent of mind, upon just grounds, to the truth of this proposition, That Christ will appear; for 'tis a wise and reasonable love, not a rash and unaccountable thing. They don't love they don't know what, or without a sufficient reason. They are fully satisfied from the promise of God, and the reason of the thing, beyond any reasonable scruple, or real distrust: They *look for these things* 2 Pet. iii. *according to his promise.* They have a firm ^{13.} persuasion, upon this ground, of the certainty

of his appearance, as they believe the rising of the sun after its setting in a cloud, and the absence of the night. I am as sure he will appear at last, as I am that he is, and that he is true. I am as certain as the promise of God, and all the reason and congruity of the thing can make me, that he will come again at the appointed time, and appear in all the circumstances of glory and importance, which have been represented.

2. IT imports earnest *desire* of it. This is essential to the love of any thing. Love always works by desire towards an absent good, and so 'tis constantly represented, *Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearance*. And to them who look for him shall he appear the *second time*: The word signifies earnest desire, looking with great expectation. So, *looking for and hastening to, or of, the day of the Lord*; and *looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*, the word is still the same. The church is represented making this return to Christ, *Behold I come quickly: Even so come Lord Jesus*. They long for his appearance, and earnestly wish and pray for it. This is the natural breathing of their desire, and exercise of their love, *thy kingdom come, and come Lord Jesus*. They often think it long, and are ready to say, in the warmth of their desire, and under the sense of present burdens, Oh when will he come! why are his chariots so long a coming?

BUT then 'tis not a rash and impatient desire, or an impetuous unruly passion; but attended

πρὸς δευ-
τερον.
ἀπὸ δευ-
τερου.

2 Pet. iii.
12.
Jude 21.

Rev. xxii.
22.

tended with patient waiting till the appointed time. Tho' they earnestly desire it, they are content to stay the proper season, and wait with patience notwithstanding the longest delay, and the greatest exercise in the mean time. They stand in the posture of *waiting servants*, and bear the burden of present absence, and all the burdens of life, with the constant hope and expectation of it. So the words here used also signify, and so the Apostle qualifies their desire: *The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.* And they who *groan within themselves*, do yet *wait for the adoption*, to wit, the *redemption of the body*. The Apostle tells the *Corinthians*; *ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of Jesus Christ*; and he describes the converted *Thessalonians*, by their *waiting for the Son of God from heaven*.

ἀποκ. εβ. α. δολία, ἀπικδ' εχ' ττ. ι.
 Rom. viii. 19.
 — 23:
 1 Cor. i. 7.
 1 Thess. i. 10.

3. THERE is *pleasure* and *satisfaction* in the expectation and hope of it. This is the nature of love too. 'Tis *desire* towards an absent object, but *delight* in it when present: Besides that there is a *pleasure* in the desire. Now tho' the appearance of *Christ* is a future thing, yet the thoughts of it, and the hopes of it, are present things. Tis a pleasant thought to a sincere Christian, that their Lord will come at last, and that he will appear in such a manner; that the Redeemer of the world will appear to all the world, in so great a majesty and grandeur. 'Tis an unspeakable satisfaction to their minds in the frequent forethoughts of it; and the very expectation is attended with pleasure,

and

and gives the highest relish of delight. They *comfort one another with these words*, that the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout ; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. As they love him whom they have not seen, so believing, or by the mediation of their faith, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. They often revolve the glorious solemnity in their minds, how pleasant and joyful a day will that be, when the Lord shall come in the clouds of heaven, with all the marks of glory ; and to all the purposes of his mercy. Blessed be the dawn of that ever-memorable day, which will shine with such an illustrious brightness, and produce such important events.

4. 'Tis powerful and influential. The expectation and hope of his appearance, upon such grounds, will not only give a pleasure, but form the mind suitable to it, and direct the conduct of the life. For example, it will engage to answerable diligence, excite to faithfulness, and promote a constant readiness and preparation for it. Love is an active principle wherever it reigns, and will naturally put us upon endeavours suitable to the nature of the object, and answerable to the degree of the love. And without this, all the former will be insignificant, and ineffectual to their end. Agreeably to this we read ; *Let your loins be girt about, and your lights burning, and you yourselves as men who wait for the Lord.* And we read of *watching* and being ready in expectation of his coming. And the Apostle speaking
of

1 Theff.
iv. 18.

Rom. v. 1.

1 Pet. i.
8.

of the coming of the *day of the Lord*; and dissolution of the world, exhorts, as the natural consequence and effect of it; *Be diligent* ^{2 Pet. iii.} *that ye may be found of him in peace without* ^{13.} *spot and blameless: And, Seeing then all these* ^{—11.} *things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness? How watchful and circumspect, how careful and diligent, what a habit of seriousness; and an heavenly mind, should such an expectation produce! How effectually should it cure the vanity of our minds, and neglects of life; and promote a daily preparation, and farther meetness, for the coming of the Lord. Wherefore gird up the loins of your* ^{1 Pet. i. 13.} *minds, be sober and hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. And ye beloved keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of the* ^{Jud. 21.} *Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.*

S E C T. II.

II. I shall consider the *reasons* of it, and shew why sincere Christians have such a love to his appearance. And to make it appear the more reasonable, and rightly judged, I shall consider it briefly under a double view.

§. I. WITH respect to *Christ*, who is to appear. This will be evident if you consider either his person; or his appearance itself. He is the great object of their love now, whom they *love more* than all the creatures, and in the *sincerity* of their hearts: *Whom having not seen, they love*, from the representations of him

in the Gospel, and the benefits they receive from him. He is *altogether lovely*; and most nearly related to them, as their master and lord, their head and husband: and most tenderly affected towards them, for he *loved them and died for them*, and *washed them from their sins in his own blood*. And how can they but love his appearance, whom they so greatly love? They cannot but desire to see one whom they love above all the world, as Stephen *saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God*.

Acts vii.
56.

AND his appearance will be most highly *honourable* to him; for he will appear in the state of a judge and the majesty of a king. He will then appear as he really is, and not in disguise, or under a disadvantage. He will vindicate himself to all the world, and wipe off every imputation which ignorance, or prejudice, or malice had ever cast upon him; and justify his injured rights, and slighted authority, against all the wicked, and infidel world. He will clear up all the **difficulties** of present Providence to **full** satisfaction, which were before obscure, or mistaken; and receive **universal** homage from the whole creation, for he will be attended **with** *ministring angels*, be *glorified in his saints*, and *take vengeance on them who know not God, and obey not the Gospel*. And how reasonable is the love of his appearance in this view, as every way most honourable to him, and the greatest display of his glory before the world?

§. 2. WITH respect to *themselves*. It will be every way to their advantage: Tho' tis highly

highly

highly reasonable from the nature of a *spirit*, and many passages in Scripture, to suppose an intermediate state of happiness immediately upon our dissolution; so the *Lord Jesus will receive* our departing *spirits*: And christians have a fearless courage in death and desire of happiness, upon this ground; *We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord*: Yet 'tis most ^{2 Cor. v. 8:} certain that the final compleat happiness will not commence till the appearance of *Christ*. And upon this account we find so generally, that this period is particularly marked out; and the desires and expectations of good men are ultimately pointed and determined thither. Our Lord says, *Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just: When he shall appear, they will be like him, and receive a crown of* ^{John xiv:} *life*: The tried faith of sincere Christians will ^{14.} be found to honour and glory at the appearance of *Jesus Christ*: And there is the grace which is to be brought to us at the revelation of *Jesus Christ*. And Christians wait for ^{the} *adoption*, to wit, the redemption of the body; and earnestly desire to be cloathed upon with their house which is from heaven. The Apostle's great aim was, *If by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead*. They look and wait for the coming, and the day of the Lord: And unto them who look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation; i. e. not to be a sacrifice, or sin-offering again, for there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin; but to their final and complete salvation.

Thus for example, They will be perfectly delivered, not only from present burdens and imperfection, but from the power of death, and the corruption of the grave: Death, the *last enemy, will be destroyed, and will have no more dominion over them. All tears shall be wiped from their eyes, and there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain: And the creature itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God: And mortality will be swallowed up of life.* They themselves will appear in glory, and to the greatest advantage, with *spirits made perfect, and glorified bodies like to his glorious body.* They will be publicly acquitted and approved before angels and men, justified from every false calumny, and all suspicions of evil, and receive the commendation of their Lord and Judge. It will be to their unspeakable comfort and joy of heart, for it will be the *time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord: And when his glory shall be revealed, they will be glad with exceeding joy; and they will have confidence before him at his coming.* Then they will actually enter into the joy of their Lord; and have admission into the everlasting kingdom: They who are ready will enter in with the heavenly bridegroom, and be for ever with the Lord. And how reasonable is the love of his appearance upon their own account? For this plainly amounts to no less than the love of their own perfection, and of the complete and consummate

Rev. xxi. 4.

Acts iii.

19.

1 Pet. iv.

13.

1 John ii.

28.

mate

mate blessedness; the highest and most natural object of a reasonable love.

IF it be said here, But do not many sincere Christians fear and tremble at the thoughts of his appearance? Do they not often *labour* with the awful thought, and feel perplexity and distress of mind? I answer, perhaps so: but then that is only upon the mistaken supposition that they are not sincere Christians, and not upon any other account. Let this point be once well cleared up, and all their fear immediately vanishes, and they find a sensible love. 'Tis always their real temper wherever there is a sincere love of Christ, and any comfortable sense of it; tho' they may not always find the actual direct exercise of it, thro' the weakness of their love, and the darkness and uncertainty of their minds about it. I must speak but a few words to the next point.

III. THE privilege and *blessing* annexed to this character, and which belongs to it; the *righteous judge will give them a crown of righteousness*. The future blessedness is represented in Scripture, in condescension to our weakness, by all the sensible images of grandeur and magnificence; 'tis the *kingdom of heaven*, and they *inherit*, and *enter* into the *prepared and everlasting kingdom*, and a crown is proper to the character of those who are now *made kings*, and are *heirs of the kingdom*. And 'tis a *crown of righteousness*, either to denote the proper *subject* of it, and to whom only it belongs; *i. e.*,

signify, a *righteous crown*, in the same sense with *the righteous Judge* in the same sentence, *i. e.* which in some sort is justly due, and which 'tis a righteous thing for him to give; as a *crown of life*, and *crown of glory*, are distinguishing properties, and signify the great excellency and duration of it. This crown is a *free gift*: *He will give it them*; 'tis an act of grace and favour, without any proper merit or desert in us. God crowns his own gifts, and sets the crown upon the head of his own grace. It cannot be claimed as a debt, which would minister to pride and boasting; but must be received as a favour and a gift, with humble thankfulness, and the highest sense of mercy: *The reward is not of debt, but of grace*; and the *gift of God is eternal life thro' Jesus Christ our Lord*. And yet 'tis the gift of a *righteous Judge*; which *God the righteous Judge will give*: 'Tis an act of righteousness, as well as grace. He bestows rewards and punishments according to the appointed rule of judgment, and agreeable to the nature of things; for the *Judge of all the earth will do right*, and will *judge the world in righteousness*. He is *just in justifying a believing sinner*, as well as in *condemning an unbeliever*; 'tis a *righteous thing* with God to *recompense tribulation* to the one, as well as *rest* to the other. He has promised to *give the faithful a crown of life*. "Tis acting justly according to a gracious constitution; which reconciles and adjusts the different ways of expression about it, and makes a more firm foundation of faith and confidence. And

Rom. iv. 4.
—vi. 23.

Rom. iii.
26.
2. Thess. i.
6.

'tis bestowed upon them *after* their work is done, and only to faithful persevering believers, and lovers of Christ: *Henceforth is laid up for me*, in the same sense in which the Apostle *John* says, *Henceforth blessed are the dead.* Rev. xiv.
15. When they have *fought the good fight, and finished their course, and kept the faith*, he will give them a *crown of righteousness*. We cannot expect the crown 'till we have gained the conquest, and must run the race, before we win the prize; and be *faithful to the death*, and then receive the *crown of life*.

I shall close the subject with a few brief remarks in a practical way.

I. LET us often *contemplate* the appearance of Christ. This is the noblest subject of thought, and of the greatest concern to us. The consideration of this is proper to raise our love to him, and reconcile our minds to his dispensations towards us. Review the several circumstances of his appearance, revolve them often in your minds, as they lie in the gospel, and have been set before you; to excite the highest thoughts, and warmest devotion towards him; to kindle a sacred flame in your souls, and keep it always alive; that the heavenly *fire* may *burn* within, while you are *musing* on it. Turn your thoughts from his humble state on earth, and his sufferings on the cross, to the consideration of *Jesus sitting at the right-hand of God*, and appearing upon a *throne of Glory* at last. If he will certainly appear, in so glorious and publick a manner, and to so great purposes and ends, how glorious

should he appear to us, how amiable and adorable in our eyes?

And this is proper to satisfy our minds with present Providence, and prevent needless discouragement, or rash censure of his dispensations. The appearance of Christ will enlighten the darkest steps of Providence, and satisfy all the world of the wisdom and equity of his ways. The Apostle exhorts the Christians upon this ground, *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.* The reason is the same, whatsoever coming is there referred to. And, *Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come.* Suspend your judgment of present appearances 'till the final account, when every dark thing will be made plain, and crooked thing set strait.

Jam. v. 7.

1 Cor. iv. 5.

2. The great *difference* between sincere Christians and other men. This is the proper temper of a real Christian, to *love the appearance* of Christ; and they have all the reason in the world to do so: But 'tis distinguishing to them, and quite otherwise with other men, as the whole reason of the case is otherwise. *They* love to think of his appearance, but others dread it; they wish and long for it, but others are afraid of it, and wish he would never come at all, or say in scorn, *Where is the promise of his coming?* They rejoice at the forethoughts and forerunners of it, knowing that their *salvation draweth nigh*; but others will be sad and grieved, and *all the kindreds of the earth will mourn because of him.* They will have courage and *confidence* before him at his coming, but others will tremble before him;

him; and every knee shall bow to him in his high advancement, as *Joseph's* brethren bowed before him in *Egypt*, who before had slighted and sold him. It will be a day of vengeance and tribulation to other men, which will be a day of the greatest joy and triumph to them. The *rich men*, and the *great men*, the *chief captains*, and *mighty men*, of the greatest fortunes, and highest spirits, will crouch and cringe, and fly to mean and helpless shifts; they will *hide themselves in dens* and caves, and say to the *rocks and mountains*, *fall on us*, and *hide us from the face of him who sitteth upon the throne*, and from the *wrath of the Lamb*. The different make of their minds toward the same object will necessarily cause quite contrary effects upon them. And my soul trembles at the thoughts of the amazement and terror of all the wicked and unbelieving, the *fearfulness* which will *surprize the sinner and the hypocrite*, at the first *sight*, and the last *words* of the appearing Redeemer and Judge. They had need be very sure, who are content to run so dangerous a risk, and to have better grounds to support their hopes than any schemes of infidelity, from philosophical subtleties, or critical cavils, which have yet appeared in the world. If they are mistaken, they are undone; *Behold ye despisers, and wonder and perish*.

Rev. vi.

17.

Isa. xxxiii.

14.

Acts xiii.

41.

3. Can we make out this *character*? Are we lovers of his appearance? Do we find this temper and disposition of mind? Perhaps you will say, I am afraid not, or I am in great doubt: How shall I be satisfied about it? I answer,

answer, Is it the powerful motive to proper duty, and all suitable regard to him? Do the thoughts of his appearance keep you from slumber and sloth, from security and neglect, that you be not surprized by the midnight cry, and found unready at last? Do they make you watchful and diligent, engage all the powers of your souls, and enforce the observance of his will? The Apostle often uses this consideration to this purpose, as the proper tendency and natural effect of it; *Let your moderation be known to all men, for the Lord is at hand: keep the commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearance of Jesus Christ.* Phil. iv. 5. And exhorts to *diligence to be found in peace,* 1 Tim. vi. and to *all holy conversation and godliness.* 4. 2 Pet. iii. Can this satisfy and support your minds under the weight of present afflictions, and present injuries, that Christ will appear at last, and release you from all oppression and suffering, vindicate your injur'd innocence, and publicly own and approve you? If our love has its proper influence, 'tis a certain evidence of the reality of it. 1 2.

4. How great is the divine *mercy* in bestowing such a blessing upon sincere Christians. How reasonable is it to *fight the good fight,* and *finish our course,* and *keep the faith,* since the *righteous Judge will give them a crown of life?* How well are they rewarded for all their service and sufferings for his sake? How infinitely superior and disproportionate is so great a blessedness to our best services, and highest pre-

pretensions of desert? And what reason is there of humble thankfulness, and highest joy of heart; to adore the divine goodness, and magnify and proclaim his mercy to the children of men?

BUT 'tis more than time to have done with the *Text*, and to proceed to the present solemn occasion, to speak of our deceas'd friend and father Dr. *Oldfield*. He was born at *Carfington* in *Derbyshire*, of religious and excellent parents. His father, Mr. *John Oldfield*, was an ejected minister of great eminence for his learning and piety*: His mother was sister of Mr. *Porter*, another ejected minister, of distinguished worth in *Nottinghamshire*. She lived to a great age, and was truly a *mother in Israel*. He sprung from a race of ministers, of the greatest note in their time. He was the second son of four, who were all ministers; the youngest of which, Mr. *Nathaniel Oldfield*, was some years (alas, how few!) the pastor of this congregation. I must be indulg'd to say of him upon this occasion, that his great capacity, and attainments of knowledge, his vast invention, and ready utterance upon every subject, and all occasions, his extraordinary piety and fervour of spirit, the acceptance and success of his ministry, which was greater than I have ever had the opportunity of observing,

* His Discourse of Prayer, which was entituled by a friend at *London*, not by himself, *The Generation of Seekers*, was reckoned by the late Bp. *Lloyd*, the best book he had seen upon the subject.

will render his name precious among serious Christians, while there are any left in the world who knew him.

BUT to return; Dr. *Oldfield* had his school-learning under the care of his excellent father; in which he made great progress very early, and promised something extraordinary. He studied philosophy under Mr. *Rayner*, and afterwards resided some time in *Christ-college* in *Cambridge*, in the later years of those truly learned and excellent persons Dr. *Henry Moor*, and Dr. *Cudworth*, the great oracles of the University at that time, and of whom he always spoke with the greatest reverence. Here he was greatly valued and taken notice of, for his exemplary piety, and publick exercises in the college. He continued 'till he came to take his degree, and then chose to leave it, not being satisfied with the subscription required.

He was first chaplain in the family of Sir *John Gell*, where he liv'd in the highest esteem, and with the greatest influence, and was happily instrumental in promoting religion, and keeping up its just dignity and authority. He was afterwards tutor to the son of Mr. *Paul Foley*, who was Speaker to the House of Commons, in the reign of King *William*. While he continued here, a *living* fell of above two hundred pounds a year, in the gift of Mr. *Foley*. From the great respect the family bore him, it was first offer'd to him, if he was satisfied to conform. A publick minister in that neighbourhood earnestly prest him to accept it, and when he declin'd it, persuaded him to study the

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the controversy over again. He went upon this occasion into a more close and thorough enquiry into the terms of conformity; but not being able to satisfy himself, he proposed the acceptance of the living to the minister, who was then possessed of a benefice much inferior to this: He freely owned to him, That he had once got over the declaration of *assent and consent*, I suppose when he had not the like scruples, but that he was not satisfied to repeat it again, as he was oblig'd to do upon institution and induction into a new living; tho' he thought it still his duty to be as serviceable as he could to the souls of men, in his present station. This, we may be sure, he us'd to observe, was no great inducement to think of conforming ever after. He was afterwards chaplain to the Lady *Lorts*, the sister of the late excellent Lady *Clinton*, in *Wales*; from thence he stepped over to *Ireland*, where he met with great regard, and was much importuned to continue. In his return to *England*, taking his passage in another ship, he lost all his juvenile writings, which he much regretted.

His first stated employment as a preacher was, I think, at Mr. *Turner's*, with the late Mr. *Samuel Doolittle*. Then he was settled as pastor of a congregation at *Tooting* in *Surry*; when I remember to have heard him preach before Sir *John Shorter*, then Lord Mayor of *London*, at *Grocers-Hall*, with great approbation of the best judges. From thence he was removed to *Oxford*, by the advice of the *London* ministers, where he lived several years with
great

great respects from many of the scholars, and some of the most learned men of that University; particularly the famous Dr. *Wallis*, and Mr. *Dodwell*, with whom he often conversed, and who express'd a great value for him: As he had an opportunity some years after, in a country retreat, of free and intimate conversation with the great Mr. *Locke*, when he was writing upon the Epistles, to their great mutual satisfaction and respects. While he was at *Oxford*, he was forc'd, tho' with great reluctance, by an unseasonable challenge; to a publick disputation upon the subject of Infant-Baptism; which led him to a close and careful study of that controversy, which perhaps no man better understood. He acquitted himself to the great satisfaction of a numerous audience, and the approbation of a multitude of scholars who were present. Some of them have been known to say, They believed the Dissenters had searched the kingdom for him, and that they had not such another man among them.

FROM *Oxford* he removed to *Coventry*, and was joint pastor to that great congregation, with the late ingenious and excellent Mr. *Tong*. Here he first taught academical learning, Mr. *Tong* bearing some part, and meeting with opposition several times from the spiritual courts, he removed the cause to *Westminster Hall*, and obtained a *Noli prosequi*. Upon the death of Mr. *Thomas Kentish*, who immediately succeeded Mr. *Nathaniel Oldfield*, he was chosen pastor of this congregation, tho' his removal from

from *Coventry* was greatly opposed by his worthy colleague, and the eminent Major *Beak*, a gentleman of great learning and understanding. Here he continued many years a constant preacher, twice a day, besides the part he bore in the academy; except the very acceptable help for some time, of the Reverend Mr. *Gravener*, in the first years of his ministry. In his latter years he had the assistance and co-partnership of my dear brother, your present worthy pastor, who comes among you in the full vigour of life, and I hope will be long continued for eminent service: I heartily pray God to strengthen his hands, and prosper his labours among you. Upon his removal to *London* he kept his academy some time in *Southwark*, but chiefly at *Hoxton*; there were joined with him the late extraordinarily learned and pious Mr. *William Lorimore*, and Mr. *John Spademan*; and after Mr. *Spademan's* death, Mr. *Capel*, who had been professor of *Hebrew* in the University of *Saumur*, before the persecution in *France*. There was no house in *England* among the Dissenters which had so great advantages, and where three such learned persons were joined together, so excellently qualified for the several parts allotted them. Here many were educated of great worth, and who now make a considerable figure in the world, in the ministry, and in other learned professions, both in the establishment, and out of it. It was here he received his degree of *Doctor of Divinity* from the university of *Edinburgh*,

burgh, with the late Dr. *Williams*, and Dr. *Calamy*. This is the short *history* of what was remarkable in his life. As to his *moral* and *learned* character, I shall give you this brief account.

God blessed the instructions and example of his pious parents to make early impressions of serious religion upon his mind, which never wore off, and preserved him from the vanities of youth, and the entanglements of riper life. He was all his life a man of strict *piety*, and great *integrity* of heart, who had an habitual reverence and constant regard to God, in all his ways. He was naturally very *thoughtful*, and of great penetration. He had a firmness and strength of mind, and was capable of close and intent thought, sometimes to the neglect of his necessary food, and the disregard of any noise about him. His first thoughts were very solid and judicious, tho' he was not always so happy in expression, and conveying his sense to others, which is often the case of very thoughtful minds, who have a multitude of ideas crowding for utterance; are more intent upon the matter before them, and aware of the difficulties which attend it, and more careful to guard against mistakes, and to convey their exact sense, than men of shallower minds, and more superficial knowledge of things.

HE was a man of *staid passions*, and great meekness and calmness of temper; not easily ruffled with anger, or betrayed to rashness. He had great *humility* of mind, notwithstanding great worth, and great esteem from many;
never

never assuming to himself, or dictating and overbearing to others. He was of no *party*, but that of God against the Devil, and of all serious Christians; and had great *charity* and moderation to those who differed from him; and was of a most *inoffensive* and obliging behaviour to all he conversed with. He was hardly ever known, thro' the course of a long life, to speak an *unkind*, or *unhandsome* thing of any body, and could easily *forgive* any unkindness, as he was never over-solicitous about the justest respect to himself; a temper which tho' it does not always meet with the regard it deserves, and perhaps sometimes the contrary, yet certainly is worthy a particular esteem. I never knew any man more *communicative* to others of what he knew, or more *patient* of contradiction: He was ready to hear the utmost which could be objected, without the least emotion, and with an evident pleasure. I can truly say, I have learned more useful hints both in matters of learning, and religion, in conversation with *Dr. Oldfield*, than from any man now living; and I believe I am not the only person who can say so. He allowed his pupils the greatest freedom of access and conversation, and yet kept up a just authority and esteem among them: He always encouraged *free* enquiries, and was ready to satisfy others, or receive satisfaction. He taught them by his daily *example* as well as instruction; and *reproved* what was amiss at any time, with calmness and wisdom, without passion and angry resentments, as one who sincerely loved them, and

desired their good; and his reproofs were often effectual, and always taken well. He was *wise* in counsel, and very considerate, who would look thro' a matter, and round about it, view it on all sides, and weigh the circumstances and consequences of it, with great exactness and caution. His judgment and opinion in affairs of moment was much valued and depended upon, in the vigour of his life. He had great *generosity* in principle and affection, and a most disinterested and *unselfish* regard to the publick good, which he served with great application, for many years, without any worldly advantage by it, and to his worldly disadvantage.

HE was very skilful in *mathematical* learning, to which his genius naturally led him; and had projected several things for publick use, some of which had the approbation of the great Sir *Isaac Newton*: But he could hardly ever satisfy himself, or give the last hand to any thing; and so those designs in which he had spent a great deal of labour and thought are like to miscarry and be lost. His published *Essay on the improvement of reason in the affair of learning, and conduct of life*, has several parts which shew great fineness and extent of thought, in the abstract way of reasoning; as well as his prudence and knowledge of human nature. His judgment in the controversies of religion was *temperate* and moderate, against running into extremes on either side, or laying a disproportionate weight beyond the evidence of things. His sense of the doctrine of the *Trinity*

nity may be seen in a *brief discourse* upon that subject, writ with great judgment and sobriety, and which met with good acceptance in the world: And in another published by his brother *, now the only remaining branch of the family, which was very much his sense of the matter. There was hardly any thing in which he shewed a greater zeal, or in which his judgment was more strongly fixed, and impressed with a sense of importance, than the cause of civil and religious *liberty*, which he reckoned essential to the present happiness of mankind, and to the very being of religion and vertue in the world. He was always reckoned excellent in *prayer*, especially upon particular occasions, a talent in which all the brothers excelled. He prayed with great gravity and fervour, with order and connexion, and with many deep and uncommon thoughts, which would often strike and surprize the audience. He was much in the exercises of *secret* devotion, and often spent a considerable length of time; and greatly lamented the apparent neglect both of secret and family prayer, among many of the professors of religion in the present age. He was remarkably *patient* in affliction, not uneasy to himself, or complaining of others, much less repining against God; of which he gave a great example in the loss of one of his eyes, by a fall in an apoplectick fit, some years ago. He had a great *tenderness* for his nearest relations, and a great concern for their welfare, especially

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* *The Trinity of the Bible*, by Mr. Samuel Oldfield of Ramsbury in Wiltshire.

their spiritual welfare; and that they might never leave God, or provoke him to leave them: which I hope will never be the case.

IN the latter years of life he met with some uncommon *trials*, and exercises, which sometimes touched him in a tender part, and made deep impressions upon his mind: But he also found uncommon *kindness* and friendship, in very remarkable and extraordinary instances, and in the most respectful and generous manner. The kind Providence of God provided for him, and made the last stage of life easy and honourable, under the disadvantage of his outward circumstances; of which he had the highest sense of gratitude, both to God, and to the worthy instruments. He enjoyed the singular felicity of a sound and healthful *age*, without any bodily infirmities, or the least abatement of the natural civility and good humour with which he had always conversed. In his last *sickness*, which was but short, and after an interval which seemed to promise recovery, he possess'd the same calmness and composure, in which he lived; his end was peace, as his life had been. I asked him the day before he died, whether all was easy and comfortable within: He said, he had a judicious satisfaction and peace of mind, tho' by reason of present weakness and lowness of spirits, he was dull and heavy. He was sensible his life was drawing to an end, and continued sensible to the last minute, without any violent shock of dissolving nature, and with an undisturbed tranquillity of mind. He said, " That nature
" must

“ must submit, and he had learnt to submit;”
“ and That all was well, and all was easy
“ within :” An honourable testimony to religion, after so long a trial, and from so wise, sedate and upright a person. And now God grant that we may every one, by this, and all the instances of others exemplary life and death, be awakened to a timely care of our soul’s welfare, and future blessedness, and be excited to daily preparation and readiness, for our own death, and for the coming of our Lord.





S E R M O N VIII.
 Of *Deliverance* by Christ, from
 the *fear* of Death.

H E B R E W S ii. 15.

*And to deliver them who through fear
 of Death were all their life-time sub-
 ject to bondage.*

THE Apostle in the foregoing verses is speaking concerning the great ends of the death of Christ, both with relation to himself, and with relation to us. With relation to the former, he says, ver. 9. That for the *suffering of death* he was *crowned with glory and honour*: and ver. 10. That he was *made perfect thro' suffering*; i. e. He arrived to the proper dignity of his person, and perfection of his undertaking: which he illustrates by several quotations in the three following verses, out of the Old Testament. With relation to the latter, he assigns a double reason and end of his death; the one is, *That through death he destroyed*
him

him who had the power of death, that is, the devil: He defeated the devil's design in bringing death into the world, and the use he afterward made of it. In this verse, he assigns another reason in consequence of the former, and as the effect of it, *to deliver them who thro' fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.*

IN speaking to these words, I shall propose these two things, answerably to the two parts of which they consist.

I. I shall consider the *fear of death* which brings men into subjection to bondage.

II. OUR *deliverance* from it by Christ.

S E C T. I.

I. I shall consider the *fear of death*, which is mentioned as one great evil from which we are delivered by Christ. And here it will be proper to consider, 1. What is that *fear* of death from which Christ delivers us. 2. What is that *bondage* to which it subjects. Under the former, I shall have occasion to consider the *causes*, and under the latter, the *effects*, of this sinful fear, which together will represent the entire evil of it.

§ 1. What is that *fear of death* from which Christ delivers. Fear in the general is, a *flight from evil*, or the aversion of the mind from what we apprehend hurtful: 'Tis the troublesome apprehension of an impending evil. The fear of death may be distinguished into two

forts, according to the different consideration of death.

I. THERE is a *natural* fear of death. Death is an enemy to nature, as 'tis the dissolution of our present frame, the *separation* of soul and body, a rending afunder the two parts of our constitution, so closely united, and long continued together. We quit this sensible world, and all the gratifications of our present nature: we leave every desirable relation, and comfortable enjoyment, all our pleasant converses with others, and sweet retirements, and whatsoever is agreeable and entertaining in life. Death under this consideration of it is a *natural evil*, and a proper object of *natural fear*, or the aversion and flight of our mind; especially where there are slow decays of nature, and long sickness and pains, which is commonly the case, to be the harbingers and attendants of it. This is not a *sinful* fear, but a *natural* passion, and is both innocent and useful. 'Tis planted in our nature by the God of nature, and is the necessary consequence of *self-love*, and self-preservation, which is the first and fundamental principle of nature. 'Tis the rising of nature against its mortal enemy; the reluctance of sense against what would hurt and destroy it, without any reasoning or consideration about it. As 'tis therefore natural to mankind, 'tis universal, and common to all men: 'tis fixed in human nature. Nature starts and recoils at the thoughts and prospect of dying. *Adam* in innocence was subject to this fear, or else the threatning of death would have had no force. It was exemplified

emplified in the human nature of the Redeemer, who expressed an innocent reluctance to death, and desired *this cup might pass from him*. The Apostle says of himself, and other christians, *Not that we would be unclothed, but clothed* ^{2 Cor. v. 4.} upon.

YEA, this is a very *useful*, as well as innocent passion; for 'tis the great guard of mens lives, and gives a force to all the laws of God and man, and is a great instrument of the good order and government of the world. If men had not the fear of death implanted in their nature, they would be often tempted, under disappointments and vexation of mind, to make away their own lives, or make bold with the lives of others; and all the sanctions of divine and human laws, would be ineffectual to restrain them, and preserve the order and peace of the world.

FROM this fear Christ does not deliver us; for that would be to divest us of our sensible nature, and love of our selves; tho' there is a great difference of degrees in different persons, very much according to their natural *temper*, as some have greater natural courage and less mixture of fear in their make, and others are more tender and easily impressed: Or according to their more eminent *attainments* in the divine life, and the greater measure, or more lively exercise of their faith, which very much weakens their natural fear, and sometimes carries them much above it.

2. THERE is a moral, or *rational* fear of death. Death in the moral consideration of it,
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is a *change* of our *state*, a passage out of one world into another. 'Tis a final determination of our main state, and a *decisive turn* for eternity. In this consideration of it, death appears more terrible, and is apt to raise a greater fear. This fear of death is not a meer natural passion, but of a *moral* consideration, and proceeds from reason and consideration about it, and is proportionably a sinful fear to the reasons upon which 'tis grounded, and the sinful *causes* from whence it may be supposed to spring. For example, from a sense of *sin*, which lies heavy and presses hard upon an awakened and sensible mind. Guilt is always *jealous*, and naturally breeds fear. Wherever there is a just apprehension of the evil and aggravation of sin, and of the divine displeasure upon the account of it, it cannot but make the thoughts of death more terrible, and add weight to the natural fear of it. So the Apostle says, *The sting of death is sin*: sin not only gave it its being, but all its terror and dread. The sense of unpardoned sin awakens a guilty fear, and gives bitterness to the thoughts of the mind, as well as a terrour to death. 'Tis my sin makes death so terrible, and fills my soul with fear: If I were an innocent creature, or a pardoned sinner, I should not be thus afraid; but if I die in this state, *I die in my sins*, and fall under the weight of *abiding wrath*.

, Cor. xv.
56.

BESIDES, There is the *love* of this world. We contract a mighty intimacy with this sensible world, as 'tis suitable to our sensible nature, and by advantage of an early and long acquaintance

acquaintance and familiarity, 'tis much endeared to us, and becomes more natural and agreeable. And especially favourable circumstances, and a prosperous condition of life, many comfortable relations, and pleasant enjoyments, more deeply engage the heart, and dispose them to think, 'tis good for them to be here. And wherever the *love of the world* prevails above the *love of the Father*, and the heart cleaves to any present good; wherever there is an inordinate value and desire of life, and a carnal and earthly frame and *habit* of mind; there the thoughts of death will be most uneasy. They must needs be loth to leave the world they love so well, and part with what they regard so much. It cannot but give them a painful concern, to think of being stript of all at once, and removed from hence for ever; for this is to rend from them the idol of their heart, which they adore and trust, and have chosen and embraced as their portion and rest. 'Tis turning them out like the *fallen angels*, of what is their heaven, or driving them, like *Adam*, out of their paradise.

BESIDES, there are the certain *consequences* of dying. 'Tis not so much the pains and trouble of dying, though they are sometimes very grievous too, but the awful consequence which immediately follows, and which it directly leads to, which is the great cause of fear. 'Tis appointed to men once to die, and after death Heb. ix. *the judgment.* Death transmits them to the 27. other world, and consigns them over to judgment. Every man must be tried and judged
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at the righteous and impartial tribunal, and their eternal state be decided by an irreverfible decree; and this renders death the moft awful and important thing in all the world, and *raifés* the fear and dread of it. I muft appear before the *judge of all the earth*, and be *judged in righteoufnefs* at the tribunal of Chrift, and receive *according to the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil*. Of what confequence is it to *ftand in judgment*? How *fearful a thing to fall into the hands of the living God*? This makes them tremble at the thoughts of death, and heightens their fear of leaving the world.

ADD to this, the *uncertainty* of their minds about their future ftate. They are often doubtful of the true ftate of their cafe, and uncertain of the final event. They know not how it will go with them hereafter, and what will become of them for ever. They don't know where death will land them in the other world, and on which fide of the fhoar it will fet them: What end it will be to this world, or what beginning of the next. Perhaps they have reafon to fear the worft, that they fhall not *ftand in judgment*, or be *found of their judge in peace*; that they fhall be condemned in the judgment of the great day, and be miserable for ever in the other world. They know they muft fare for ever hereafter, according to the ftate they are now in, and their prefent temper and courfe in this world; *That without holinefs no man fhall fee the Lord*, and that *nothing enters into the New Jerufalem which is unclean*. And tho' they are loth to go to hell, and dread the torments

ments of the damned, yet they find themselves unfit for heaven, and in no capacity of enjoying it. There is a manifest unsuitableness of mind to that pure and glorious state, or even a dislike and disaffection to it. In proportion to such apprehensions of mind of their future state, their fears of death of course will rise, which is the passage to it, and entrance upon it; especially when there is but one step between time and eternity, and as they fall by death, they rise at last and remain for ever.

§ 2. WHAT is that *bondage* to which the fear of death does subject. The Apostle does not say, that they were *actually* under it all their lives, as if they were never at any time free from the fear of death, and it was always actual in their minds; for 'tis often diverted by the cares and pleasures of life; but only that they were *subject* to it, *i. e.* in a state of bondage, and liable to it upon all occasions, and that it was often actually stirred up by afflictions, and sickness and serious thoughts, And this was *all their life-time*, *i. e.* all the former part of their life, before their deliverance by Christ. Perhaps he has a particular respect to the gentile world, in a state of ignorance, idolatry and wickedness, and without any divine revelation; or to the former dispensation of the law, when they knew so little of another world, and death was more terrible, and a greater object of fear, and bound upon them the straiter by the law. But answerable to the prevalence of fear, from whatsoever cause, will be the *bondage* of mind in any other; and this is often

often found in experience. Now this bondage, which is the consequence of the fear of death, and to which it subjects, is a *servile* spirit, or the temper of a *slave*, under the constant awes of displeasure, and dread of punishment; when the natural fear prevails, and the rational fear is heighten'd, and both concur in all their circumstances, to give a dread to the mind, and fix it in a state of slavish bondage. 'Tis a torment to their mind whenever they think of it, and they have no relief but in *not* thinking of it, or *putting the evil day afar off*. They are so far under the power of it, as to be *slaves* to it, and 'tis so great, as to be able to govern them.

Now here it will be proper to consider the *evil* of this temper of mind, which the Apostle represents by *bondage*, to be the more sensible of our deliverance from it by Christ.

I. 'Tis a *disparagement* to the gospel-state, and unsuitable to the *genius* and design of it. The gospel is a state of *liberty* and freedom, in distinction from that of the law. *Fear* was the proper complexion of the legal dispensation, where God was represented under more awful characters, and worshipped with greater distance; in so much that the *fear of God* was commonly used to signify the *worship* of God, and the whole of *religion*, under the old testament. 'The Apostle upon this account calls it a *yoke of bondage*, and represents them who were under it, not only as *children*, or minors, but as *servants*, or bondsmen, who were in *bondage to the elements of this world*; and ex-
 postulates with them for *turning again to the weak*

weak and beggarly elements, whereunto they desired again to be in bondage. Answerably hereunto he speaks of the *spirit of fear*, and the *spirit of bondage*, which is proper to servants, who are always kept under the awes of the master's authority, and the dread of his displeasure.

BUT now tis a principal glory of the gospel-dispensation and suitable to the peculiar representations of it, to raise the mind above a servile slavish fear, and to form a more noble temper, and a child-like disposition of mind. So *Christ has redeemed us*, says the Apostle, *who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son.* And again, *We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of Adoption*, or the temper of children. Once more, *God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind*: of vigour, delight and sobriety.

THIS spirit of bondage, or slavery of fear, is wholly *unsuitable* to the gospel-state, and directly contrary to the liberty of the children of God. 'Tis introducing a *legal* spirit into the gospel-dispensation, and contradicts its gracious design in one principal branch of it, which is to breed a spirit of liberty and joy. The power of fear in the minds of men, gives an ill *idea* of the gospel of Christ, as if it were not so truly excellent, or were weak and vain; and all its boasted succours and supports, were ineffectual to conquer their fears, and form a

more

more noble and generous temper of mind. 'Tis indeed a great misrepresentation of the matter, and naturally tends to lessen and disparage the grace of the gospel, and weaken the reverence and regard of others to it.

2. 'Tis highly *injurious* and hurtful to our selves. For example; It destroys the *peace* and comfort of our minds. For *fear bath torment in it*. Where the fear of death prevails, it renders every state and circumstance of life uneasy. It gives a sting to all the miseries of life, and renders them doubly grievous. The convictions of *sin* are more pungent and distressing, lie with a heavier weight and give a more frightful prospect. The *sickness* and disorders of nature are more burdensome; it gives an accent to every groan, and quickens the sense of the sharpest pain. It makes the *heart sick*, under all the sickness of the body. How easily could I bear the burden of nature, if I had but an easy mind, and had any comfortable hope in death. And it embitters all the *comforts* of life, and draws a gloom over the brightest prospect. It abates the relish of the best enjoyments, and damps the joy of the most prosperous state, and makes them ready to say, What good do these things do me, when I must quickly die and leave them, and may every moment be snatch'd from the dear enjoyment? and there is no *enduring substance*, or *continuing city* in this world.

THE fear of death disturbs the mind in the performance of *holy duties*, and affects every service of life, as well as every enjoyment of it.

it. A slavish dread of mind unfits for spiritual exercises, and the noblest employments of the christian life, and hangs like a dead weight upon the aspiring soul when it would ascend to God and heaven, and prevents the cheerful service and delightful communion with God. 'Tis an enemy to *gladness of heart*, and flatly inconsistent with the noble exercises of love, and joy and praise. Wherever it prevails, it breeds a sadness and dejection of mind, and makes us go on heavily in the ways of God, and all our service a drudgery and slavery, like the principle from whence it springs.

BESIDES, It brings us into slavery to the *devil*, and is a powerful *snare* of sin. It gives the devil a *great advantage* over us, and a stronger hold of us; and by the power of this principle, as well as by the love of pleasure, he *leads them captive at his will*, and carries them almost whither he pleases. So to save their lives he draws them into any mean submission or sinful compliance; and rather than yield to die, they will submit to the grossest imposition, or renounce their christian profession. Thus in the times of *heathen* persecution, many were brought, by the power of this principle, to sacrifice to idols, and many in the *antichristian* state to submit tamely to the heavy yoke of papal tyranny and superstition. This is mentioned as the root of apostacy in those who *received the sword with joy*, but when *persecution because of the word arose*, by *and by they were offended*. 'Tis certain no man will be a *martyr* for Christ, or love him more than

his own life, which yet the gospel requires of every disciple of Christ, who is under the bondage and servitude of the fear of death. It was the glory of the primitive martyrs, especially those of the weaker sex, who are most apt to be impress'd with the power of fear, that *they counted not their lives dear to them, and loved not their lives unto the death.* On the contrary, men are easily drawn, from this cause, to any sinful means to save their lives, and the fear of death, like the *fear of man*, proves a dangerous *snare*.

Rev. xii.
11.

To conclude with one instance more, It sometimes leads to *despair*. The bondage of their spirit distracts their thoughts, and gives a restless concern of mind: It sets them upon the rack, and throws them into agonies. As it first led them into sin, and proved a snare, it next torments them with the sense of it, and makes it more frightful and full of horror. Sometimes this rises so high as to make them impatient of life, and weary of living, under so great a dread of dying; so that the fear of death not only destroys the comfort of living, but all hope of relief, and by a strange turn of things brings them quite round again; their fear gives them courage, and the despair of their minds throws them into the arms of death, to deliver them from the fear of dying! So some have offer'd violence to their own lives, to get rid of the torment of their fears; as *Judas* went and *hanged himself* under the agonies of soul in which his guilt had cast him. A strange contrast this, that though they are afraid to die,
their

their fear makes them unwilling to live, and the torment of fear makes them unable to bear the burden of life.

S E C T. II.

I am now to consider our *deliverance* by Christ from the fear of death; How far, and by what means, we are delivered from it. To understand this matter aright, and prepare the way for what is to follow, we must distinguish our *deliverance*, as we did the *fear* of death; and consider it either as *fundamental*, or *actual*. There is a *fundamental* deliverance, when the foundation of it is laid, and the just ground of our fear is removed, and the causes of it are taken away; so that if we are not actually delivered, yet there is a sufficient foundation laid for it in due time, and in a proper way. Our fear of death is not like the despair of the damned, hopeless and irretrievable. If we are not delivered from it, it cannot be charged upon him, or any defect in the provision he has made for it. We are answerable for it, and not he, if we are not delivered.

AND our *actual* deliverance is begun in this world, and commences with our faith, or hearty subjection to the gospel of Christ. The dominion of fear is broken at the same time with the dominion of sin, and it's no longer a governing principle or prevailing temper. This is the case of every sincere christian, though different and various in degree, according to the different attainments and circumstances of particular persons. And it will be compleat and perfect, from all the fear of death, and every

degree of it, at length. This is sometimes seen in this world, in some extraordinary instances. Some persons of higher attainments in the spiritual life, have seemed to gain an entire conquest of their fears, and a perfect deliverance from them. However this is certainly the case at last; death is a perfect deliverance, and an effectual cure of all our fears to every true believer.

Now I shall show distinctly how he delivers from the fear of death in both these senses.

§ 1. HE lays the *foundation* of our deliverance in his *own person*, and by what he has done himself for us; and that is partly by the power of his *death*, and partly by the *revelation* of the gospel which was confirmed and made effectual by it. I shall consider them both distinctly.

1. By his *death*. This is directly referred to in the context; *And by death destroyed him who had the power of death, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage.* He destroyed the devil, and delivered from the fear of death, at the same time, and in the same way; *i. e.* by his death. The influence of the death of Christ to this purpose, is variously represented in the scripture. For example, By his death he made *atonement* for sin, and procured the forgiveness of it. This was prophesied of him in the old testament, *When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin: And, he shall bear our iniquity.* In the new testament, He is a *propitiation for sin*; and has made *reconciliation for the sins*

Isai. liii.
1c. 11.
1 Joh. ii.
2
Heb. ii.
17.

of the people; declared God propitious and reconcilable. And in this sense he was *made sin for us*, and *for sin condemn'd sin in the flesh*: By a sacrifice for sin, destroyed its condemning power, and adjudged it to destruction. And so the death of Christ throughout the new testament stands related to sin, and is connected with the forgiveness of it. The case here stands thus: The law, of which it was a transgression, was the *strength of sin*, or gave it its condemning power; and sin was the *sting of death*, which gave it its being, and render'd it formidable; and furnished all its poisonous arrows by which it wounds and kills, and makes the smart and rage: *But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ*; over the strength of sin, and the sting of death. So he *redeems us from the curse of the law* which threatned death, *being made a curse for us*, or suffering an accursed death. Christ by dying for sin has secured the honour of the divine law, the great instrument of his moral government, and destroyed the strength of sin, or its power to condemn and torment. So *God is in Christ reconciling the sinful world to himself*; not imputing their trespasses to them; and is ready to forgive their sin, upon the gracious terms of the new covenant. They who were *enemies by wicked works*, are *reconciled to God by the death of his son*. So the sting is plucked out, and death disarmed of its strength and terrour, to all true believers in him. This strikes at the root of the evil, and goes to the bottom of it. It answers the strongest plea of a sinner's mind,

Rom viii.

1 Cor xv.
56, 57.

Gal. iii.
13.

and removes the just cause of his greatest dread.

BESIDES, by his death he destroyed the *devil*, who had the power of death. When God the supreme judge is satisfied and reconciled, the devil loses his power to hurt them. This is the immediate reference of the text; *And by death destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil*: Not his *being*, for he is an immortal spirit; and is reserved as a standing monument of righteous vengeance to all eternity, and preserved in flames which neither purify nor destroy. But 'tis his *power* over death: Not *authority* or right, as if he had the disposal and direction of it as he pleased; or were the lord and sovereign of death; for that is proper to

Rev. i. 18.

Key 10
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Christ, who has the *keys of hell, and of death*.

The word here used signifies simple *power* and strength; not *right* and authority. But it refers either to his *introducing* death into the world by the first sin, when the *old serpent by his subtilty beguiled Eve*; and was a *murderer from the beginning*, and so it may stand opposed to the character of Christ as the *captain and author of salvation*: Or to his *commissioned* power to inflict death, and execute the sentence of the law, by bringing distempers and calamities, which prove fatal, and issue in death.

1 Cor. xi.

3.
Joh. viii.

44.

So Satan *smote Job with sore boils*; and by a great wind *smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon his children, and they were dead*.

Job ii. 7.

—i. 13.

God *cast upon the Egyptians the fierceness of his anger, by sending evil angels*. And he *bound a daughter of Abraham who had a spirit of in-*

Luk
11.

xiii.

firmity

firmity for eighteen years. The murmuring Jews were destroyed of the destroyer: i. e. the destroying angel. So the Jews call the devil the angel of death, and the Apostle apollyon, and abaddon, which signifies a destroyer.

Ps. lxxviii.
49.
1 Cor. x.
10.
Rev.

BESIDES that he has the power to terrify the consciences of men with the thoughts of death; for his nature is a mixture of guile and cruelty, who first draws men into sin which deserves death, and then affrights and torments them with the fear of it.

BUT now Christ by dying has destroyed the devil's power. The word signifies to counter-work and defeat, to enervate and frustrate any design, to make a thing cease as to its present condition, and to take off the force and power of it. So the Apostle says, *Do we make void the law?* And speaks of *bringing to nought the things that are.* So he defeats and disappoints the devil's design in bringing death into the world, of entailing it upon the whole human race, and keeping them always in subjection to it. He has turned the devil out of his office, and wrested the power he possessed out of his hands. He has no longer any power to inflict death, or terrify the minds of men for whom Christ died. He is to be considered as a conquered enemy, or a rebel held fast in chains, and wholly under the power of Christ. He cannot execute any design, or do any mischief without his permission, as he could not enter into the herd of swine without his leave. And so by his cross he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a skew of them openly, tri-

Κατωρ-
γων.

Rom. iii.
31.
1 Cor. i.
28.

Coloss. ii.
15.

umpling over them in it. 'Tis an allusion to the Roman triumph: He drags them about in triumph, like captive slaves, at his chariot-wheels. So the *prince of this world is cast out*, or dispossessed of the dominion he had long exercised in the world. And in this sense he *destroys the works of the devil*. This is a considerable step towards the conquest of the fears of death, that we don't lie at the devil's mercy, and that he has no longer power over it.

Joh. xii.
31.

1 Joh. iii. 8.

AGAIN, he has conquer'd *death* it self, and destroyed the power of it. 'Tis true, death is still in being as well as the devil, who had the power of it. As death entered into the world by sin, so it will continue in the world as long as sin continues: The effect will remain as long as the cause of it. But though death has a being, it has lost its power too. 'Tis no longer to be considered as a victorious conqueror, which lays waste all about it, and defies all controul; 'tis a conquered enemy, though 'tis an enemy still. So the Apostle says, He has *abolished death*. 'Tis the same word as before. He has vacated and disannulled it, as a cancelled bond, or an antiquated rite, a thing out of date. He tryed the strength of it, and overcame it. He encountered death in all its terrours, and in its full strength: He was under the power of death for a time, and laid in the grave the prison of death; but he broke loose from the grave, the seat and empire of death, and conquered death in its own dominions. Death seized him, and confined him, but could not detain

2 Tim. i.
10.
καταργήσεν
τὸ θάνατον.

detain him: *He loosed the pains * of death, because it was not possible he should be holden of them.* He conquered death by dying, and beat him at his own weapons. When he rose from the dead, he visibly triumphed over all the power of death, and gave a sensible evidence of the acceptance of his performance, and his compleat victory over all his enemies. Act. ii. 24.

AND as he conquered it in his own person, so he will utterly destroy it at last, for the *last enemy which shall be destroyed is death.* The whole empire of death will cease, and there will be *no more any death.* So that death is conquer'd and disarm'd: 'tis rendered powerless by the death of Christ; like a conquer'd enemy stripped of all its terrour. And it may well cease to be frightful, which has no power left to hurt us, and is not able to detain us under its power.

ADD to all this, That he has changed the *nature* of it, and made it quite another thing. So the scripture represents the matter: He has not only taken out the sting, and removed the curse of it, but clothed it with a blessing. It was originally the threaten'd *curse* for the sin of man, but 'tis now a covenant *blessing*. It was the execution of the divine vengeance upon guilty rebels, but 'tis now a messenger of peace, and forerunner of the greatest good. It was a gloomy vale, which led down to the blackness of darkness; but 'tis now a passage to glory. It was once an enemy, but now a friend.

* Or the *bands* of Death, which better suits with *λύπαις* and *καταβάσαι*, and is agreeable to the ambiguity of the *Hebrew* word in the old testament, to which the Apostle here refers.

friend. Hence we find that death is made over in covenant to true believers, and reckoned in the inventory of their blessings: *All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, whether life or death; all is yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* And the Apostle says: *To me to die is gain:* It was gain to himself as well as to the christian church; and what he reckoned *far better.* There can be no reason to fear that which not only means us no harm, but is the instrument and occasion of the greatest good; which is really friendly in its design, and will turn to our greatest advantage. Thus far he lays the foundation by his death.

2^{ly}, HE lays the foundation of our deliverance by the *gospel-revelation*, which was confirmed by his death. This is one of the peculiar glories of the gospel doctrine: We may consider it in the two great instances of it.

1. IT reveals the glorious *resurrection* of the body at last. This was altogether unknown to natural light, and the heathen world; and not fully revealed under the old testament. The lively representation in the noble testimony of holy *Job*, was very general, That he should *live again*, and in *his flesh should see God.* The prophet is more explicate; *Many of them who slept in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* But the gospel of Christ has made an express and particular revelation of the resurrection, and all the glorious circumstances of it. That we shall be raised from the dead by the power of Christ, to whom *all power* and

1 Cor. iii.
21.

Philip. i.
21.

—23.

Job xix.
25.

Dan. xii. 2.

and judgment is committed of the father; and in the virtue of his resurrection. So he says, *I* Joh. vi. will raise him up at the last day. And, the dead 40. shall hear the voice of the son of God, and they who hear shall live. The resurrection of Christ—v. 25. is spoken of not only as an argument that the dead shall rise, but the principle by which they will be raised. So our Lord says, *because I live ye shall live also.* The Apostle says, *But now* 1 Cor. xv. *is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first* 20. *fruits of them who sleep.* And he is the first—Coloss. i. *born from the dead, that in all things he might* 18. *have the preeminence.* And again, *If we be-* 1 Thes. *lieve that Jesus died and rose again, even so* iv. 14. *them also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

THE bodies of the saints at the resurrection will be *incorruptible, glorious, powerful and spi-* 1 Cor. xv. *ritual.* They will be refined from all the prin- 42. ciples of corruption and decay, and become immortal; they will appear in full beauty and perfection, and shine in the brightest lustre and glory; they will be delivered from present weakness and imperfection, and preserved in the full vigour of all their powers, and the greatest agility and fitness for action; and they will be purified from the grossness of flesh and blood, and the need of sensible refreshments, and recruits of their present animal state, and made fit companions and instruments of the glorified soul, and capable of the heavenly happiness. Yea the *vile body*, which now labours under many infirmities, and is liable to the rottenness and corruption of the grave, *will be changed*
and

Philip. iii. 21. *and fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.* They who have long lain in the dust of the earth will awake from the dead, and arise vastly changed, and to infinite advantage, free from all natural defects, and sinful frailties; from all the disorder of distempers, and unruly appetites.

So that a dying believer may say, Though I pay the last tribute to nature, and yield to the stroke of death, according to the appointment of God, yet I shall not lie under the power of it. Though my body rots in the grave, and sees corruption, yet it shall be but for a while; it shall rise out of those ruins, and be restored to a more glorious state for ever: then will the last enemy be destroyed, and then will be brought to pass the saying which is written, that grand and august saying, *death is swallowed up in victory; and mortality swallowed up of life.* If we are tender of the present flesh, and shrink at the thoughts of the grave, let us relieve our minds with the certain prospects of a glorious resurrection; of bodies of a nobler make and firmer consistence, which will shine with a greater glory, and never suffer any disorder or decay, or ever die any more.

2. THE gospel reveals the *immortal life* of the other world. Christ has not only abolished death, but brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. He has made a clearer revelation of a future state of blessedness; brought it out of the darkness and obscurity in which it lay, and set it in a clear and open light. The light of

of reason only, made uncertain guesses, and the most improved enquirers into nature sometimes express themselves with doubtfulness about it. It was more imperfectly revealed under the former dispensations, and but very sparingly, and in more general terms. But the gospel has more distinctly represented the excellence and certainty of the future state; of the immortal nature and separate existence of the soul, that death *only kills the body, but cannot kill the soul*; ^{Matt. x.} that when the earthly house of *this tabernacle* ^{24.} *is dissolved, we have a building of God*; and when *absent from the body, are present with the Lord.* ^{2 Cor. v.}

It describes the excellence of the final blessing ^{1, 8.}, as a state of immediate enjoyment of God, of his glorious presence and everlasting love; of *being with Christ, and beholding his glory*; in the society of holy angels, and glorified saints; and in a glorious place represented by all the amiable images, and engaging circumstances, which are proper to raise our love, or our admiration: 'tis a spacious and glorious *kingdom*; a beautiful and regular *city*; a *paradise* of pleasure, a *church* for worship and devotion; an *inheritance* for stability and safety. We have the most direct and strong assurance of its continuance and perpetuity. So our Lord promises to his disciples, *I will give them eter-* ^{Joh. x.} *nal life, and they shall not perish, neither shall* ^{28.} *any pluck them out of my hands.* And the Apostle speaks of it as the great promise of the new covenant, *This is the promise which he hath* ^{1 Joh. ii.} *promised us, even eternal life.* And they who are ^{25.} *called receive the promise of the eternal inheri-* ^{Heb. ix.} *tance.* ^{15.}

tance. So 'tis every where represented as an *everlasting kingdom, an incorruptible inheritance, a crown of life which fadeth not away.*

IT has mark'd out the way to the future blessedness, and directs to the sure method of obtaining it. Our Lord tells the disciples, *Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.* And *I am the way, the truth, and the life,* or the true way to life; that is, by the revelation of the gospel; by following the example he has set us, and by doing his will. And the Apostle says, *He is the author of eternal salvation to all them who obey him.* So then a good man may say, "Though I die and my body perish, yet
 Heb. v. 9. " my soul is an immortal principle, and will
 " never die: the *dust returneth to the dust,* but
 " *the spirit returneth to God who gave it.* I com-
 " mend my departing spirit into the hands of
 " my heavenly Father, and faithful Redeemer.
 " When my body drops into the grave, my
 " soul will ascend to the regions of light; tho'
 " my body lies for a time rotting in the
 " grave, and becomes a lifeless and loath-
 " some carcass, my soul will mount up into
 " purer regions, and run into the embraces of
 " the *father of spirits.* Death cannot *kill* the
 " soul, or so much as hurt or touch it, it only
 " releases it from the prison of the body, and
 " sets it at liberty from its present burden and
 " confinement. I have the *hope of eternal life*
 " *which God who cannot lye hath promised;* and
 " am *looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus*
 " *Christ, unto eternal life.*" And why should
 we be tormented with the fear of death when

we have so great assurance of the resurrection of the body from the power of death, and of a glorious life beyond the grave; of an immortal happiness of soul and body in the other world.

THUS far Christ has laid the *foundation* of our deliverance, and removed the *grounds* of our fear.

S E C T. III.

§ 2. HE *actually* delivers from the fear of death by the influence of his *grace*, or the assistance and reliefs of the gospel-dispensation. That is, when we are actually brought to believe in Christ, and receive the christian doctrine, and have an actual interest and participation in the benefits of his death, and the promises of the new covenant. He has laid the *foundation* upon which our deliverance is secured by his death; but he does not *actually* deliver from the fear of death till we *actually* believe in him, and become the members of Christ, the head of the redeemed seed, and subjects of Christ the glorious *prince of life*. So they who are delivered from the fear of death are represented in this context as *sons*, and *sanctified*, as ver. 11, his *brethren* and *children*. Thus for example, 12, 13. it is by breaking the *dominion* of sin, and destroying the reigning power of it. 'Tis the power of sin in the souls of men, as well as the conscious sense of past offences, which makes death frightful, and arms it with so much terror; and we cannot be free from the tormenting fear of death till the reigning power of
in

fin is destroyed. The Apostle represents this as the great advantage of the gospel-state, *Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace; which is described by sin reigning in the mortal body; and being servants of sin.* And the Apostle says, *We thro' the spirit mortify the deeds of the body that we may live.* The bent of the heart must be altered, and turned from the love and service of sin to God; and when the power of sin is conquered, the seeds of fear, and the spring of the trouble, is removed. When we are *sanc-tified* by his spirit, we are *justified* by his blood, and there is *no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus.* If we are reconciled to God, and in a state of favour, we are delivered from the *curse* of the law, and have nothing to fear from the *power* of death.

BESIDES, 'tis by subduing the *inordinate love* of life, and of all present and sensible good. The heart must be taken off from the predominant love of the present world, which is inconsistent with the *love of the father*, and is *en-mity with God.* So we are *crucified to the world by the cross of Christ, and the world is crucified unto us.* It loses the charms and influence it had before; and no more affects us than two dead bodies lying together, affect one another. They overcome the world by the power of their faith; for *this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.* The crucifixion of Christ gives an affecting representation of the vanity and emptiness of sensible good, and its insufficiency to be our portion; and the lively views

views of another world, easily disparage all the glory of this, and naturally tend to wean the heart from it, and set it above it; *to set their* Coloss. iii. *affections on things above, and not on things on the* ^{2.} *earth.* 'Tis the inordinate love of the world makes the thoughts of leaving it so terrible. When men are immersed in the cares of the world, or bewitched with the pleasures of life, 'tis difficult to think of parting with them, and is like rending a limb from the body, or tearing from their embraces the idol they adored. But when the heart sits loose to this world, and is discharged from its cares and delights; when men have only regular and temperate regards to present good, they will not think a removal from them so great an evil, and will part with them without reluctance and dread. They fall like ripe fruit, and yield themselves up with free choice, and ready resignation to the divine will; if not with earnest desires of a better state.

FURTHER, 'Tis by working suitable *dispositions* of mind to the heavenly state; or making them spiritually and heavenly minded. When their spirits are formed to a state of blessedness, and made *congenial* and agreeable to it. Thus when they are *sanctified* and made holy, are *wrought for the self-same thing*, and made *meet to be partakers of the inheritance*, and ready for the coming of the Lord; when there is a solemn choice of God as our only portion, and a sincere love of him above all the world; and we *love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*, and more than any creature, and have an higher value

and regard to his favour and presence than any present good; this is a proper preparation for heaven, and a powerful preservative against the fear of death. A prevailing love to God and heaven will expel the *torment* of fear; for *perfect love casteth out fear*, and so in a proportionable degree to the measure of our love. The love of Christ will make them willing to die that they may be with him, and inspire a noble courage and confidence of mind under the greatest dangers and terrors of death: *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with Lord*; and the Apostle desired, upon this ground, *to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.*

To conclude this matter; 'Tis by clearer *prospects*, and present *foretastes* of the future blessedness. They have sometimes a strong faith of unseen things, and more affecting prospects of the promised rest, as *Moses* had of the land of *Canaan*, which warms their hearts, and kindles earnest desires. They *see him*, by faith, *who is invisible*, and have a direct *respect to the recompence of reward*. They *know in whom they have believed*; and that when the *earthly house of their tabernacle is dissolved*, they have a *building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. And they have sometimes the present *foretaste* of the future glory, in the unspeakable joy and consolation of their souls. The *spirit not only bears witness with their spirits, that they are the children of God*, by the evident impression of the divine image upon their souls, and so they have a title to the inheritance

ritance of sons; but he is the *earnest of the inheritance*, and the *seal unto the day of redemption*. They have a full satisfaction of mind, and a lively and *joyful hope* of the *glory of God*, and the *incorruptible inheritance*. Eph. i. 14.
—iv. 20.

AND this, wherever it is, not only conquers the fear of death, but makes them triumph over it as a vanquished *enemy*, or rather embrace it as a *friend*. They are ready to say with old *Simeon*, *Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for my eyes have seen thy salvation*; and with their dying Lord, *Father into thy hands I commend my spirit*; and with the martyr *Stephen*, *Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*; or with the Apostle, *O death, where is thy sting; O grave where is thy victory?*—*Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory.*

IF any should say here, how is this reconcilable with *fact* and experience? Are not many good men subject to the fear of death, and sometimes in great uncertainty and doubt; in great disquiet and uneasiness, or even anxiety and distress of mind, upon a dying bed? I answer out of the principles already laid down; that the *foundation* of their fear is removed by Christ, and the just ground of it taken away: They *fear where no fear is*, and there is no just *cause* of their fear left. And they are actually delivered from the fear of death in a great measure, that is, the *prevailing* fear of it. Every sincere believer has a greater *love* to Christ, than *fear* of death, in the settled habit of his mind, and had rather die than not come to heaven. Put it to them under their greatest fear, whe-

ther they would always live in this world, and be content with the present state; and chuse never to enjoy God and Christ hereafter, upon condition they were never to die; and they would certainly answer, No. 'Tis not therefore the prevailing habit, and principle of their minds, though it may be to such a degree, as to be very troublesome and uneasy to them.

AND there are many causes may be assigned of the remaining fear of death in good men: 'Tis never owing to any defect in their deliverance by Christ, but always to themselves. It sometimes proceeds from the great remainders of *sin*, which cloud their evidences, and create trouble of soul; for guilt has always fear accompanying it, as inseparably as the shadow to the body: Or from the weakness of their *faith*; for a weak faith will necessarily be attended with a great deal of doubt, *Wherefore didst thou doubt, O thou of little faith?* They tremble and are afraid, because they are uncertain of their state towards God, and distrustful of the final event: Or it may proceed from natural *temper* and constitution; a black and melancholly vapour may fly up into their heads, and spread a gloom through their souls. They are naturally timorous, and easily receive discouraging impressions, and ready to start at any sound of terror, or shadow of danger: Or even the lowness of the *animal* spirits, and the weakness and disorders of nature, may breed dejection of mind. However, he will perfectly deliver them at last from every remainder of
fear.

fear. Death will be an antidote against itself, and effectually cure all the fear of it. They will be set above the reach of all its darts, and the least apprehension of fear. There *will be no more death*, in the regions of immortality, and they will never fear that which is not.

III. I shall only add two *practical remarks* upon what has been said.

I. How *unreasonable* are the fears of good men. 'Tis true, wicked men have a great deal of reason to fear death; for that is the destruction of all their happiness, and the beginning of the greatest sorrows. And Christ has not delivered them from the fear of it, but left them under the full force of it. 'Tis armed with a sting, and full of terrour. It stands ready, like the divine executioner, to gripe and seize them, to drag them to the tribunal of justice, and the prison of hell. 'Tis a wonder the fear of death don't follow them wherever they go, haunt them like a ghost, and almost fright them out of their wits. 'Tis owing to great stupidity and inconsideration, to the constant engagements and diversion of other things, and to many flattering and deceitful views, that wicked men can be secure in sin, who certainly know that they must quickly die. And O the fright and terrour, the agony and distress of dying sinners, when their minds are awakened, and their views enlarged, when they stand upon the brink of the grave, and the edge of another world; when their sin is *brought to remembrance*, and *set in order before them*; and

Heb. x.
26.

they have no view before them but of an angry judge, and a flaming hell, or a *certain fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation, which shall consume the adversary!*—

Job xviii.
4.

BUT as to good men, why should they be afraid of death? Art thou afraid of the *dissolution* of nature? But that is an irreversibile decree, upon a just ground: 'Tis the execution of the original threatning against the sin of man; and 'tis *appointed to man once to die*. It argues great weakness and impotence of mind, and involves great absurdity in it, to fear that which we know before-hand cannot be avoided, which is the condition of our nature, and settled by a divine decree. Can we expect the decrees of heaven should be reversed, and the constitution of things set aside, for our sakes? *Shall the earth be forsaken for thee, and the rock be removed out of its place?* It must be strange fondness and partiality to ourselves, to expect to be exempt from the common law of mortality, to which all the world besides is subject. 'Tis our wisdom and interest to submit and yield to the righteous will and wise constitution of heaven. And especially when we have so much reason to expect the resurrection of the body at last, to such great advantage, and the eternal life of the other world. That is only like pulling down an old decayed house, to raise a nobler building in its room. Or art thou afraid of *changing* worlds, of leaving this world, and going into another, a strange and unknown world? But why, if it be to a better world,
and

and to a state of blessedness, should we fear a change to so great advantage? or leaving a state of guilt and imperfection, for a state of purity and perfection; and the confinement and miseries of the present life, for the liberty and rest, the joys and glory of the other? This is a needless and causeless fear to every sincerely good man; yea, they have reason for *hope in their death*, and to *rejoice in hope of the glory of God*.

2. How great are our *obligations* to Christ! How admirable was the love of our Redeemer to *partake of our flesh and blood*, and submit to die for us, that he might deliver us from the fear of death? He endured a cruel and cursed death, in all the pains and terrors of it, to deliver us from the bondage of fear. How great is the privilege and blessing of true believers in him, above the *Heathen* and *Jewish* world? What poor relief and consolation against the fear of death, were drawn from the wisdom of philosophy, and the succours of improved reason? And what advantages have we above the former dispensation in the clearer light, and greater provision, by Christ and the gospel-revelation? How should this endear him to us, and recommend the gospel to our value and esteem? How readily should we embrace his doctrine; how cheerfully should we *serve him*, being *delivered out of the hands* of our greatest enemies, *in righteousness and holiness, without fear, all our days*? How comfortably may we wait for our final deliverance, and perfect blessedness; for the *captain of our salvation, made*

Heb. ii. 10. *perfect by suffering, was not only crowned with honour and glory, but will bring the many sons to glory, at last. He will give them all eternal life, and they shall not perish, and none shall pluck them out of his hands; and neither death nor*

Rom. viii. 38. *life shall be able to separate them from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

I shall conclude this long discourse with a short account of our deceas'd friend, whose death and desire gave the occasion of it. She was religious betimes, and began the practice of secret prayer from between six and seven years of age, which she continued all her life. She has been known to say, "That she did not know the time in which she was converted." She entered early into the married state, and was happy in that relation for forty years. She lived with tender affection, and full confidence; with a wife care, and faithful diligence. Her behaviour in her family, and particularly her care of her children, was very exemplary; instructing, encouraging, warning and reproving them upon all occasions; and to most of them with happy success. She well answered the character the Apostle requires in such a relation: She was grave, sober, faithful in all things; in behaviour as becometh holiness, a teacher of good things.

1 Tim. iii. 11. Tit. ii. 3.

In any of the greater troubles and afflictions of life, she would spend many hours, and sometimes whole days, in solemn retirement and secret devotion; and was often a great support and relief to her beloved yoke-fellow, in the tryals and adversities which beset him. She was regular

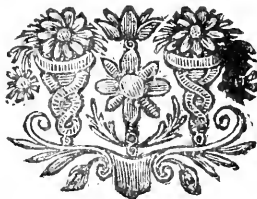
gular and unblamable in her whole course, and useful in every relation of life. She was indeed an ornament to her profession, and *adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour, in all things.* She greatly delighted in reading, and made a wise and judicious choice. She often read with understanding and affection, besides the daily use of the scriptures, the works of Dr. *Preston*, among our old divines; and Mr. *Baxter's* practical writings, Mr. *How's*, and Mr. *Showers's*, among the moderns; and had a particular relish of some among the living. She deeply lamented the *differences* and animosities among christians as a scandal to the world, and an enemy to brotherly love, and practical religion.

HER *end* was peace, as her life was *upright*. She was sensibly touched in her last sickness with the tender affection of her dear *yoke-fellow*, and could not bear the concern he sometimes expressed about her. "She desired, what she said, she never did before, that unless he could restrain his passion, not to see him:" But assured him, she was satisfied of her state, and of the grounds of her hope; and was so far from being afraid to die, that she *desired to depart, and be with Christ*; and that she knew through grace, that when this *earthly house of her tabernacle was dissolved, she had a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

LET the consideration of such an example as this assuage the grief of bereaved and desolate relations; confirm our faith of the christian

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stian doctrine, and encourage the faith and diligence of every sincere christian: And God grant, that we may not be found *slothful*, but *followers of them who thro' faith and patience inherit the promise.*



S E R-



S E R M O N IX.

Of Christians *Desire* to depart,
or *Willingness* to die.

PHILIP. i. 22, 23, 24.

—*Yet what I shall chuse, I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.*

THE Apostle in the beginning of the chapter having exprest his great affection and concern for the christian *Philippians*, and encouraged them by the success of his sufferings, which had occasioned the spreading the knowledge of the gospel, and animated others to greater courage in the profession of it; comes in the 20th ver. to speak of his *earnest expectation and hope, that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life, or by death:*

death: That his honour and interest in the world should be promoted, by his preaching of the gospel, and the services of his life; or by his sufferings and death: and he seems to speak of it as a matter of indifference to himself, which it was, and to leave it entirely to the pleasure of God. He explains himself more particularly in the 21st ver. *For to me to live is Christ.* The work and business of life is to serve him, or the great motive to live, and what renders it valuable and desirable. And *to die is gain:* If I die a martyr for his sake, my faithfulness and constancy to the death, no less than the labours of my life, will be a means of advancing his honour, as well as of promoting my personal interest and welfare. So it follows in ver. 22. *For if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour:* What all my labour will be directed to; and this will make it worth the while to live, whatever difficulties, or sufferings I meet with. 'Tis *καρπὸς ἔργου*, operæ premium. *And yet what to chuse I wot not:* I am not presently determined what to do. I find it no easy matter to know which to prefer, if I were left to my self, and it were referred to my own choice: *For I am in a strait betwixt two, &c.*

ἐκ διαφ.
 ἑρμ.
 Theoph.

I shall propose to consider these words in a double view.

I. As they relate to the *Apostle*, and express the *temper* of his mind in his present circumstances.

II. As they are *applicable* to other christians, and may serve to direct and regulate ours. And then

then make some practical *reflections* in the close.

S E C T. I.

I. I shall consider the words as they relate to the *Apostle*, and express the *temper* of his mind in his present circumstances. Here it will be necessary to consider two things; 1. The strait to which he was reduced. 2. The determination he came to at last. This will lead me to open the main drift of the *Apostle's* discourse in this chapter.

§ I. THE *strait* to which he was here reduced: *I am in a strait betwixt two*: συνέχουσι, I am straitened, and held in on either side: There was a difficulty on both hands, and he was *prest in spirit* each way. The *Apostle* is thought to allude to the expression of *David* to *Gad*; *I am in a great strait, whether to fall* ^{2 Sam.} *into the bands of the Lord, or the bands of man.* ^{xxiv. 14.} I shall briefly represent the case on both sides.

I. ON the one side there was his *desire to depart and be with Christ*. The force of this consideration will best appear by settling the sense of the several terms. Thus for example, it was to *depart*, ἀναλύσαι. The word signifies to resolve and unbind; and plainly refers to the *dissolution* of his nature, or the separation of soul and body; for 'tis opposed to *abiding in the flesh*, in the next verse. So he speaks of himself, *I am ready to be offered, and the time* ^{2 Tim iv} *of my departure is at hand*; ἀναλύσεως, of my ^{6.} departure out of the body. The *Apostle Peter* calls it, *putting off this his tabernacle*. 'Tis used ^{2 Pet 1} of a man's returning to his own home or coun- ^{14.}

εὐσελῶς
Luk. xii.
36.

try, after a long absence; *And ye your selves like a man who waits for the Lord, when he shall return from the wedding.*

Luk xxiii.
43.

AND upon his departure he was *to be with Christ*. This was to be the immediate consequence to him, and what stood in the closest connexion with it. This our Lord represents

2 Cor. v.
8.

by *being with him in paradise*: In a state of rest and pleasure; and being *in Abraham's bosom* in the same sense. The Apostle represents it

by being *absent from the body*, and *present with the Lord*; free from all the inconveniences of the bodily state, and all the labour, and weakness, and sorrow of the present life; and happy in the presence of Christ, and in communion and enjoyment of him; in the sight of his glory, and the sense of his favour. And though the final and *complete* happiness of good men will not commence till the *appearance* of Christ, and the *resurrection* of the body at last; and which because 'tis the great peculiarity of the christian doctrine, and was not understood by the world before; as well as is of the greatest consequence in it self; is, I suppose, the reason, why we find it so often referred to this period, throughout the new testament. *And thou shalt be recompenced at the resurrection of the just.* 'Tis at the day of retribution, they *shall enter into the joy of the Lord*. The Apostle speaks of the *glory to be revealed at the appearance of Jesus Christ*. And we shall be *ever with the Lord*, when the *Lord himself shall de-*

1 Thess.
iv. 16, 18.

scend from heaven with a shout, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. But then nothing hinders

inders

ders their being *immediately* happy, though in a lower degree and less perfect state. This was plainly the Apostle's view in the present case, that upon his departure, he was to be, in some sense, *with Christ*, and *present with the Lord*.

AND this he esteemed *far better*. There is a strange emphasis in the expression *πολλῶ γὰρ μᾶλλον κρείσσον*, there is a double comparative: 'tis not only simply *better*, or preferable, but *much better*; and not only much better, but *very much better*. It was not only so in it self, and *absolutely* considered; but in the *relative* consideration of it too: it was more for his personal advantage and benefit, than his present state, as it was a state of entire freedom from present labour and suffering, the hope of which made them easy to him; and of more perfect service and enjoyment of Christ, which was the height of all his desires. It was undoubtedly preferable to every thing in this life, and whatsoever he enjoyed in it, or was capable of doing. There was no comparison between the one and the other; for though he was capable of doing much service for Christ in this world, and had great enjoyment of him too; yet it was with great weakness and imperfection, and with a great deal of trouble and suffering. He served the Lord with *much weakness and fear*, and with *many tears and temptations*. It was not to be compared with the future state of perfect freedom, and perfect service and enjoyment of Christ. It made the two states vastly *disparate* and unlike, and the one

1 Cor. ii.
3.
Act xx.
19.

one of them, beyond all comparifon, more defirable than the other.

HE had hereupon a *great desire* of it: having a *desire to depart*, and *be with Chrift*. It being fo much better, and more excellent, he could not but defire it. And though no good man defires death, or diffolution, *finply* for it felf, and for its own fake, for 'tis a natural evil, and the great terrour and dread of nature, as 'tis the fruit of fin, and the deftruction of our prefent being; yet for the fake of fomething elfe, and as it ftands *connected* with a greater good, it may be defirable; that is, rather than not *go to God*, and *be with Chrift*, and in order to our doing fo, and as the neceffary and appointed means of it. So the Apoftle represents it; *For we who are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be fwallowed up of life*: Not finply to be *unclothed*, or ftript of the body, but for the fake of the *heavenly* clothing, and the immortal life which is connected with it.

AND it was an earneft and *fervent* defire. —ver. 20. He fpeaks of his *earnest expectation and hope*. His defire of it was answerable to the excellent nature of the thing, and the great expectation of his mind. He had a warm and vehement defire, as well as a regular and well-grounded one. He defired it as a moft excellent ftate, and more perfect and preferable to the beft ftate of this world. He could not but greatly defire what appeared to him fo truly excellent and defirable, and what he muft be fuppofed

supposed to have had so clear a satisfaction in his mind about. So he often expresses himself: *Being confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.* And, *While we are in this body we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon.*

So that here he was prest with the weight of his own *desire*, and strongly urged, on this side, by a regard to his own ease and happiness, which is the strongest propensity of the reasonable nature; *i. e.* of deliverance from present labour and suffering, and a more perfect state of service and enjoyment. This contributed to his present difficulty, and was one of the two things which reduced him to so great a strait.

2. ON the other side, there was his further *usefulness* to the church, and their need of his service. This is mentioned ver. 24. *Nevertheless to abide in the flesh, is more needful for you.* q. d. It would be better for me to depart, and be with Christ, this would turn most to my account, and be most for my advantage and satisfaction, beyond all comparison. If I were only to consult my self, and my own personal good, I should perfectly be at a point, and determine the matter this way: I should chuse to depart, and get out of the strait at once: my earnest desire of future happiness would strongly incline me this way. But then, when I consider on the other hand, how I stand circumstanced with relation to you, and of what importance my continuance in life may be to the church of Christ; how much you need my

F f

further

further help, and what disadvantage you may suffer by my absence; then I find myself greatly prest on the other hand, and am at a stand again; and *what I shall chuse I wot not.*

IF any say here, But was this a sufficient *balance* to his *being with Christ*, and able to keep the scale in an equilibrium; should not that consideration have greatly weighed down, and easily have turned the scale? I answer, so it might easily appear to a narrow and selfish mind, and upon a hasty and transient view of the case: but upon a closer and more attentive consideration of the circumstances of things, it will appear to have a great deal of reason, and to carry great weight in it. 'Tis certain this church was first planted by him; for he was directed by a vision to go into *Macedonia*, and he *came to Philippi, which is the chief city of Macedonia*; and *on the sabbath-day went out of the city, where prayer was wont to be made, to the Proseucha, and spake to the women who resorted thither.* And here he converted *Lydia*; and dispossessed a *damsel of the spirit of divination*; and converted the *jaylor of the prison* into which he was cast. He first laid the foundation of a christian church among them, and was their *spiritual father*, who had *begotten them again by the gospel.*

THERE was great mutual *endearment* between them. They shewed a dutiful and affectionate regard to him in his bonds at *Rome*, and *their care of him flourished again.* He speaks it to their honour, though to the reproach of others, *That no church communicated with him as concerning*

Act. xvi.
12.

—14.

—16.

—25.

Chap. iv.
10.

—15.

cerning

cerning giving and receiving, but they only; and — 15.
 that he received of Epaphroditus, who was their
 messenger, and probably their minister, the things
 which were sent from them; an odour of a sweet — 18.
 smell, or sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to
 God. And they were exceeding dear to him; He
 expresses the tenderest regards to them; for he Chap. i. 2,
 thanks God upon every remembrance of them; al- 4
 ways in every prayer making request for them.
 He had them in his heart, and says with great
 solemnity, God is my record, how greatly I long — 8.
 after you all in the bowels of Christ Jesus; i. e.
 with the tenderest affection. And again, My Chap. iv.
 dearly beloved, and longed for, my joy and my 1.
 crown.

BESIDES, He was apprehensive lest they
 should be discouraged by his sufferings for preach-
 ing the gospel, or disheartned by their own
 sufferings in the profession of it. He tells them,
 to this purpose, That his bonds had fallen out
 rather for the furtherance of the gospel; and per-
 swades them, not to be terrified by their adver- Chap. i.
 saries, which was to them an evident token of 12.
 perdition, but, says he, to you of salvation, and
 that of God. And to fortify them against the
 impressions of fear upon that account, he tells
 them, For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ — 28, 29.
 not only to believe, but to suffer for his name: It
 was vouchsafed to them as a favour and ho-
 nour.

IT appears too that there were false and con-
 tentious teachers crept in among them, in his
 absence, who preached Christ out of envy and
 strife. They envied the Apostle's reputation

among them, and preached in a contentious opposition to him, bred differences and animosities among them, and endeavoured to weaken his credit and authority, and corrupt the doctrine he had taught them. This led him to say, *To write the same things, to me is not grievous, but for you it is safe: beware of dogs, beware of evil workers: beware of the concision: that is, the Judaizing teachers, who preached up the necessity of circumcision, and being justified by the law of Moses.*

Chap. iii.
12.

Now the Apostle's presence and preaching was greatly needful to a church he had newly planted, not only upon the score of mutual affection and endearment between them, but to encourage them to steadfastness in the christian faith, under sufferings, and to secure and preserve them in the doctrine of the gospel against seducers among themselves, and to strengthen their union and affection, to himself, and to one another. It was plainly highly necessary, in their circumstances, for the greatest purposes of good: and their establishment and improvement in the christian state, very much depended upon it. So he prays for them, *That their love might abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. That it might be wise and judicious; and that they might approve the things which are more excellent, or be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood; and that they might be sincere to the end, and be filled with all the fruits of righteousness.* He tells them that his continuance among them was

—9, 10.

—25.

necessary for their *furtherance and joy of faith,*

or

or the increase of their joy of faith; for so it follows in the next verse, *And that your joy* ^{—26.} *might be more abundant*, whatsoever their trials and sufferings might be.

AND this press'd him hard on the other hand, and made the difficulty great on that side. His usefulness to the church, and the needfulness of his presence among them, in their present circumstances; that his young converts might not be discouraged by sufferings, either his, or their own, or be corrupted by seducers: that they might be strengthened and confirmed, before he left the world, and his labours and preaching among them might not be *in vain*, but have their proper effect. These were very tender and important points, and could not but lie with weight upon his mind.

§ 2. THE *determination* he came to in the issue, and upon a mature weighing and considering the whole matter. This is mentioned v. 25. *And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you*, q. d. Tho' I am press'd indeed on both sides, and greatly straitned between these two different considerations of the present case, yet upon the whole, and all things considered, I am content to live longer for your sakes, and to adjourn my own happiness and being with Christ, for your greater improvement and establishment of heart. I am willing to be a little longer out of paradise, to see you in a greater disposition for it, and more likely to follow me thither.

HIS love to the church prevailed and turned the scale, though the weight of his own inclinations, and a regard to his own welfare, lay in the other. He was desirous to see them safe and secure in the faith and profession of the gospel, under their present weakness and temptation to the contrary. And when he says, *Having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you*; 'tis very probable that he had some intimation given him of the will of Christ about it, and that he was *persuaded* and satisfied in his mind, that it was best for his service and interest in the present circumstance of things, that he should continue longer in life, and not be immediately dismissed, and received to his presence.

THIS was certainly a wise and brave resolution, and argued a noble greatness of mind, to prefer the welfare of the church of God to his own; and the good of many others, whom he greatly loved, to the present enjoyment of blessedness. He was content his own happiness should be deferred, that others might be secured, and be kept from it a while that they might be brought to it at last. This was acting upon the noblest principles of *friendship* and benevolence, and the most disinterested and unselfish good-will; and was the greatest instance of self-denial, for the honour of Christ, and the good of others. This is the state of the whole case as it refers to the Apostle. I proceed now,

S E C T. II.

II. To consider the words as *applicable* to other Christians, and may serve to direct and regulate our desires. I shall consider it to this purpose in a double view. 1. How far, and in what cases a christian may fitly *desire* to die. 2. In what cases a christian may be *willing* to live notwithstanding.

§ 1. How far and in what cases, a christian may fitly *desire* to die. I shall represent this in a different light.

1. NOT when it proceeds from *faulty* causes, and a disordered temper of mind. This indeed was not the case of the Apostle. He was not discouraged by the difficulties of duty, or the afflictions and sufferings of life. *None of those things moved him.* He maintained an unshaken fortitude and constancy of mind under all his tryals, and was not only *stedfast and immoveable*, but *rejoiced*, and *gloried* in his sufferings and *infirmities*. But this is often the case with us. There is impatience under present evils, a weariness of the work of life, or dissatisfaction with our present state. We are prest with the weight of some present misery, or tired with the labours and conflicts of the christian state, or uneasy in our present circumstance and situation. 'Tis not with us, in several respects, as we would have it; or 'tis otherwise with us than we desire. This sometimes raises uneasy impatience of mind, and runs into rash desires and unguarded expressions. So *David* under a passionate grief for the un-

timely death of his beloved *Absolom*, breaks out into this rash exclamation, *Would to God I had died for thee, O Absolom, my son, my son.* Job in the present impatience of his spirit under a great concurrence of afflictions, cursed the day of his birth; *Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, there is a child conceived.* And he hastily wishes for death; *My soul chuseth strangling and death, rather than my life. I loath it; I would not live always. Let me alone, for my days are vanity.* The prophet *Jonah* under an unnatural disappointment at the repentance of the *Ninivites*, and for fear of the reproach of being thought a false prophet, says, *Now therefore, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.* And upon the loss of his gourd, tells the Almighty with peevish perverseness, *I do well to be angry even unto death.*

So a christian sometimes through impatience and discouragement under great tryals and afflictions, is ready to say, "I am quite weary of life, I wish I were out of the world: I would be glad to die, to get rid of the grievance under which I labour: Why am I continued only to suffer? I beseech thee take away my life." But now this argues great *weakness* and impotence of mind; the unrestrained violence of unruly passion, against all the dictates of reason, and succours of religion. And besides, is greatly *dishonourable* to God, and a reflection upon his governing wisdom, and

love-

sovereign authority, who is the proper judge of what is fit, and the only sovereign of life.

2. THE only true reason of a christian's desire to die, is, when he has reason to apprehend his *usefulness* is at an end, and that he can render no further service to God and his church in this world; or be of any further use to others, in any respect, it may be only a burden and trouble to them. For as this was the reason of the Apostle's determination in the present strait, for further continuance in life, that he might be further useful to the church of God; so the reason will hold for a determination the other way, in another circumstance of things: As when we are quite disabled for service, and have outlived our capacities of usefulness, and any service, and significance in life, whether by the prevalence of distemper, the decays of age, or want of opportunity. Why should a good man desire to live, when he can be of no further use to the world about him? What should hinder his desire to depart and be with Christ? There is no room, in such a case, for any strait or suspense of mind: The choice and determination is natural and easy the other way.

AND especially if it is attended with lively views of the future blessedness, and he has the *full assurance of hope*, and the *joy of faith*; is well satisfied of his interest in God, and his title to blessedness, upon the terms of the gospel covenant; and can say, in some measure, with the Apostle, *We know that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands,*

2 Cor. v. 1.

hands, eternal in the heavens. No wonder if they who are *new creatures*, and have the *first-fruits of the spirit*, groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption; and that they groan being burdened, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven. Nature burdened, groans and desires, longs to be relieved of its present burden, and to be easy and happy. So *Jacob* sitting upon his dying bed, and in the midst of his blessings to his sons, suddenly cries out, *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord.* And aged *Simeon* at the sight of the child *Jesus*, in the temple, says, *Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* Provided always however, that it be accompanied with due *submission* to the divine will, and be not absolute and peremptory, with a becoming deference to the direction of infinite wisdom, and the sovereign authority of God. For He best *knows* the fittest season and circumstances of our departure, as he has the highest *right* to prescribe; and it always becomes depending creatures to submit to the appointments of his will, and acquiesce in his disposal, whatsoever it is. In such circumstances a christian may lawfully desire to *depart*, and justly account it *far better*.

§. 2. IN what cases a christian may be *willing* to live notwithstanding. I shall instance only in these two.

1. When 'tis needful for further *preparation* for a state of blessedness, and a clearer sense of their title to it. This was not the case of the

the Apostle neither, it was far otherwise with him, who had a full satisfaction of mind, and was ripe for glory. He had no desire to continue in life upon that account: but 'tis very often the case with other christians. Thus when a christian has reason to apprehend that what through the weakness and imperfection of nature, the many snares of sin in his circumstance of life, and the hurry and engagements of business in the world, he has been often betrayed into great neglects, and entangled in many temptations; is much indisposed for a state of blessedness, and dark and doubtful in his mind about it; he may reasonably desire, if it be the will of God, to be continued longer in life, to recover a better state and habit of mind, to gain a greater victory over the powers of sin, the love of the world, and the fears of death; and a greater fitness for a state of blessedness, and a fuller satisfaction of mind about it; that he may be able to leave the world without reluctance, to meet death with composure and fortitude, and resign his soul to God with peace and joy. This, I think, makes it reasonable and wise, where providence favours men with a fit opportunity, after long engagement in the business of life, to retire from the hurry of the world, and devote some time for a more serious review of past life, the more solemn contemplation of death, and preparation for another world.

To this purpose we find the Psalmist praying, *O spare me that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more.* 'Tis plain from ^{Pf. xxxix.} ^{13.} the

—74. the context that he had death in view; *Lord, make me to know my end, and the measure of my days what it is, that I may know how frail I am.* And, *Behold thou hast made my days as an bands breadth, and my age is as nothing before thee. I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.* And then he adds, *O spare me, that I may recover my strength.* It may relate to the *body*, and signify the repairing the decays of natural strength, and a capacity of further service before he died; or, as a learned man conjectures †, it may relate to the *soul*, and signify the courage of his heart, and the vigour of faith, that he might be better prepared to die, and go out of the world with greater composure, and without fainting and discouragement.

So a christian may be supposed to say,
 “ Let me be spared and continued in life to be
 “ more thoroughly formed into the divine life,
 “ and *renewed after the image of God*; to be
 “ more fit for the future blessedness, and prepa-
 “ red for my eternal state; that I may be de-
 “ livered from the present doubts and uncer-
 “ tainty which often perplex and distress my
 “ mind, and attain to a fuller persuasion and
 “ satisfaction of mind; and be *begotten again*
 “ *to a lively hope*, and be able to *rejoice in hope*
 “ *of the glory of God.*”

2. WHEN their greater *usefulness* to others require it, and the state of the church makes their continuance needful. This was *directly* the case of the Apostle here: His greater usefulness determined his choice, and so it

† *Lightfoot's Remains*, p. 137.

must ours. If we are capable in any degree of serving the interest of God in the world, and the state of the church makes our further service needful, we should be willing to live under any disadvantage and trouble to ourselves. For though God can never want instruments to support his interest and carry on his work in the world; and can easily raise up others in our room, and qualify and spirit them for it, and that in an higher degree too, as *Elisha* had a *double portion of Elijah's spirit* when he left the world; yet God ordinarily acts, in the works of *providence* and *grace*, not in an immediate, but *mediate* way, and according to the aptitude and fitness of means to their respective ends. Men are gradually fitted for extensive usefulness, and not all at once; and don't presently rise up with all the advantage which further time and experience will give them. If therefore by longer standing, and greater opportunity, we have any advantages for service above others, it may be our duty to deny ourselves, and be content to live, though we meet with trouble, and suffering in the mean time, and our own happiness is further delayed by it.

IF we are in such a circumstance and situation of things, that our lives may be needful for the good of the church, and we may be capable of serving it with any peculiar advantage, we must keep our post as long as we are capable in any measure of filling it up, and till we are fairly *discharged from that warfare* in which we are engaged, by the great lord
and

and sovereign of life. We must *fight the good fight*, and *finish our course*,—in the view of the *crown of righteousness* at last, and not desert our station through weariness of labour, or fear of danger, and without the leave of him who plac'd us there.

S E C T. III.

I shall conclude with some *practical reflections* upon what has been said.

1. The *presence* of Christ is the proper *christian* happiness, and preferable to any state in this world. Their present happiness in this world lies in the service and enjoyment of Christ, and therefore the Apostle says, *To me to live is Christ*; the great business and comfort of life; and his *earnest expectation and hope* was that *Christ might be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death*. And their happiness hereafter, will lie in *being with him* too, both their immediate happiness after death, and their final happiness too. For though the proper happiness of a reasonable creature, considered as such and in the final and ultimate view of it, lies in the presence and favour of God, the chief good; in the immediate sight of his glory, and perfect likeness to him, and delightful communion with him; and so we shall *behold his face in righteousness and be satisfied when we awake with his likeness*; and *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*: We come unto God the Judge of all. The whole design of the death and mediation of Christ

Heb. xii.

23

was to *bring us to God, for Christ once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring*

us

us to God; and he is gone before, to *prepare* Joh. xiv. 2.
mansions in his father's house: Yet what is pecu-
 liar to the *christian* happiness, and the nearer,
 and more sensible consideration of it, is, that
 we shall *be with Christ*, and come unto *Jesus*
the mediator of the new covenant. We shall
 be present with him whom we have loved and
 served, and who is our Saviour and Lord. So
 he represents it to his disciples; *If any man* Matt. xii.
serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, 26.
there shall also my servant be. And he prays
 to the Father for them; *Father, I will, that is,*
I desire, that those whom thou hast given me Joh. xvii.
may be with me where I am, and may behold 24.
my glory. And the final blessedness at the re-
 surrection is summed up *in being for ever with* 2 *the* Theff.
Lord. They will be in the same place iv. ult.
 where he is, and behold the glory he possesses,
 and be formed into his likeness, and be infinitely
 delighted in his presence.

AND there is no *comparison* between the pre-
 sent and future state. Here we groan under the
 burden of a mortal body, and the miseries of the
 present life; under the great imperfection of
 goodness, and the frequent prevalence of sin; we
 often mourn and complain under the sense of our
 present distance from him, and of his displeasure.
 But there will be a full relief of all our pressures
 and burdens; of all our weakness and imperfec-
 tion; of all the snares and temptations to sin, and
 all the sufferings and afflictions of life. That
 will be a state of felicity and joy; of the plea-
 sures of paradise and the *joy of the Lord*. We
 shall hear and see *unspeakable things*, which it is
2 *not* Cor. xii.
4.

Rev. ii. 7. *not possible for a man to utter; which we can now form no idea of, and have no words sufficient to express. We shall eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. And who can doubt whether that is not infinitely preferable and to be esteemed far better?*

2. THAT christians upon their departure out of this world are *immediately* with Christ. This is the direct consequence of it to good men, without any thing intervening, or any third state of things distinct from these two. When they depart out of this world, they are in some sense *with Christ*, though not in so full and immediate a manner, as they will be hereafter. *Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ*: His desire was not merely *to depart*, but chiefly to be *with Christ*; and the one, only in order to the other. It would not otherwise have been a reasonable desire in the Apostle, if he were not to have been immediately with Christ, or were to have continued in an inactive insensible state till the resurrection. Nor was there any need of his being *in a strait*, upon that supposition. It would have admitted an easy determination, and he might presently have come to a point with himself. There could be no pretence for any doubt, or uncertainty about it. It was certainly much better for him, beyond any reasonable doubt, to have continued in a state of service, who was capable of so great service, and when the church so much needed it too; and to have the present enjoyment of Christ, which to be sure was to a great degree; than to lie silent in the dust, and be utterly uncapable

able of any service and enjoyment of him; for so long a time together. Surely I would rather choose to live as long as I could in a state of service and enjoyment in this world, under all the present disadvantages of it, than lose so much of my existence, and slumber away so many years of time in a state of useless and inactive silence. It would alter the whole state of the case, as here put by the Apostle, and make the one *far better*, which he says of the other.

AND lest any should think that this was any thing *peculiar* to the Apostle, and proper to him, who was advanced to an higher office, and had reached to greater attainments, than other christians; we find him speaking to the same purpose, not only in his own name, as he does here, but in the name of other christians and as a common case; *For we know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved,* the tent or 2 Cor. v. 1. tabernacle in which we now reside, *we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, under the present burdens and sufferings, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.* It was not the mere dissolution of the present *tabernacle*, but the *building of God*, and the *house from heaven*, which was their comfort and support under their present burdens; and they not only *groaned*, but *desired to be clothed upon*, or to be in a state of future happiness. And that he apprehend the one of these was in some measure immediately to follow upon the other, appears from the 6th and

8th verses: *Therefore we are confident, or* couragious, *knowing that while we are at home in the body; or present in the body, for we are not here at home; we are absent from the Lord:* i. e. While we are in this bodily state, and with the *people* of this world, we are in a state of absence and distance from the Lord, and the blessed society of the other world, which is our proper home. He takes it up again, and repeats their common sense, *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.* These are the two terms, *absent from the body,* and *present with the Lord,* without any intimation of an intervening state, and plainly exclusive of it. He concludes in the 9. ver. *Therefore we labour, or are ambitious, that whether present, or absent, we may be accepted of him, or acceptable and pleasing to him, and possessed of his favour; and that when absent from the body, as well as when present in it.* Nor could these expressions be well understood otherwise, by those to whom they were written, when a state of immediate happiness after death, was the general sense both of the *jewish,* and *gentile* world, at that time †.

This

† That it was the belief of the Jewish church, before our Saviour's time appears by the *Chaldee Paraphrase* on Cant. iv. 12. which speaks of the *soul of the just carried into paradise by the hands of angels:* and the solemn wish of the Jews concerning their dead friends, according to the Talmudiits; *Let his soul be gathered to the garden of Eden: Let him have his portion in paradise, and also in the world to come.* Grot. in Luk. xxiii. 43. Cicero says, *O præclarum diem, cum ad illud divinum animorum concilium cætumque profissiscar, cum ex hac turba et colluvione discedam.* De Senect. The first Writers of the Christian church say, ἔχουσιν ἰδῆσαν ἐν οὐρανῷ, they *possess the region of the just.* See their testimonies collected at large by Bp Bull, Vol. I. Ser. 3.

THIS is agreeable to many other representations of the matter quite thro' the scriptures. 'Tis the observation of the wise man, That Eccles. xii. 7. the dust returneth to the earth, and the spirit returneth to God who gave it. And he distinguishes between the spirit of a man which goeth upward, and the spirit of a beast which goeth downward. Our Lord himself says, chap. iii. 12. Father, into thy hand I commend my spirit. The martyr Stephen in imitation of his dying Lord, closes his life with saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit, or take me to thy self. God is said to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, long after their death; and he is Luk. xx. 38. not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to him. Our Lord said to the penitent thief, This day shalt thou be with me in paradise, when he only asked, to remember him when he came into his kingdom. Lazarus was carried by Angels into Abraham's bosom, a place of rest and joy, and was comforted there. We read of the Heb. xii. 23. spirits of just men now made perfect, or who have finished their course; and of the Rev. vi. 9. souls under the altar who were slain for the word of God; and cried to judge and avenge their blood.

THE case is the same as to wicked men; so the rich man is represented, *tormented in flames.* or in a state of misery. Judas went to his own place; the proper and appointed place for so wicked a man. We read of the Act. i. 25. spirits in prison, in the days of Noah; which, whatever it refers to, supposes their continued existence, and being in a state of confinement and misery.

ADD to all this, the argument from *natural reason*; and the *spiritual* and *immortal* nature of the soul, as a principle distinct from the body, and essentially conscious and active; which has been the general opinion of the christian philosophers, as well as the heathen, both antient and modern; and is capable of being carried to a considerable degree of evidence: But I rest in the scripture-revelation, which is the most certain measure of our apprehensions about it.

3. 'Tis an excellent attainment to *desire* to depart, or be willing to die. This was the temper of the blessed Apostle here, and proper for our imitation. And though every christian does not attain to such a pitch of excellence, or *his* assurance of future blessedness; yet 'tis certainly an excellent spirit wherever it is, and what we should aim at and endeavour after, to sit loose to all the enjoyments of life, so apt to engage and engross our minds: to have those lively views of the future glory, and that satisfaction of mind about it, as to feel warm desires of soul rising up, and earnest expectations of it; to be able to say, "I could be willing to die this moment, if it were the will of God, that I might be with him:" or as an excellent person once said, in the near views of his dissolution, not *weary of the work of life*, nor *destitute of the comforts of it*, "I would not be four and twenty hours longer from the presence of Christ for all the world."

THOUGH this is not indeed essential to the christian state, yet 'tis an excellent attainment
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in it self, and what the christian dispensation is admirably fitted to promote, by the clearer representations, and exprefs promises of eternal life. Every sincere christian always *desires to be with Christ*, simply considered, and values his favour and presence above the greatest good of this world: He would not always live in such a state as this; or else he cannot be a sincere christian; but every christian cannot presently *desire to depart*, or be willing always to die. No; if they could be immediately *translated as Enoch was, and not see death*; or be *carried alive to heaven in a fiery chariot, as Elijah was*; or be *wrapt up into paradise with the Apostle Paul*; or be *caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*, as the surviving christians will be at the last day; they would be content to depart immediately. But they have the dread of death, or uncertainty of happiness, which damps their hopes, and breeds uneasy doubts, and distress of mind. But when a christian is delivered by the death of Christ from the *bondage of the fear of death*, and has a regular and well-grounded hope of eternal life upon the foundation of the gospel-promise; he may well desire both *to depart*, and *be with Christ*. And how honourable is this to the christian doctrine, and how worthy and becoming the christian hopes!

4. USEFULNESS to Christ and his interest, is the great aim and endeavour of sincere christians. This is what ought to weigh down all other considerations, and direct, and determine our choice and desire. *Nevertheless to abide in*

the flesh is more needful for you. He was in a great strait in his mind between his desire of happiness, and his usefulness to the church; but the latter prevailed. He was willing to live in this world in a state of service and suffering, though he was as sure to be happy as he was to die; and was content, for their sakes, to adjourn his own happiness, and be kept longer from Christ. He was *willing to spend and be spent*, and to be *offered upon the service and sacrifice of their faith*.

THIS is an excellent *pattern* for us too, and carries this instruction in it, that we should prefer a *useful life* to every other consideration whatsoever. And though every man must judge of the particular *instances*, and way of his service, by his own *capacities* and *opportunities*, and considering all the circumstances of the case; yet we must not *consult with flesh and blood*, or consider only what will be for our own ease and benefit, or how we may most promote our own private and personal welfare; but how we may do most good in the world, and be most useful to the church, and be of greatest consequence, and significance in the places where we stand.

LET us imitate this excellent spirit of the blessed Apostle, and readily submit to any private and personal inconvenience and disadvantage for the sake of a publick good, and be content to deny our selves, for the benefit of others. We may be useful in one kind, when we cannot be so in another; or in some degree, if not in an higher degree. Perhaps we may
be

be useful in some respects, in which others cannot be so useful. Men of wisdom and experience may be fitted with greater advantage, for some services, as men of zeal and activity may be fitter for some other. To conclude, Let us improve the present opportunity and advantage for the service and enjoyment of Christ, and be directed and governed by it in all our motions and views. Let this give us measures and motives in all our service, and animate all our endeavours. The greater service we do him in this world, and the greater enjoyment we have of him, we shall be the more fit to be with him, and shall have a larger share of glory hereafter. *Our labour in the Lord shall not be in vain; and we shall not lose our reward.*

I shall say nothing of our *deceased* friend but what I think may be useful to the *living*, and shall speak of her with the *modesty* and *simplicity* with which she lived. She descended from pious and worthy *parents*, and had the great advantage of a good example, and religious education. This made early impressions upon her mind, which stuck fast, and never wore off. By this means she was happily preserved from the vanities of youth, and the snares of younger life. She was early *serious*, and in good earnest in religion; and was brought betimes to make a solemn surrender of her self to God. She made great conscience of serious retirement, and constant attendance upon the publick worship, all her life; and was often used to express her value and delight in the many opportunities of that kind, which

this city affords, and which many others neglect; and kept up a steady course of regular unaffected *piety*, and unblamable *behaviour*, thro' her whole life. Her religion was sincere and silent, without noise and shew: It was a *principle* of life and action, which formed her spirit, and governed her course, and appeared in a constant habitual regard to God, and an ultimate view to him, in all her ways.

SHE was remarkably cautious and *inoffensive* in her deportment to others; and many ways very *useful* to those about her, in the several places in which she lived: she greatly delighted in doing good. She was exemplary in her *relative* character, and in every capacity in which she stood; and acted with great prudence, diligence, and faithfulness, in the conduct of all her affairs.

SHE bore her languishing and sickness, which continued a considerable time, with an excellent composure of mind, and cheerful submission to the divine will; without impatient uneasiness, or unbecoming complaint. She possessed great peace of spirit, without any distressing doubts; and was well satisfied as to her future state. Her greatest concern was, that faith and patience might hold out to the end: And it proved accordingly. In the distress of her last hours, when all prospect of future usefulness was at an end, she *desired to depart and be with Christ*; and earnestly prayed, *Come Lord Jesus*; "When will he come?" "O where is he?" and said at last a little before her departure, "He is come, he is come."

AND,

AND, O! may the many instances of mortality among our friends about us, enliven our diligence in the service of Christ, and promote our preparation for being with him; that we may *comfort one another with these words*, under all our sorrows for their departure, that *so we and they shall hereafter be for ever with the Lord.*





S E R M O N X.

The *Close* of the Christian life :
or, *St. Stephen's dying prayer.*

ACTS vii. 57.

Lord Jesus receive my spirit.

Chap. vi.
14.
—vii.

WHEN *Stephen* stood before the council, under a charge of *blasphemy*, because he said, that *Jesus of Nazareth would destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses delivered*; he made a noble defence of himself, the substance of which is: That it appeared from the scriptures of the old testament, in the several great periods of time, and revolutions of affairs, he instances from *Abraham* to *Moses*, and from *Moses* to the building of the temple, that God never intended to confine his worship and presence to the land of *Canaan*, and the temple of *Jerusalem*, though he had shewed special favours to that people all along; and that the ceremonial law was not designed to be of necessary and perpetual obligation, but only to the coming

ing of the *Messiah*, the great prophet like to *Moses*; That the frequent judgments of God upon their fore-fathers for their sins, and their several captivities, made it reasonable to expect the destruction of their temple and nation for their greater wickedness: their *fathers* persecuted the prophets, and *they* had betrayed and murdered Christ. And then he declared before them, that he saw *heaven opened*, and *Jesus standing at the right hand of God*; most probably, by a visionary representation of the divine glory, like the visions in *Ezekiel*, and the Revelations. Upon this they were enraged and provoked beyond all measure, and all patience; they were *cut to the heart*, and *gnashed on him with their teeth*, the highest marks of indignation and rage, they *stopped their ears* and *cried with a loud voice*, that they might not hear his cries, and to animate one another; and *ran on him with one accord*, and *cast him*—54.
out of the city, and *stoned him*.—57.

In the following verses we have an account of *Stephen's temper and behaviour*, under this cruel and violent usage, suitable to the doctrine and example of Christ: He *committed himself to the Lord*, and *prayed for his enemies*, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit*, and *Lord lay not this sin to their charge*. 'Tis only the former of these I propose to consider at this time: He *called upon God*, or simply, *invocated*, saying, ^{ἐπικαλεσ-}
Lord Jesus receive my spirit. These are some ^{μενοι.}
of the last words of the first martyr of the christian church, and express the proper temper of a *dying christian*, and are a fit *example* to us.

The

The words may be resolved into four *propositions*, which I shall briefly consider and then apply.

I. THAT there is a *spirit* in man distinct from the body. We are compounded beings, and consist of a body and soul. The soul is the principal part of the man, and the proper agent, the animating and active principle. The body is the habitation of the soul, and only the instrument by which it acts and executes. This is the frame of human nature, and agreeable to the original account of its formation. We find it represented by *Moses* as a principle of life ; *The Lord God formed man out of the dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.* The dust of the earth was animated by a living soul. The dissolution of our constitution is described by the wise man, agreeably to this account ; *Then shall the dust return to the earth, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it :* They are of a different kind, and go different ways. 'Tis a principle of *thought* and reason, of understanding and choice. So 'tis represented in the book of *Job* ; *Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and the spirit out of my understanding causeth me to answer. But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.* 'Tis represented as a principle of *action*, both of natural and religious action : we not only *live* and *move*, but *worship* God in the *spirit*. The
Apostle

Gen. ii. 7.

Ecccl. xii. 7.

chap. xx.
2, 3.

—xxxii. 8.

Joh. iv. 24.

Apostle says, *Whom I serve with my spirit in* Rom. i. 9. *the gospel of his son.*

'TIS represented as a *distinct* thing from the body, and of another kind. If there were any room to doubt it, upon natural principles, I think the words of our Lord are *decisive* in the case; *Fear not them who kill the body, but are* Matt. x. *not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who* 28. *is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* The body and soul plainly stand in opposition to one another, and the same thing is affirmed of the one, which is denied of the other. The one may be *killed*, while the other is *alive*. When our Lord appeared to his disciples, after his resurrection, and they were *terrified* and *affrighted*, and *thought they had seen a spirit*; he tells them, *Behold my hands and my feet,* where remained the *print of the nails* by which he was fastened to the cross; *handle me and see,* xxiv. *for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me* 39. *have.* A spirit therefore is distinct from a body, and not capable of being handled and seen, and don't fall under any of the bodily senses.

AGREEABLY to this account the Apostle represents the matter; *For this cause we faint not,* 2 Cor. iv. *but though the outward man perish, the inward* 16. *man is renewed day by day; though the body* 17. *suffer and decay by great afflictions and persecutions, yet the soul gathers strength under them all, and is supplied with fresh vigour of faith, and hope, and patience, and courage: the one was* 18. *perishing, and the other renewed,* which shews they are distinct things, or else they must perish together, or be renewed together.

gether. The Apostle represents the christians as *groaning in this tabernacle, being burdened, and earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven ; and as willing to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.* And he speaks of himself to the same sense, *I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better.* He reckoned upon *being with Christ, and present with him,* when he was *absent from the body and departed out of the world,* which he could not be if he had only a body, or it were to be only at the resurrection. He could not be absent from the one, and present with the other, at the same time, but with respect to something distinct from both ; nor was there otherwise any reason for being in a strait in his mind, or having any difficulty, about it. When he had *visions and revelations,* and was *caught up into paradise,* he says, *Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell : whether my soul remained in the body, or was for that time separated from it, I cannot determine,* which necessarily supposes a real distinction between them, or there could be no room for any doubt or uncertainty about it. So the Apostle's distinction of *body, soul and spirit,* cannot mean only the body, whatever is the difference between *soul* and *spirit,* whether the one is designed to signify the *animal* life, and the other the *rational* faculty ; or they are only different characters and powers of the same mind. In another place he speaks of God as the *father of our spirits,* in distinction from our earthly

chap. v.
2, 8.

Philip. i.
23.

2 Cor. xii.
2.
ἐν σώματι.
ἐκ τοῦ σώματος.
σώματι.

1 Thef. v.
23.

earthly parents, who are the *fathers of our flesh*.⁹ Heb. xii.
 The spirit is of a different original, as well as
 of another kind. And he represents it as one
 instance of the blessedness of the future state,
 that we *are come to* — *the spirits of just men*
made perfect: i. e. We now stand related un-
 der the gospel-dispensation to that general as-
 sembly and seat of the blessed, where are the
spirits of just men, who have finished their
 course, as well as an *innumerable company of*
angels. — 23.

THE clear and plain declarations of the scrip-
 ture-revelation may reasonable be set against
 any real difficulties in the matter, or the doubt-
 ful reasonings of our own minds. And though
 we don't know the precise *nature* of a spirit, or
 the manner of its *union* with the body, which
 is a great mystery in nature; as neither do we
 the *substratum* or abstract essence of *matter*; yet
 we do know the essential and distinguishing
 properties of them. The soul is a *thinking*
 conscious principle, an intelligent agent, a
 principle of life and action, which bears a near
 resemblance of God the infinite spirit, and of
 angels, who are pure unbodied spirits. These
 are powers wholly distinct from matter, and
 incompatible with it, which is only *extended*
substance capable of being divided into parts,
 and being differently figured and moved, and
 of being dissolved; that has no principle of
 thought, or power of self-motion: and no
 composition, or disposition of the parts of mat-
 ter, can produce such an effect, or render it
 capable of action which is inconsistent with the
 nature,

nature, and all the known properties of it, and which belongs to none of them afunder *.

I

* If matter can think, it must be either as 'tis an *essential* property of matter, and what *naturally* belongs to it; and then all matter must think; for what naturally belongs to it, must be common to the whole, and to every part of it, but that is a contradiction to our senses as well as to our reason. Or else it is proper to matter under some special *modification* of it, and only belongs to matter so and so modified, or framed and disposed in such a particular manner, as suppose in a *human body*: But the meer modification of matter can neither *give* nor *alter* any essential property of it. What is proper to matter will always belong to it, under any modification of it; and no modification of matter will add any essential property to it. 'Tis nothing but matter still, under any whatsoever different modification: 'tis only solid or extended substance, in any shape or form. Or else a *power of thinking* must be added to some certain *systems* of matter, or matter under such particular modifications of it; and this is the most plausible and likely pretence. But then the power of thinking must be the power of some being or substance; it must be the power of *something*; for a meer *abstract* power which belongs to no subject, is utterly inconceivable. Now that must be either some *material* substance, and then it will be repugnant to the nature of matter, and suppose a power incompatible with itself: Or it must be the power of something different from matter; and then it must be *spirit*: for there is nothing but matter and spirit in the universe; and then it grants the thing in dispute, and yields up the subject of the debate.

Besides, If it is *added* to a system of matter, it must be either *inseparably* added to it; and as an essential property of it; and then it will have an essential property quite different from it self, and wholly foreign to its nature, and which would alter the whole kind, and make it quite another thing: Or it must be *separable*, and only accidental to it; and then the thinking matter may become *unthinking* again, and the thinking power be removed from it; and so we should be thinking beings not by nature, but only by an *accident*, and the noblest power of nature be only an accident of the vastly inferior and less noble part. And not to dispute the limits of divine power, I would only ask, Whether 'tis not a more reasonable supposition, and more easily conceivable, for the power of God to make a *spiritual substance* capable of thinking agreeable to the nature of the subject; or to suppose him to add a *power of thinking* to any material system, which is *heterogeneous* and disagreeable to it.

I conclude this head with this observation, That this was the general sense of the wisest and best of the heathen Philosophers and Moralists, and appeared most agreeable to the light of nature, and the evident reason of things, as 'tis more clear and certain throughout the Scripture-revelation.*

II. That at death the spirit will be *separated* from the body, and exist apart from it. If 'tis distinct from the body, and of another nature, it may be separated from it, and exist without it. As the body existed, and was formed out of the dust of the earth, before the living soul was infused into it, so the soul may subsist when 'tis separated from it. Though they are closely united to one another, in the present state, yet the bonds of union are not indissoluble, and will be broken asunder. There is no natural and necessary connection between them, but only an ordained one, or by the appointment and pleasure of God.

BUT then as 'tis a *vital* principle, and all life and action proceeds from the union of soul and

* Ἀπολιπέσει ἡ ψυχὴ τὸ σῶμα τῷ σαρκὶ.

Hippoc. in Aphor.

Cicero represents it as a prime opinion among the Philosophers, *Sunt enim qui discessum animi à corpore, putent esse mortem.* Tull. cul. l. 1. c. 9. and *Posse animos cum è corporibus excesserint, in cælum, quasi in domicilium suum pervenire,* c. 17. *Auctoribus quidem ad istam sententiam, quam vis obtineri, uti optimis possimus, quod in omnibus causis et debet et solet, valere plurimum: et primum quidem omni antiquitate, quæ quo proprius abeat ab ortu, & divina progenie, hoc melius ea fortasse, quæ erant vera, cernitur.* c. 12. *Sed ut deos esse natura opinamur, qualesque sint ratione cognoscimus: sic permanere animos arbitramur consensu nationum omnium. Quæ in sedè maneant, qualesque sint, ratione discernendum est.* c. 16.

body ; so the separation of the soul from the body is the death and dissolution of it. 'Tis destroying our present being and way of existing : the body dies and returns to the dust, when deserted of the living soul. This is plainly implied here, when *Stephen* prays, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit* ; not only that he had a spirit distinct from the body, but that the spirit was now *dislodging*, and ready to depart from the body ; that the time of its separation was near, in which it must no longer continue in the body and in this bodily state. It was to be then *out of the body*. So the Apostle says, *We know that this earthly house of our tabernacle shall be dissolved* ; and speaks of *being unclothed*. The tabernacle in which we dwell must be taken down, and the present clothing be put off. He says of himself, *The time of my departure is at hand*. To the same purpose the Apostle *Peter* says, *Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle* ; and he speaks of his *Decease*, or *Exodus*, his going out of the body, and out of this world.

THE separation of soul and body is properly the death of our present nature. This came into the world by sin, and is the proper fruit of it. 'Tis the sentence of the law executed upon the breach of it. The threatening lay thus, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* : The execution was, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return* : what was dust, was to return to dust ; or, as the wise man more distinctly represents it, *The dust returneth to the earth, and the spirit returneth to God who gave it,*

2 Cor. v.

1, 4.

καταλυ-
θη.

2 Tim. iv.

6.

ἀναλύσε-

ως.

ἀποδέσει.

3 Pet. i.

14, 15.

ἐξόδου.

Gen. ii. 17.

—iii. 19.

it, or breathed it into man at first. If man had continued innocent, and never sinned, he had never died, and there had been no separation of soul and body. This account the Apostle gives of it, *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* It was the effect of the first sin. And 'tis now appointed unto men once to die: 'Tis settled by law and constitution. This is the common state of fallen nature. We are not immortal in this world, that is proper to the other world. Our death is appointed by the divine will, though we *know not the day of our death.* Nature tends to a dissolution, and gradually decays and wears out, though no evil befall it; and 'tis liable to many distempers, and many accidents, which often prove fatal, and hasten a separation. Men sometimes die a *natural* death; the force of nature is quite spent, and it expires by gentle decays, like a lamp when the oil is consumed: and sometimes they die a *violent* death, by the hands of justice, or the hands of wickedness; sometimes in one age and period of life, and sometimes in another. There is a time to every one when the soul and body must part asunder after the closest union, and longest continuance, and notwithstanding the greatest intimacy and endearment, and the greatest unwillingness and reluctance. There is no possible way to prevent and avoid it, according to the observation of the wise man, *There is no man who hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the*

Rom. v.
12.

ἀποκρίταις

Ecd. viii.
8.

day of wrath, and there is no discharge in that war, neither shall wickedness deliver them who are given to it.

III. The Lord *Jesus* will receive the departing spirits of good men. This was the matter of *Stephen's* prayer. He knew not only that his spirit was to depart from the body, but that *he* was to receive his departing spirit, and that it properly belonged to him as his work and office. He therefore *invokes*, and puts up this prayer to him, as a proper object of prayer, and as a proper request to him; *Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit*. And we cannot suppose that he would have prayed in this manner, who was *full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*, if the case had been otherwise; if it did not belong to him to receive it, or he was not disposed to do it.

THIS is a more distinct and particular account of the matter, and proper to the christian revelation. In the old Testament we are only told, That the *spirit returns to God who gave it*, and who is the *Father of spirits*; but here we are told, that the *Lord Jesus receives our departing spirits*. 'Tis through the *Mediator*, and by his immediate agency, that the whole kingdom of providence and grace, is now administered, in all the disposals of life, and the issues of death. He appoints the ordinances of worship, and the duties of life, and is present in the article of death, and has the disposal of our departing spirits; as we are to *live to the Lord*, and to *die to him*. We must commit our departing spirits to God by Christ.

They

They must be *immediately* committed to him, to be conveyed and presented to God. We learn thus much by this instance, and 'tis certainly exemplary and instructing to us. But what is the import of his *receiving* the departed *spirits* of good men? What does it contain in it, and how are we to conceive of it? We should be careful in matters of pure revelation to speak with the scriptures, and to measure and limit all our conceptions by it. As we know no more of the unbodied state of the other world than the revelation has told us, so we must not indulge to rash presumption, or vain curiosity about it; but be content to be ignorant where that is silent. I conceive the expression was designed to convey these two ideas:

1. The taking them under his protection and care. And so, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit*, is as much as if he had said, "Take my dislodging soul under thy special and immediate guardianship, when it quits the body and leaves the world. When it is going into the invisible state, and world of spirits, let it be under thy powerful protection and merciful care. When I tread an untrodden path, and go into a world where I have never been before, and where I am altogether a stranger, be thou my patron and protector, do thou conduct and defend me."

He receives the departing spirits of good men under his protection, and is answerable for the care of them. He is their refuge and guide, to whom they fly, and whom they follow, when they go into a new and unknown state.

Heb. i. 12. And as the Angels are now *ministring spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation*; and
 Matt. xxiv. 34. he will *send forth his angels, at the great day, to gather his elect from the four winds*: so we have reason to apprehend, that he will imploy the ministry of angels, to take care of departing spirits, and keep them from the insults of evil spirits, in their passage through the regions of the air, the seat and empire of evil spirits; for the Devil is not only represented as the *God of this world*, but as the *prince of the power of the air*. He preserves the naked trembling spirit by a guard of holy angels, from affrightment and amazement, from the terroure and power of envious spirits, who would gladly seize it as a prey, and distress and terrify it, as the Devil
 Eph. ii. 2. now *goes up and down seeking whom he may devour*. This seems plainly intimated in the instance of *Lazarus*, *And it came to pass the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom*. So an excellent person once said in the article of death: *Angels, do your office*. Thus he takes care of the precious *depositum*, which is committed to him, and keeps it safe, from all evil, and every danger in the way.

1 Pet. v. 8.

2. He *conveys* them to God, and to a state of *bleſſedneſs*. What the intermediate state of bleſſedneſs will be to good men, we can have no more clear and particular conceptions than the ſcripture-revelation gives us, and what ariſes from the natural notions of a ſpirit, and the eſſential difference between good and evil; *i. e.* That they are in a ſtate of *activity*, and in a ſtate of *reſt* and happineſs, and vaſtly different

ferent from that of wicked spirits. Thus when *the dust returneth to the earth, the spirit returneth to God who gave it*; to be disposed of by him according to its state and condition, and what was its true temper and character in this world. He receives the departing spirits of good men, to convey them safe to their proper abode, to a state of *rest from labour*, or freedom from all uneasiness, and to *be with him in paradise*, in a state of happiness and joy, to wait the time of his final appearance, and their compleat blessedness. In this sense they are to *be with Christ*, and *present with the Lord*, when *absent from the body*; which sure can never mean less, than that they are in a state of present happiness, and the expectation of what is final. So *Lazarus was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom*, *i. e.* immediately upon his death; as soon as he died, he was carried to *Abraham's bosom*. This representation is agreeable to the language and tradition of the *Jews*, who speak of *Abraham's bosom*, as a place of dignity and ho-^{Dr.}nour, and of rest and delight. They will be ^{Light-}where *Abraham* is, and with *Abraham*, *Isaac* ^{foot's} ^{Works!} and *Jacob*, in the region of the Patriarchs, and the state and place of happy souls departed out of this world. This was not an incident, or circumstance, but an essential part of the parable, which was designed to represent the different states of good and bad men immediately upon their dying, or going out of this world; and to be sure was intended not to mislead, but to direct our conceptions of the future state.

So the sense is, “ Receive my departing
 “ spirit to thy self; Convey it safe to God:
 “ Carry my dislodging soul to the regions of
 “ the blessed, to the proper place and abode
 “ appointed for me: Place me in such a state
 “ and degree of happiness among the blessed
 “ dead which belongs to me, and for which by
 “ thy grace I am made fit.”

I shall only further observe, That 'tis no wonder that no more is spoken of the immediate state of departed spirits in the scripture, because that was generally apprehended and believed in the *Jewish* and Heathen world, and was of less consequence in it self, than the Resurrection of the body, and the final happiness of heaven, the peculiar glory of the Gospel-revelation.

IV. That christians should *commend* their departing spirits to Christ by *prayer*. This was directly the case here, and is the form of the expression, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit*. This prayer was directed to Christ in his exalted state, *standing at the right hand of God*, and in the quality of a *Mediator*, who *ever lives to make intercession for us*. It was a solemn resigning of his spirit to Christ, and commending of it to his care; and was expressive of his trust and confidence in him, as well as of his desire. It was the *prayer of faith*, and with assurance and satisfaction of a gracious regard from him. The sense is, “ I commit my departing spirit to thy powerful protection, and
 “ trust thee with the whole care of it. I put it
 “ under thy conduct, and depend upon thy
 “ faith-

“ faithful mercy : I have full confidence of
 “ thy preservation and disposal, and rest secure
 “ of safety and happiness.” So our Lord him-
 self did in the last moment of life, *Father in-*
to thy hands I commend my spirit, and having Luk. xxiii.
said this he gave up the ghost., He committed 46. *He committed* περὸ θήτο-
 it to him as a trust and treasure. The words μαί.
 are borrowed from the *Psalmist* : *Into thy hands* Pf. xxxi. 5.
I commit my spirit, thou hast redeemed me, Lord
God of truth ; only with this difference, That
 he directed his prayer *immediately to God*, and
 we are instructed in the christian revelation to
 direct this prayer immediately to *Christ*, and
 to *ask the Father in his name*. This is our
 pattern and example, and proposed in the Gos-
 pel for our imitation. We must commit our
 departing spirits into the hands of Christ. This
 is the proper prayer of a dying christian, and
 the fit close of his life. But upon what grounds
 may a dying christian offer up such a prayer to
 Christ ? With what warrant and hope of suc-
 cess ? I answer, upon good grounds and suf-
 ficient security.

1. His great *love* to the spirits of men. He
 is the great lover of souls, and gave the dear-
 est and most costly proof of his love ; He *par-* Mat. xx.
took of our flesh and blood ; and *came not to be mi-* 28.
nistred to, but to minister, and to give his life
a ransom for many : He *made his soul an of-*
fering for sin, and gave himself an offering
and a sacrifice to God. He *died for us, and for* Eph. v. 2.
our sins, to redeem and ransom our forfeited
 lives, and procure forgiveness and the favour
 of God. This is every where ascribed to his
 love,

love, and made the great expression and fruit of it : So He *loved the church, and gave himself for it ; and loved us, and washed us from our sins, in his own blood.* He had a true *philanthropy*, or love to men. The whole design of his death and undertaking, was, to *save us from our sin, and reconcile us to God, to be the author of eternal salvation, and obtain eternal redemption for us.* He is a *merciful and faithful high priest*, who can be *touched with the feeling of our infirmities*, and knows how to *succour and have compassion*, as he knew the miseries of life, and all the fears and terrors of death, in all the circumstances of aggravation. He has a tender love to his sincere followers, as he *loved Lazarus, and wept* at his death.

And what may we not expect from so great a love? What will he not do for us, after he has died for us? Will he deny us any thing, when he freely gave his life for us? Will he not take care of the souls whom he has redeemed, or suffer them to perish for whom he died? Will he forsake them at last, and leave them exposed in an unknown state, whom he has preserved all their lives, and wherever they have been in this? How reasonable a ground of such a request is this? How freely may we resign our spirits to one who has so great a love to us; how safely may we trust our best friend?

2. His *relation* to them. He is their Lord and Saviour, their Head and Husband; they are his subjects and servants, his members and friends, to whom he stands in a special relation,
and

and who is endeared to them by special marks of favour. And he is concerned in the protection and care of his faithful servants, as a prince is concerned to secure his subjects. He is interested in the safety and welfare of all his members, and esteems every injury and neglect of any of them, *as done to himself*; as the meanest and remotest member cannot suffer, but the whole body feels the pain, and the head is presently affected by it.

All the sanctified and renewed, are the *members* of his body; interested in his love, and entitled to his care: *They are Christ's, as Christ is God's*. And he retains his relation to them, living and dying; and in all circumstances of things, is the same fast and unalterable friend: *having loved his own, he loved them unto the end*. As he said of his disciples, *Those whom thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost*; so he will not suffer any of them to be *lost*, who are *given to him of the Father*, and have been brought to give up themselves to him, and commit themselves to his care. They shall not perish for want of his care, who belong to him, and whom he owns under such endearing characters, and in such peculiar relations. Surely we may depend upon one so graciously disposed, and nearly allied to us; who is concerned for our welfare, and interested in our happiness. The safety and salvation of true believers is the glory of Christ, as the *multitude of the people is the king's* Prov. xiv. 28. *honour*. If any of them should miscarry, he would sustain a loss; for he would lose a subject

ject of his kingdom, and a member of his body.

3. His ability and *power* to take care of them. 'Tis requisite there be power in the object of prayer, and to the purpose for which we pray. He must be *able* to do what we desire, otherwise all his affection and concern will be ineffectual. Now he is unquestionably qualified for this great trust, for he is *of power to save* ; and is *able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him* : The expression signifies not only *fully* and *completely*, but *perpetually* and for ever ; and may refer not only to the *salvation* by Christ, but to his *power to save*. He has ability to the utmost, as he *abideth a priest continually*, and *continueth ever and hath an unchangeable priesthood*. He is able to save in life and death ; all the while we are in this world, and when we are going out of it too. So he is *able to keep us from falling, and present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*.

HE has *all power in heaven and earth given to him* ; universal authority and dominion. He is Lord of angels, as well as men. He could command *twelve legions of angels* in his humble state on earth to save his own life, and is now the *head of all principalities and powers*, and they are made *subject to him*. And to be sure he will not suffer them to be injured and evil treated, when they are leaving the world, who can so easily take them under his care, and is able to defend them from all assaults, to secure them from violence and fear, and conduct them
safe

Heb. vii.

27.

Ἐἰς τὸ
πᾶν τελέει.

v. 3.

—24.

Jud. ult.

safe to their proper abode. And how safely may we commit our departing spirits to the care of him who is every way sufficient, and so able to protect and secure them? Add to this,

4. His *engagements* and undertaking. Christ as *mediator* is not only related to his people, and qualified to preserve them by his love and power, but stands under engagements proper to his mediatorial character. Thus he is engaged to God in the covenant of redemption, to do the work of a mediator, and *finish the work which was given him to do*; i. e. to perfect and compleat it. And he was not only to *die a sacrifice for sin*, but to bring them safe to glory; to *keep them from falling, and present them faultless*. He who by the grace of God *tasted death for every man*, was to bring Heb. ii. 9, 10. *the many sons unto glory*. And he would fail in his trust, if any of them miscarried, and *came short of the glory of God*.

BESIDES, he is engaged by his *promise* and faithfulness to preserve and secure them. No sincere christian shall finally perish, for he has promised to all his faithful followers, *I will* John x. 28. *give them eternal life, and they shall not perish, and none shall pluck them out of my hands*. No power of earth or hell; of evil men or evil angels. And he is a *merciful* and faithful *high priest*. He is not only faithful *to God*, and to *him who hath appointed him*, in the discharge of his work; but he is faithful *to them* to whom he is merciful, and to whom he is an high priest. So he is the *faithful witness*, or revealer of

of the will of God to men, and *all the promises of God are yea and amen in him*, or will certainly be accomplished. Upon these grounds Rom. viii. the Apostle expresses a firm assurance, *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* And how securely may we offer up such a prayer as this upon such an encouragement and warrant ; and depend upon it that he will preserve us through all the tryals of life, and not forsake us in the greatest extremity, in an hour of death, and at our departure out of this world ?

28.

IF any should think that this might possibly be proper to *Stephen*, the first *martyr* for christianity, and the extraordinary privilege of one *full of faith and the Holy Ghost* ; I answer, That this was no more proper to *Stephen*, than it was to him to have a spirit, and to have that separated from the body : and as that is the common case of all others, no reason can be assigned why other good men should not expect the same favour, in like circumstances, and upon the same common grounds. Besides that we find the Apostle speaks to the same purpose, not only of himself, but in the name of other christians too.

II. To apply it briefly in the following inferences :

I. THAT the soul does not *die* with the body, or *sleep* in the grave. There is a spirit in

in man distinct from the body, and which survives it, and exists separately from it. 'Tis only the body which properly dies, the active conscious principle lives when the body drops into the grave, and resolves into its native dust. To suppose it to die with the body, or sleep in the grave, is inconsistent with the nature of a spirit, which is essentially vital and active.

EITHER there is nothing but *body*, and organized matter, which is dissolved at death, and rendered incapable of action, as a *clock* when the weights are taken off, or the wheels are out of order; and then we are only *reasoning machines*, or a finer and more curious piece of *clock-work*. This would destroy the distinction between the *dust* and the *spirit*, the *body* and *soul*, the *inward* and *outward man*, which the scripture expressly asserts. And then there would be ~~the~~ ^{no} difference between the *spirit of a man which goeth upwards*, and the *spirit of a beast which goeth downwards*, if both perish together? Or else there is a *spirit* distinct from body, and then we conclude from the nature of a spirit that it cannot naturally die, or cease to act in one kind or other, for that would destroy its very nature; an *unactive spirit*, would be a contradiction, as much as *unextended matter*, if we have any just conceptions of either.

no
Ecccl. iii.
21.

BESIDES, it is contrary to the representations of the scripture, and the desires and hopes of good men. The Apostle's image of *dissolving* and *putting off the tabernacle*, and being *unclothed*, implies as much, as a man continues

to live, though his habitation is pulled down ; and the body, when 'tis unclothed. Demolishing the house don't destroy the inhabitant, and we are not killed, when we are undressed. It would infer the loss of so much of our existence and being, and of all action and enjoyment, sometimes for thousands of years together ; and introduce a dark and uncomfortable state of things, which only tends to damp the joy and comfort of good men, weaken their supports under present troubles, and the motives of their diligence and desire.

2. WE should be often thinking, and *preparing* for a time and state of separation. The spirit which now animates the body, and is the principle of all its actings, will be separated from the body, and depart out of the world. The body will rot in the grave, but the departed spirit will live in the unbodied state, and be happy or miserable, in the world of spirits. And what a solemn time will that be ? How much depends upon this single circumstance, the critical moment of entering upon an immediate state of happiness or misery, and of waiting for the final consummation of it ?

SHOULD we not often *think* of the awful time, and daily prepare for it ? I must quickly leave this body, of which I am now so fond and so careful ; and leave this world in which I have dwelt so long, and am so well acquainted. The deserted body will become a lifeless carcase, a lump of clay, mere dust and ashes ; but my spirit will go to God, and to the world of spirits, into a new and unknown state.

Where

Where will death lodge my departing spirit? What will be my station and abode in the other world? How shall I be disposed of there?

OF what infinite *importance* is this to every man? How unreasonable is the neglect and forgetfulness of it? It must be very blamable and full of hazard, in a time of *youth* and *health*, never to think of it, or provide for it, when we must be quickly there, and be there for ever. We live at great uncertainty in the present state, and as to all our present enjoyments, and cannot be sure of any long continuance in the most secure and flourishing state, and have reason to expect it may be otherwise; and should we not be often thinking of our departure, and always providing for a better state? Should we not be greatly concerned, and above all things, that we may be *reconciled* to God the *Father of spirits*, and *accepted* of him in Christ, and in the way the gospel prescribes; and *lay up our treasure in heaven*, and *lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold of eternal life*? The serious contemplation of death would be of admirable use to correct the vanity of our minds, and regulate our whole conduct, amidst all the gaiety and snares of life. But this is especially reasonable after *a long* continuance in life, and under growing *weakness* and visible decays of nature. Methinks when we have lived fifty or sixty years in this world, and have gone thro' the several stages and conditions of life, 'tis high time to be thinking of another world, and of leaving this. Surely we should think

of it every day we live, and render the thought familiar to us, that we may not be terrified with the fear of it, or surprized, unprepared. And yet how sad is the thought, that though the *living know that they must die*, and have so frequent examples of it before them, the generality of men are as secure and forgetful of it, through the vanity of their minds, and multiplicity of other cares, as if they were to live as long as the antient Patriarchs, or were never to die at all.

3. THE peculiar *happinefs* of good men, and the great *difference* between them and others. The merciful Redeemer will *receive* their departing *spirits*. And how safe will they be in his hands? How securely may they trust him? How cheerfully may they commit their spirits to his care? How unspeakable is the support and consolation, from this consideration, under the nearest prospects of death, and in the very agonies of it?

ON the other side, How sad is the case of a dying *sinner*? what will become of *his* departing spirit, who lived a stranger, and an enemy to Christ: who stands in no gracious relation to him, and has no security from him: who has slighted his authority, and despised his love, neglected his service, and provoked his anger? *They* cannot expect the same favour from him, or that he should receive their souls at last, and charge himself with the care of them, who never shewed any regard to him, and have no claim, or pretence to favour from him. No, their dislodging souls will sit trembling
upon

upon their dying lips, and shiver and shriek at the dark and dismal prospect before them; they will be seized as a prey by evil spirits, be dragged to execution, and *fall into the hands of the living God*. They will be hurried away into a state of misery, as the *rich man in hell* lift Luk. xvi. *up his eyes, being in torments*. And there will 23. remain no other expectation, but a *fearful look-* Heb. x. *ing for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which* 27. *shall consume the adversary*. What confusion and terrour, what agony and despair, will seize the sinner's spirit, when he finds himself forsaken of his only friend, and in the hands of his worst enemy, in the greatest extremity and distress?

4. WE learn what is the proper *close* of a christian's life. When we have finished our course of service, and done the work of life, what remains but prayer to God, or lifting up our souls to him, and commending them into his hands? So did the holy Psalmist, *Into thy hands I commit my spirit*. So did old Simeon at the sight of the infant Saviour, *Now Lord lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*: So did our blessed Lord himself, at the close of life, and when he had finished his work, *Father into thy hands I commend my spirit*: and so did dying Stephen in the proper christian form, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit*.

LET us endeavour to put our selves in this posture in a dying hour, and imitate these great examples. Let this be the last work of life, and the last exercise of our souls, if we

shall be then capable of it, to commend our departing spirits to our *heavenly Father*, and commit them to the care of *Christ*. As prayer has been the great instrument and means of our daily preservation, it will be the fit close of the christian life. I would chuse to end my days, and leave the world with such a prayer as this; “ Lord, thou hast been the *guide of my youth*, and my constant succour and help; “ thou hast directed every disposal of life, and “ treated me with distinguishing favour. I “ have early given up my self to thy conduct, “ and always depended upon thee for acceptance with God. I trust I have been faithfully “ devoted to thy service, in my fixed purpose, “ and main design of life; and now, O Lord, “ forsake me not when I am grown old, or “ in the close of life; receive my departing “ spirit under thy care, and convey it safe to “ a state of blessedness: *Guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to thy glory.* “ And when the *earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved*, let me know that I have a building “ of God, an house not made with hands, eternal “ in the heavens.”

IT remains now to speak of our deceased friend, of whom I have received the following account, not for the praise of the dead, which, how little can that signify; but for the benefit of the living, especially of the younger part of the audience, in a place where she spent the greater part of her life, and was so generally known and beloved: and in this respect 'tis to be hoped it may signify much.

MRS. *Daniel* was born in *London*, in the year 1711, and came with her father to *Hackney* 1714. She continued here till she entered into the twentieth year of her age, when she changed her condition, with her father's approbation and consent, to whom she always bore the most tender affection and dutiful regard. She was a person of a good understanding, took delight in reading, and was agreeable in conversation. Her natural temper was brisk and lively; but her constitution, weak and tender. About a year after her marriage she fell into an indisposition, which was feared would be a consumption; and it proved so in the end. The care of friends, and advice of physicians, only served to preserve life about two years from the first seizure; in which space however, she had the happy opportunity of more retired and close reflection, and thought more seriously than ever of God and religion, of her soul and eternity. And now her pious *education*, her *father's* counsels and advice, and the conversation and prayers of other *Ministers*, were of great use to her. She became fully persuaded that they only are truly happy, who are forgiven and accepted of God; and after a deep sense of the evil and danger of sin, and of the freedom and riches of the grace of God in Christ, she determined solemnly to give up her self to him; and soon after followed this *personal* surrender to God, with *sacramental* dedication. Her illness was long, and sometimes painful, but it yielded the *peaceable fruits of righteousness*, for she was patient and submissive, under

der the hand of God, sensible she was punished less than her sin deserved ; and was led by this rebuke to lament over the *vanities of youth*, and all the *errors* of life, and fervently to implore the pardoning mercy of God, and to deprecate his displeasure.

HER distemper sometimes flattered her with the hopes of recovery, but oftner threatned a removal. At length, on the Lord's-day, *August* the nineteenth, she found a change in her self, which led her to conclude her end was drawing near. This awakened a fresh and lively concern, and put her upon more solemn preparation. She gave up her self again and again to God, express'd great faith in the Redeemer, great hope of mercy for his sake, great desires of prayer, and great courage in her conflict with the last enemy. She lived to *Tuesday* following, and continued all the while in a devout and comfortable frame. That evening perceiving her breath to shorten, and unusual sweats, she asked, if they were not death-sweats ; and when it was answered, that they were, she said, " Then the Lord hasten my departure." After this she took a solemn leave of all her relations, severally, and then desired them to leave the room ; and soon after expired, without a groan. She was perfectly sensible to the last moment, and died without expressing any uneasy fear. Her last words were, " Lord have mercy upon me ;" and, " Lord Jesus receive my spirit."

AND, O ! may this example be monitory and awakening, and be improved for caution, direction

direction and encouragement to every younger and elder person; and may every instance of early piety, and comfortable death, warm every breast with a generous zeal, and *provoke us to emulation*, that we may act a proper part in life, and *obtain the same mercy* at last.

F I N I S.



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