
A
S E R M O N

OCCASIONED BY THE

D E A T H

O F

The Rev. D^r. JOHN GILL.

The victorious Christian receiving the Crown.

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O F

The Rev. Dr. JOHN GILL,

Who departed this Life, OCTOBER 14, 1771.

In the Seventy-Fourth Year of his AGE.

PREACHED OCTOBER 27,

By SAMUEL STENNETT, D.D.

TOGETHER WITH

T H E A D D R E S S

A T T H E

I N T E R M E N T.

By BENJAMIN WALLIN, A.M.

Published at the Request of the Congregation.

S E C O N D E D I T I O N.

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2 TIM. iv. 7, 8.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.

SUCH was the triumphant language of an apostle, at the close of a tedious and painful warfare with the powers of darkness; just as he was giving the last blow, laying the vanquished enemy at his feet, and stretching out his hand to receive the rewards of victory. The end crowns the work. To enter the lists is brave; to stand the shock of repeated onsets is braver still; but it is the height of bravery to dare the enemy, in the immediate view of the last grand assault of all. Happy man, whose courage thus grew with his dangers, who deemed himself a conqueror when

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others

others pronounced him conquered, and triumphed over the king of terrors, when he yielded up his life into his hands! A more striking instance of the mighty power of religion is perhaps hardly any where to be met with. Nor is it possible, I think, to hear the apostle, circumstanced as he was, express himself in this manner, without feeling a persuasion that there is a truth in religion, and that this great and good man was really possessed of it.

It is generally agreed that this was his last epistle, and that it was written, as the postscript tells us, when he was brought before Nero the second time, that is, (as we may from several circumstances reasonably conjecture) when he was under sentence of death. Indeed he says himself, in the words immediately preceding the text, that *he was now ready to be offered*, and that *the time of his departure was at hand*: phrases that very strongly express his apprehension of suffering a violent death, and that it was now very near approaching. He was *already poured out*, as the word is, * alluding to the custom of libations in sacrifices, and his departure was *at hand*, or *instant*.† So that we view

* σπένδομαι

† ἐπέσκηκε

him just coming forth, as it were, to execution, with all the solemn appendages of death immediately before his eyes. Awful moment! Men in common, and with very good reason, are greatly shocked at such appearances. Yet, here and there we meet with a person who, through a vehement passion for fame, or else by mere dint of fool-hardiness, supports with some appearance of resolution. But where is there an instance of any one behaving as the apostle did, with such fortitude, and at the same time with such composure and joy, on any other principles than those of true religion? He does not despise death, and yet is not subdued by the dread of it. The solemnity of the great event strikes his imagination, but it does not deprive him of self-possession. In short, what had past, and what was to come, afford him such quiet in the reflection, and such joy in the prospect, that the terrors of the last enemy, though perceived, are utterly incapable of shaking his resolution. And thus the noble declaration he had made to the Ephesians, when he took his final leave of them, he bravely resumes even in the article of death. *None of these things move me, neither count I my*

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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 *.

Now in the text, considered as the dying words of the apostle, there are two things which demand our attention :

I. The pleasing reflection he makes on his past temper and conduct ; and

II. The full assurance he expresses of the rewards of heaven.

Each of these I shall explain and illustrate, and then attempt some improvement of the whole.

I. As to the apostle's past temper and conduct, there are three particulars he recollects with pleasure—that he had *fought a good fight* ;—that he had *finished his course* ; and—that he had *kept the faith*. And, in regard of each of these particulars, we are to consider him both in a private and public capacity ; as a Christian, and a Minister.

FIRST, He had *fought a good fight*. The phrase is manifestly agonistical, and al-

* Acts xx. 24.

ludes to the games that were practised among the Greeks and Romans. And as it is general, and signifies any kind of strife or contention, it may refer indifferently to either of those exercises, wherein they disputed for the crown or reward. It will be proper however to confine our view here to the idea of a fight or combat. So the same apostle tells the Corinthians, that *he strove for the mastery*, and that *he fought not as one that beateth the air*^b.

Now the Christian life is often, and with great truth, compared in Scripture to a warfare. And the enemies which the apostle had in his private capacity to contend with, were such as are common to all good men. No sooner do we become the disciples of Christ, but we enter the lists with sin, Satan and the world, very numerous, powerful and subtle adversaries. We wage war with the appetites, passions and corruptions of human nature, with flesh and blood, with principalities and powers, with spiritual wickedness in high places—enemies who would fain enslave our immortal minds, overpower the dictates of reason and conscience, carry us away into captivity to sin, and so plunge us in temporal and

^b 1 Cor. ix. 25, 26.

everlasting shame and misery. Time would fail me were I to attempt a description of the continual conflict in the breast of a Christian, between grace and corruption, sin and sense, his love of God and his propensity to folly and vanity : were I to represent to you the powerful aids which the evil passions of the heart receive from Satan, the God of this world, who is ever watching his opportunity to seduce us into sin ; and from sensible objects with which we are surrounded on every side, and which have a mighty influence to draw us into unwarrantable and dangerous compliances. Time would fail me were I to remind you of all the secret gins and snares laid for the ruin of the Christian, which are not to be detected and counteracted without the utmost vigilance and sagacity ; and of all the open attacks made on his integrity, purity and piety, which are not to be resisted without great resolution, firmness and obstinacy : were I to recount the many bitter menaces of his desperate adversaries, the sudden and violent assaults they sometimes make upon him, the deep wounds he receives from their sharp and poisonous arrows, and the numerous discouragements, fears and sorrows he endures.—

Such

Such then is the fight in which the Christian is engaged, a sharp and bloody, a long and tedious fight—a fight that is not to be dispensed with, but at the peril of the life, the liberty and the happiness of the immortal soul—nay, a fight that will not admit of a parly, but should be maintained incessantly, from the very moment a man commences a Christian, to the very instant he passes into heaven as a conqueror. This fight then the apostle fought, entered upon it with great vigor and earnestness, maintained it with increasing ardor and resolution, and was now just giving the decisive blow.

But there were extraordinary difficulties he had to contend with in the character of a minister and an apostle, to which we may reasonably suppose he had his eye in this expression. Every Christian is indeed required, not only to look well to himself, to his own personal interests; but to defend the cause of truth and religion, against the contempt and opposition it meets with from a vain and wicked world. This he is to do, if not by public instruction and reasoning, yet by his influence and example. But the ministers of Christ are obliged to stand in
the

the front of the battle, to meet the enemy in the gate, and to receive the first and principal shock. The most public and dangerous post is assigned to them. So that they, of all others, are *to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*; and, uninfluenced by the frowns or flatteries of the world, *to endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ*. And how the apostle fought this fight, amidst peculiar circumstances of self-denial, temptation and persecution, I need not tell you. It was indeed, as to him, a bloody fight. Almost every kind of opposition he met with that can be imagined. From the time of his conversion to his martyrdom he was in one continual conflict. *I know not*, says he to the Ephesians, *the things that shall befall me at Jerusalem; save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me*^c. And this fight he maintained to the last, with unwearied labor and invincible resolution, surrounded on every side with the most powerful enemies, Jews, Greeks and Romans, men of every character, rank and circumstance of life, supported by the evil passions, prejudices and customs of the

^c Acts xx. 22, 23.

world, by the civil magistrate in many places, and by the powers of darkness. Nevertheless he was not intimidated. He did not yield for a moment. He prevailed. — But, before I dismiss this head, a little notice must be taken of the epithet he gives to this fight or contention, in which he and his Christian brethren were engaged. He calls it a *good fight*. And it is so on many accounts.

It is a *good cause* in which, as the disciples of Christ, we are engaged. The cause of God and truth, of virtue and holiness, of liberty and religion. A cause in which the honour of Heaven, the welfare of mankind, and our own truest interest, are immediately concerned. It is not a contention for worldly wealth, dignity and dominion, for the applause of men, or the uncertain and unsatisfying emoluments of the present life; but a dispute about matters of infinite moment — matters which have an immediate reference to our well-being here and hereafter — a dispute whether God or Satan shall have the empire of this world, whether truth or error shall prevail among mankind, and whether grace or sin shall bear sway in our hearts. Surely

this therefore must be *a good fight*. 'Tis a cause truly noble, and, in respect both of justice and importance, challenges all the disputes in which the bravest heroes, whose actions history has recorded, have ever engaged.

It is *a good fight*, if we consider at whose instance we resolve upon it, and under whose banner it is we are enlisted. Christ is the great and good Prince, who hath on our behalf declared war with sin and the powers of darkness, hath lifted up his standard against these mighty enemies, and invited us to join issue with him, in order to their total overthrow and dispersion. He is our General, and having himself fought his way through unspeakable torments, sufferings and death, hath secured the victory to his followers. And surely that must be *a good fight* in which he has condescended to take a part, and the success of which by his mediation he has put beyond a doubt. *For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame.* He hath shewn us the way, and by being *made perfect through sufferings*, is become *the Captain of our salvation*. Look to him, therefore, Christians, *the Prince and leader of your faith*; so will

you acknowledge the fight *good*, and instead of being *wearied and faint in your minds*, will wax bold and resolute ^a.

It is a *good fight* again, as Christ hath provided every aid and support needful for the maintenance and happy issue of it. Our enemies, it is confessed, are numerous and powerful; and we are of ourselves unequal to the conflict. But we go not naked, helpless and unsupported into the field. We are not left to our own prudence and skill, or our own natural strength and fortitude. He *the Lord of hosts is on our side*. Infinite wisdom and experience mark the path in which we are to advance, and lead us on to the attack; and almighty power and goodness sustain us in the fight, and command victory in our favor. He, the Captain of our salvation, *teaches our hands to war, and our fingers to fight*; provides us with every needful weapon, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the breast-plate of righteousness, the girdle of truth, and the sword of the Spirit; raises us up when we are ready to fall; pours divine strength and joy into our hearts when we are about to faint; and either restrains the fury of the enemy, or makes us bravely superior to it. It is a

^a Heb. ii. 10. Chap. xii. 2, 3.

confederate war. Heaven deigns to take a part in it: and the alliance on the side of the sincere Christian is so strong, that it is impossible the powers of darkness should prevail.

The company also with which we associate makes the *fight good*. All the men of God of every nation, kindred and tongue under heaven, are engaged in this war. It is an army composed of *the excellent of the earth*. Some indeed young and unexperienced, yet bold and resolute; and others veterans, of long standing, and who are capable of animating us by their example and success. Thousands have fought this fight; and tho' in themselves helpless and many times dispirited to a great degree, yet have come off *more than conquerors*. An innumerable company of confessors and martyrs are already got to heaven; and many, very many, have taken up the weapons they have done with, and are nobly struggling in the same cause wherein they have prevailed. *We are encompassed about with a great cloud of witnesses*^b. Once more,

It is *a good fight*, in regard of the honors and rewards appointed the conqueror. Of these I shall have occasion to speak more

^b Heb. xii. 1.

particularly hereafter, and therefore forbear to enlarge here.—Well might the apostle then call it *a good fight*. Such he judged it when he first engag'd in it. Such he acknowledged it to be even when in the heat of battle. And it is with peculiar pleasure he pronounces it such, just as he is stretching out his hand to receive the crown.—*I have fought a good fight*. To proceed,

SECONDLY, the same matter he declares in other words, or in a figure of somewhat different import — *I have finished my course*.

Running was another kind of strife or contention used in the Græcian games; and to this the apostle alludes in several of his epistles, as particularly where he says, *Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain*¹. The rules observed in this exercise, and the manner in which it was conducted, we have not time to consider: all we can do is to attend to the general idea designed to be conveyed by the phrase. Without regarding therefore the reference it has to a contention or dispute with others, which should reach the goal first; we shall

¹ 1 Cor ix. 24.

only view it as expressive of his having just finished—his course of life, as a man; and—his course of duty and suffering, as a Christian and an apostle.

1. He had *finished his course*, was now got to the period of his life. “ My race is run, “ and I am going off the course. I have “ stayed the time appointed me here, and “ must now enter into another state. My “ part I have acted, and I must now quit “ the stage, and make way for those that “ are to succeed me.” But what was there, you will say, extraordinary in all this? The term of every man’s continuance here on earth is fixed, and beyond it no one can pass. Such an acknowledgment has therefore nothing peculiar in it. True, Yet the composure, cheerfulness and joy with which it is pronounced, adds a kind of dignity and glory to the expression, which renders it justly deserving of admiration. With the utmost reluctance, if not anguish of mind, many are obliged to say *they have finished their course*. They would be glad if there were no end to it, or, however, if the end were a great way off. The thought of passing out of this life into another is most irksome and painful to them. But how different

different was the temper of the apostle ! He considered life as a journey, and was glad he was got to the end of it. Death had lost its terrors, and he was not afraid to submit to it. A future world was become familiar to him, and he felt no surprize at the near approach of it. Nor was his willingness to dye owing merely to the extraordinary troubles he met with, which might be supposed to put him out of humour with the present life, and so reconcile him to part with it. But it was the effect of a lively sense impressed upon his heart, of the superior joys and pleasures of a future state. This made him nobly indifferent to all the agreeable connections and enjoyments of this life, and to life itself. So, with a smile on his countenance, he says, *I have finished my course.* — But by this expression he seems chiefly to intend,

2. His having completed his course of duty and suffering, as a Christian and a minister. This is what the apostle means when he speaks in the *Hebrews*², of the *race that is set before us*; and, in the passage just now mentioned, of our *running so that we may obtain.* The life of a Christian is

² Chap. xii. 1.

an active life. It is a disgrace to our character, and an affront to the solemn profession we have made, to sit still, and indolently neglect all further improvements in the divine life. On the contrary, we are to *give diligence to make our calling and election sure*; we are to *examine ourselves whether we are in the faith*; to *fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into rest, we should seem to come short of it*; to *work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*; and *not having yet attained, nor being already perfect, to press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*^h. We are to give the concerns of our souls the preference above any other concern, and to pursue their interests with greater attention and vigor than those of time and sense. And if this be our object, we shall pay a serious regard to the duties of meditation, prayer, hearing the word of God, and attending upon the positive institutions of Christ. There is also a course of duty to be run, which hath respect to the glory of God, and the good of our fellow-creatures, as well as our own personal advantage. We are *not to live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and rose again*ⁱ; and *to seek not our own things, but*

^h Philip. iii. 12, 14.ⁱ 2 Cor. v. 15.

those whereby we may edify one another. Nor hath any Christian reason to complain that he hath not wherewith to serve God, or promote the welfare of society. For however slender our abilities may be, greater good may accrue from a faithful application of them than we commonly imagine. By our prayers, example and influence, however contracted our sphere of action may be, we have it in our power doubtless to serve our generation. Happy man who hath zeal and resolution enough to contend with the many difficulties and discouragements, which ever lie in the way of doing good! — Now, *to finish our course*, whether in the character of private Christians or ministers, is to do the work our Master hath appointed us, humbly, chearfully and resolutely, and to persevere therein to the end.

In such manner the apostle could say at the close of life, he had acquitted himself; sensible at the same time of the imperfection that had attended his best services for the interests of truth and religion, and of the kind and seasonable assistance he had received from the almighty arm of divine grace. With what meekness, humility, patience, chearfulness and constancy, he ran

his race of duty, and finished it at last, his history sufficiently declares. To that I must refer you, and forbear reciting the particulars of his almost incomparable example. Nor can I here enumerate the many grievous afflictions, temptations and sorrows, on which he pleasingly reflects, whilst in the near view of their happy issue, with an ecstasy of joy he thus triumphs: “ *I have finished my*
“ *course* — my course of suffering as well as
“ *duty*. The pain, fatigue and labor I have
“ *felt* whilst running my race, and the shame,
“ *abuse* and persecution I have endured, is
“ *now* just at an end. A few steps more,
“ *and* I shall reach the goal, and seize the
“ *prize.*” Which leads me to the

THIRD particular, that he had *kept the faith*. Faith is sometimes to be understood of the *grace*, and sometimes of the *doctrine* of faith. If we take it here in the former sense, his *keeping the faith*, is expressive of his having maintained the lively and vigorous exercise of this divine temper all through his profession. He had *walked by faith, and not by sight*°. And *the life he had lived in the flesh* was, as he tells the Galatians, *by*

° 2 Cor. v. 7.

the faith of the Son of God^p. Nor was it indeed possible for him to have fought this good fight, and to have finished this course of duty and suffering in the manner he did, had he been destitute of faith, or had the exercises of it been weak and faint, and frequently suspended or over-ruled by sensible things. As faith hath the main influence in the spiritual life of a Christian, and is the root from whence every virtue and grace springs, so that amazing degree of it to which the apostle attained, accounts, and can only account, for those extraordinary appearances in his temper and conduct. — By his keeping the faith some also understand *his faithfulness*; that, having at his conversion and his baptism solemnly entered into covenant with God, and with great sincerity and seriousness devoted himself to the service of Christ and his gospel; he had kept his engagements, and steadily maintained his profession unto the end. And such was his character. He had vowed, and he had not gone back. He had taken an oath of allegiance to Christ his Prince and Leader, and no consideration could prevail with him to violate that oath.

^p Gal. ii. 20.

But it is the *doctrine* of faith which I think the apostle chiefly, if not wholly, intends — *the faith once delivered to the saints* — *the gospel of the grace of God* — *the truth as it is in Jesus*: that doctrine which brings us the glad tidings of God's merciful design of restoring some of the sinful race of men to his favour and likeness, through the obedience and sacrifice of his Son, and the influence and operation of his Spirit; and wherein are given us such amazing displays of wisdom, justice, power and goodness. This doctrine, which he had not received of man, nor been taught by man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ; this doctrine, which had been committed to him, as the servant, the minister, and the ambassador of Christ, to be faithfully dispensed unto others; *he had kept*, not suffered it to be wrested from him by the art or malice of false teachers, nor himself mutilated, corrupted or perverted it, nor on any account withheld it from others. So that his *keeping* it may intend,

His having faithfully preached it. This he did wherever he came, and according as the providence of God gave him opportunity. To all the churches he could appeal for the truth of it, as he did to the Ephesians,

fians, that *he had kept back nothing that was profitable to them, but had shewed them and taught them publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*¹. It may intend also,

His having zealously defended it. This he did both against the public and avowed opposers of it, and against those who secretly undermined and perverted it. He reasoned both with Jews and Greeks, at Antioch and Athens, by word and epistle, at the hazard of all that was dear to him, and even of life itself. Nay, he was jealous of the least encroachment on the gospel, and on that liberty with which Christ had made his people free; *withstanding even Peter himself to the face when he was to be blamed, and not giving place by subjection to false brethren, no not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with the church*². And it may intend, once more,

His sealing the gospel with his blood, which he had in effect already done, no consideration whatever having been effectual to prevail on him to renounce his attachment

¹ Acts xx. 20, 21.

² Gal. ii. 5, 11.

to Christ and the truth. — Thus had he *fought a good fight, finish'd his course, and kept the faith.* And now we proceed to consider,

II. The full assurance he expresses of the rewards of heaven. *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.* How animating these words, and what divine transports must his soul have felt while his pen wrote them! You will allow me, for a few moments,—to descant on the description here given us of the heavenly blessedness, in which the apostle, together with the rest of the faithful disciples of Christ, was interested; and then — to touch upon the grounds of his assurance that he and they should most certainly possess it.

FIRST, As to the reward he had in prospect; it was *a crown* — a crown of *righteousness* — a crown of righteousness that was *laid up for him* — a crown that should be *given him* — given him by *Christ the righteous Judge* — *at that day*, immediately upon

his dissolution, and more publicly at the great day of account — and a reward which to his infinite joy, he should share with the rest of his fellow-soldiers, even *all who love the appearing of Christ*. If it be inquired,

1. What was the reward he expected? It was *a crown*, a figure by which he designed to convey an idea of the perfection, happiness and glory of the heavenly world. Various metaphors are used in Scripture to this purpose. We read of *kingdoms, thrones and sceptres*; of *an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*; of *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*; of *a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*; of *a house in which there are many mansions*; and a *paradise* wherein there are *trees bearing all manner of precious fruits*, and *a river of pleasure proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb*. But here the apostle describes the rewards of heaven by *a crown*, agreeably to the practice of the Greeks and Romans in their games, to which he evidently alludes. To the man who prevailed, whether at single combat, running, wrestling, or in any other of the exercises, a crown was

was

was adjudged, *a leafy crown* *, besides many other honors. So, says he, having fought my fight, finished my course, and kept the faith, a crown shall be given me. I shall be declared conqueror in presence of angels and men, and be distinguished with all the honors and triumphs of victory. And a glorious crown that will be indeed which shall grace the brow of the victorious Christian; not a leafy, not a golden crown, not a crown composed of the most costly jewels that the cabinets of princes can furnish; but a diadem of celestial brightness and glory, and which fadeth not away.

Here I might attempt some faint description of the dignity, power, wealth and happiness to which the Christian shall be exalted in the heavenly world, all which are signified by this crown that shall be given him. I might tell you of that state of perfect freedom and uncontrouled sovereignty to which the immortal mind shall be restored, in opposition to that ignominious and wretched state of bondage to which, thro' the apostacy

* The crown in the Olympic games, which were sacred to Jupiter, was composed of wild-olive; in the Pythian, sacred to Apollo, of laurel; in the Isthmian, instituted in honor of Palæmon, of pine-tree; and in the Nemæan, of parsley.

of human nature, it is at present reduced. I might tell you of the change that shall pass on all the powers of the soul, by which it shall be refined, ennobled and enlarged, and so become capable of the most exalted exercises, and the purest and most satisfying pleasures. I might tell you of the substantial and increasing joy it shall feel, arising from the immediate vision and contemplation of God, from an uninterrupted sense of his favor, from intimate communion with the blessed Jesus in all his glory, and from the friendship and society of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. But after all, it must it will be acknowledged, if the Scriptures are to be credited, that the most animated description of the joys of heaven falls infinitely short of what those joys and pleasures really are. *For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*°.

2. The crown he had thus in prospect, was a crown of *righteousness*. By the most violent and iniquitous measures the princes of this world, many of them, acquire the crowns they wear. And the authority which

° 1 Cor. ii. 9.

their crowns give them, they too often abuse to the vilest and most tyrannical purposes. So that the respect to which the regal dignity intitles them, is the fruit rather of slavish dread, than of affectionate reverence and esteem. But it is not such crowns as these the saints possess in heaven. They are crowns of righteousness. Crowns to which they become intitled, not only through the infinite benignity and goodness of him who hath a right to bestow them, but in a way perfectly consistent with truth, justice and holiness. *Grace reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord*^p. And thus hath he declared his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus^q.—In like manner, a perfection of purity and righteousness is one main ingredient of the felicity and glory of the heavenly world. *As the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God*^r, and *nothing that defileth shall enter into it*^s; so all that peace, harmony and love, which are the inseparable concomitants of truth and justice, shall ever prevail there. In that blissful world there is no fraud, dis-

^p Rom. v. 21.^q Chap. iii. 26.^r 1 Cor. vi. 9.^s Rev. xxi. 27.

simulation or hypocrisy; no envy, malice or malevolence; no contention for power, wealth or dominion: but, on the contrary, righteousness, peace and friendship maintain an undisturbed and perpetual sovereignty through all those happy regions. — Again,

3. This crown of righteousness is *laid up* for the saints. Which intimates both the greatness of the heavenly glory, and the certainty of their secure and peaceable enjoyment of it. 'Tis our most valuable treasure that we usually lay up with care, and in a place of the greatest safety. And who shall say what is the value of that treasure which is laid up for the saints in heaven? 'Twas obtained for them at the expence of the precious blood of Christ; a consideration which enhances the worth of it to a degree beyond the comprehension of angels. And who shall doubt the security of it, since the same Jesus hath actually taken possession of it, on behalf of all his faithful followers? So that, for its value, it infinitely exceeds what the liveliest imagination can frame an estimate of; and, for its security, is beyond a possibility of being alienated or destroyed. It is laid up in heaven, and so out of reach of the

envy, malice and power of hell. — To proceed,

4. This crown shall be *given* the Christian. It will be the fruit of the free grace, and the unmeasurable bounty of the blessed God. No one will dare claim it upon considerations of merit; that idea will have no place in heaven. Nay, it is a circumstance that will add brightness to the crown itself, and greatly increase the joy of him who wears it, that God of his free mercy thus bestows it upon him. O! with what gratitude will the Christian receive it, acknowledging himself most unworthy, and God most liberal, condescending, and good! *The gift of God is eternal life*¹. And as thus the free favor of God is the source from whence proceeds all the happiness of heaven, so with peculiar pleasure the apostle realizes this crown as given him,

5. By *the Lord the righteous judge*. Christ is the person he here intends — Jesus of Nazareth who met him in his way to Damascus, converted him to the faith, and commissioned him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles — His Master, Saviour, and Friend, for whom he felt the most ardent and un-

¹ Rom. vi. 23.

conquerable love, whose interests he had faithfully and affectionately served, and in whose immediate presence and company above he promised himself the highest satisfaction and joy. He is *the Lord*, the great Prince, *to whom*, as Mediator, *all power is given in heaven and in earth*^u: who *hath the government on his shoulder*^w, and *a name written on his vesture and on his thigh*, *King of kings, and Lord of lords*^x. And he is *the Judge* who presides on this great occasion, to determine who are conquerors, and to dispense the promised rewards to them. And a *righteous* judge he is, incapable of erring through ignorance or partiality. So that the decree he passes will be agreeable to the strictest truth, and the most perfect justice; nor will it fail of receiving the universal applause of angels and men.

To the victorious Christian HE, then, will adjudge the crown, and HIS hand shall place it on his head. And O! who can describe the sweet mixture of majesty and grace which will beam from his countenance, whilst with soft and solemn accents his lips shall pronounce the joyful sentence? “He hath fought a good fight, he hath

^u Math. xxviii. 18. ^w Isa. ix. 6. ^x Rev. xix. 16.

“ finish-

“ finished his course, he hath kept the faith.
 “ — His be the rewards of victory. — Well
 “ done! good and faithful servant. Enter
 “ thou into the joy of thy Lord.” — The
 apostle realizes also,

6. The time when this event should take place — *that day*. Immediately on his departure hence he knew he should be happy. To which purpose he elsewhere signifies his firm persuasion, that having given up the ghost, he should instantly *be with Christ, which is far better than to continue here*⁷. And, considering the solemnity of death, and the prodigious consequences that follow upon it, the time when it happens well deserves the emphatical description of *that day*. But it is the day of judgment, I apprehend, the apostle hath here chiefly in view: for this phrase he most commonly uses, when speaking in his epistles of that last great transaction. And O! how will the strangeness, variety, and importance of the events of that day, distinguish it from every other day whatever! On a sudden the great archangel shall sound his trumpet. The dead, roused by that tremendous voice, shall instantly rise into life. The Judge, even he

⁷ Philip. i. 23.

who the other day expired on mount Calvary, shall appear in the clouds of heaven, with a countenance more radiant than the sun, and attended by myriads of flaming spirits. Before his tribunal every individual of the human race shall be summoned. Their characters shall be impartially tried, and their state irrevocably fixed. The sentence shall immediately be executed. Heaven and earth shall pass away. And so shall the scene be finally closed. Now on this day, and in the presence of this vast assembly, the apostle assures himself he should receive the crown. — To all which he adds the pleasing consideration,

7. And lastly, That others should be partakers with him of this glory. — “ The crown he will give *not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*” My time will not allow me to enter particularly into the spirit of this expressive character : or I might tell you of the Christian’s firm belief of the second appearance of Christ ; of his thoughtfulness about it ; of his anxious concern to be in readiness for it ; and of the joyful hope, with which he sometimes entertains himself, of his own interest in the favor and friendship of that great and glo-

rious person. He hath not indeed as yet seen him with the natural eye; but, believing in him, his breast hath often glowed with a warm and affectionate love to him. And while faith hath sometimes presented this most amiable of all objects to the view of his mind, he hath rejoiced more than they whose corn and wine and oil are increased. And in this happy frame, hearing the blessed Jesus say in his word, *Behold I come quickly!* with what ardent desire, with what longing expectation does he reply, *Even so come Lord Jesus?*^z To persons of this character, whatever may have been their rank and condition in the present life, and in whatever age or country they may have lived, the Lord the righteous judge will give a crown of glory. Their crowns may not indeed, all of them, be equally resplendent: a prophet's and an apostle's reward will probably exceed that of an ordinary Christian. Yet they shall all be perfectly happy, all possess a fulness of joy. And this circumstance, I mean the felicity of other Christians, added not a little, such was the benevolence of his heart! to the satisfaction and pleasure the apostle felt on this occa-

^z Rev. xxii. 20.

tion. “ Not I only, but others, many
“ others, thousands of thousands whom no
“ man can number, shall share with me in
“ all the rich fruits of divine benignity and
“ love, and in all the inestimable blessings
“ purchased by the precious blood of Christ.”

Thus have we distantly surveyed the transporting prospect the apostle had immediately before his eyes, at the eve of life, and when he was just finishing his warfare. Which leads me to consider,

SECONDLY, The grounds of his hope. He expresses himself, you see, with the firmest assurance of a future state; and of his own title to the happiness of it. He does not say, “ There *may* probably, but there most certainly *is* a crown of glory laid up for me in heaven.” With the like confidence he had before assured Timothy^a, that *he knew whom he had believed, and was persuaded that he was able to keep that which he had committed unto him against that day*— Words evidently spoken with great coolness and deliberation. And however the text is the language of extasy and triumph, it is clearly distinguishable from that of enthu-

^a Chap. i. 12.

fiasm and madness. For though the infinite splendor of those great objects, which pressed so close on the eye of faith, might well diffuse a rapturous joy through his soul; yet that joy did not deprive him of self-possession, nor render him incapable of reflecting on the sure and rational evidence upon which his hope was built. He had been a resolute opposer of the gospel, and a bitter persecutor of those who professed it. At the instant he was carrying one of his most bloody schemes into execution, that Jesus whom he persecuted had appeared to him, expostulated with him upon his impotent rage, and by a divine energy renewed and changed his heart. These facts he had invariably and constantly affirmed, giving the fullest proof by his clear and nervous reasonings, that he was not himself imposed upon; and, by his holy and self-denying manner of life, that he had no design to impose on others. And, more than this, in the immediate view of death, we see him triumphantly realizing the joys of heaven, as insured to him by the mediation of that Jesus whom he had once thus cruelly persecuted, but afterwards so affectionately loved and faithfully served.

And

And now what sober man, who reflects a moment on these things, on the character and life of the apostle, and his heroic behaviour in the prospect of death, can wish for more satisfactory proof than what results from hence in favor of Christianity? Nay, I will add, that man must not only be stupidly incredulous, but criminally averse to the pure and benevolent spirit of the gospel, who does not feel the force of such evidence. It *is* true then, that Jesus rose from the dead, that He ascended up into heaven, that He will quickly come again to judge the world, and that He will then publicly dispense crowns of glory to all those who obey his gospel. To the prophecies of the Old Testament, to the miracles of our Saviour and his apostles, to the nature and tendency of the Christian doctrine, to the history of its rise and progress in the world, nay, to the consciences and feelings both of good and bad men, who, having read the Bible, must have beheld their own characters clearly delineated there; to these authorities, to each of them, to all of them, I may appeal for the truth of these things.

Thus have we considered, as was proposed, the pleasing reflection which the apo-

tle makes, at the close of life, on his past temper and conduct; and the transporting view he takes of the reward he was about to receive at the hands of Jesus Christ. It remains that we make some improvement of what hath been said.

1. From the account the apostle here gives of himself we may naturally infer, that it is no easy matter to be a Christian. Very slight notions, I fear, too many entertain of this sacred character. But, if the Scriptures are true, whatever encouragements the gospel affords us under a sense of sin, we may depend upon it *the gate is strait, and the way narrow that leadeth unto life, and few there be who find it*^b. We must rouse ourselves from a supine and indolent state, put on the whole armour of God, enter the lists with the powers of darkness, and be content to endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ. We must lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth easily beset us; and, girding up the loins of our mind, run with patience the race of duty and suffering which Providence hath set before us. In fine, having received the gospel into our hearts by faith, we must keep the precious treasure inviolate, and resolve in the strength of God

^b Matt. vii. 14.

not to part with it, even at the expence of our lives.

2. It is clear from the apostle's example, that the Christian, as he advances towards heaven, may be allowed to look back with pleasure upon his past temper and conduct, so far as they have been upright and commendable. No man took more pains than he to discountenance all appearances of self-confidence and vain-glory in matters of religion. The most distant idea of our meriting the favor of God, to which however human nature is very prone, he abhorred. Yet, sensible of the importance of personal character, and of the utility of self-knowledge, he every where presses us with great earnestness, *to examine ourselves whether we are in the faith*^c; and *to prove our own work*, assuring us that *so we shall have rejoicing in ourselves, and not in another*^d. And however we are to direct our eye to Jesus Christ alone for our justification and acceptance with God, and gratefully to remember and acknowledge, that it is by his grace we are what we are; yet a recollection of past experiences of the love of God, and of our steady attachment to Him amidst surrounding temptations, will have a happy effect, with his bless-

^c 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

^d Gal. vi. 4.

ing,

ing, to soothe our troubled breasts in seasons of perplexity and sorrow. In like manner,

3. The apostle's behaviour on this occasion teaches us, that it is by no means unworthy of a Christian, or inconsistent with ingenuous and evangelical obedience, to be influenced by the hope of future rewards. A desire of happiness is interwoven with our constitution. And our Saviour is so far from separating what God hath thus joined together, that He hath in the most gracious and condescending manner taught us, that our duty is our interest, and that what He requires of us tends to our present comfort and our future and everlasting welfare. Labour therefore, Christians, to impress your minds with this unquestionable truth, that you serve not a hard and severe, but a mild and gentle Master; and that, whatever difficulties may attend your profession, through the corruption of human nature and the unavoidable connections of the present life, *the ways of wisdom are nevertheless ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*^{*}. Set the crown of glory before your eyes which you are shortly to wear, and that will make you nobly superior to all the reluctance you feel at the idea of bearing the

* Prov. iii. 17.

cross. And, above all, be persuaded *to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*^f. Again,

4. How should a consideration of the bliss and glory, which our deceased Christian friends possess in the heavenly world, reconcile us to the loss we sustain by their dissolution! When those whom we have loved, and whose characters we revere, are removed hence by death, we cannot avoid expressing the concern and sorrow we feel. And it is fit we should. Christ wept at the grave of Lazarus. But while faith brings distant objects near to the eye, and realizes the exalted honors and ravishing pleasures our dear friends and relatives enjoy in that other state, undue passion will subside and a calm ensue. And it is our unspeakable happiness, that on this occasion, mournful as it is, we have every consideration of this sort to afford pleasure to our minds. The venerable deceased, for whom, I doubt not, there are many sincere mourners in this place, hath *fought a good fight, hath finished his course, and kept the faith*; and is now possessed of *a crown of glory*

^f Heb. xii. 2.

which

which fadeth not away. Great respect is due to his memory; and happy shall I account myself, if, while I am attempting to do justice to it, the grand end of this discourse may be answered, I mean, the improvement of this sad providence to the spiritual profit of all who hear me.

Dr. *John Gill* had the honor and happiness to descend from pious ancestors. He was born at *Kettering* in the county of *Northampton*, November 23, 1697. His thirst for knowledge even in early life was so great, and his improvements so considerable, that at the age of ten years, as I am informed, he was able to read his Greek Testament. A neighbouring gentleman, accidentally coming to the knowledge of this, would have persuaded his parents to send him, at the proper time, to one of the Universities. But, as this proposal did not fall in with his or their religious principles or views, he continued with them: and by his own industry, with but little assistance from others, he quickly made very considerable progress in his studies. On November 1st, 1716, he was baptized upon a profession of his faith, and admitted a member of the church at *Kettering*

tering under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. *Wallis*. He was soon called to the work of the ministry, of the great importance of which he was deeply sensible. In the year 1719, upon the death of the Rev. Mr. *Stinton*, he was invited to preach to this church, and early in the following year was ordained your pastor. In which office he continued among you the remainder of his life, that is, upwards of fifty-one years, enjoying the rare felicity of being scarce ever interrupted in his work by bodily disorder.

His natural and acquired abilities were very considerable. He had a clear understanding, a sound judgment, and an uncommonly retentive memory. In point of application and industry he had scarce his equal: so that he commanded a large compass of knowledge, and enjoyed a distinguished reputation for substantial and useful learning. With the oriental languages, Jewish antiquities, and the writings of the rabbies he was familiarly acquainted. And how well he was versed in the knowledge of the sacred scriptures none who are conversant with his works can be ignorant. His merit in these respects drew the attention of the *Marischal college* at *Aberdeen*, and pro-
G cured

cured for him, in the year 1748, a diploma, creating him Doctor in Divinity. But, as he deemed it his greatest honor to be serviceable to the interests of religion, so this was the grand object to which he directed all his literary improvements. And if by these pursuits he was necessarily precluded from many social offices, to which he might otherwise have attended ; yet that defect was more than compensated by the incessant and painful labors of the closet, to which for the good of others he cheerfully devoted himself. Labors so prodigious, that it will, perhaps, seem incredible to posterity, that one man should have been the author of so many publications.

That he was a man of strict integrity I believe all will acknowledge. But though his steadiness was such, that, having come to a point with himself upon any opinion or fact, he was scarce ever to be moved from it ; yet, convinced of his mistake, he was ready to acknowledge it. And though he knew how with spirit to resent an injury, he knew how also with becoming meekness to endure and forgive it. His warmth might indeed on some occasions exceed, yet he had prudence and resolution to check it ; and
failed

failed not afterwards, like a good man as he was, to feel great pain on account of it. And however his inflexibility, his recluse manner of life, and the small share he bore in conversation, might perhaps excite in some persons an idea unfavorable to his character, in point of affability and cheerfulness; yet he knew how to be obliging in his carriage to strangers, and could be innocently pleasant with his friends: so that few left his house or his company, without some impressions to his advantage in these respects.

His religious principles, which were strictly Calvinistical, he maintained with great warmth—a warmth that proceeded, I doubt not, from a firm persuasion of their truth and importance. Yet, amidst all his zeal, which was accompanied with undissembled piety as well as unshaken integrity, he had a charitable and affectionate regard for those who held the grand leading principles of Christianity, though they could not agree with him in his explanation of some points. To exalt and magnify the free grace of God in the redemption and salvation of sinners, and to exclude all boasting on our part, were the grand objects of his discourses and writings. But the unfavorable consequences

which too many were disposed to draw from his reasonings, he constantly denied, and warmly opposed: maintaining the utility and importance of good works, and indeed their indispensable necessity, as the fruit of the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit, to the character of a real Christian. And, as he was himself most exemplary in his conversation, so he heartily concurred in every measure to discountenance a licentious conduct, especially in those who made a profession of religion. What grief he felt when at any time Christ was wounded in the house of his pretended friends, as well as the joy he expressed when tidings of a different kind were brought him, his family and those who were intimately acquainted with him well remember, nor will the remembrance thereof be easily erased from their minds.

In the character of a Pastor he acquitted himself with great affection, fidelity and constancy. To the truth of this the tribute of real and cordial sorrow which you, my friends, now offer to his memory, affords the best and most natural testimony. His close attention to study did not indeed allow of his visiting you so frequently as you earnestly wished:

wished : yet his place in the house of God he constantly filled, as also in a weekly Lecture, which for near thirty years he preached, with the interruption, I think, but of three times. On a great variety of subjects, he largely insisted with the views I before mentioned ; and which, with the blessing of God, proved the means of the conversion of not a few among you, and of the edification and comfort of many others. As he was *allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so he spake, not as pleasing men, but God who trieth the hearts.* And being affectionately desirous of you, he was willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also his own soul, because ye were dear unto him. And, I may add, ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably he behaved himself among you : as you know, also, how he exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, (as a father doth his children) that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory * Nor should I forget to remind you of what, as I understand, made a very deep impression on some of you, I mean the discourses he delivered, with more than ordinary life and energy, at the close of his

* 1 Theff. ii. 4, 8, 10, 11, 12.

ministry ;

ministry; and especially his affectionate address to you at the Lord's table, the last time he administered that sacred ordinance, when, as I am told, he was uncommonly impressed with the great things of God, and with the joyful and transporting prospects of a better world.

From that time, the beginning of April last, his health was very visibly on the decline, and he was himself apprehensive that his dissolution was nearly approaching. Some notes found in his desk on the subject of preparation for death, and prefaced with our Saviour's words, *Be ye also ready*, were written probably about this time. For though he was incapable through weakness of appearing in public, he was employed in his study, more or less, to the very last, or at least till within two or three weeks before his death. During his illness, amidst all the pain and weakness that attended him, he was never heard to make the least complaint, but submitted with the greatest patience and resignation to the will of God; sensible also of the filial piety and affection of his family, whom he ever tenderly loved. Nor was he only patient and resigned, but serene and chearful. To a Minister who visited him,
upon

upon being asked how it was with him, he readily declared, “ My dependance is
 “ on the blood and righteousness of Jesus
 “ Christ alone, not on any labors of mine.
 “ I consider the Father, Son, and Holy
 “ Spirit, as equally concerned in my salva-
 “ tion. Nor have I any doubt of my interest
 “ in the everlasting covenant: this, added
 “ he, is the foundation of my hope.” In
 much the same terms he expressed himself to
 another dear and intimate friend, mingling
 many tears with his tender and affectionate
 discourse. “ I have nothing to make me
 uneasy,” said he to another. And more
 than once, I think, repeated the following
 stanza out of *Dr. Watts’s Hymns* ;

He rais’d me from the deeps of sin,
 The gates of gaping hell ;
 And fix’d my standing more secure
 Than ’twas before I fell*.

Nor does it appear that his hopes and
 comforts were at all suspended or interrupted.
 Some of the last words, I am told, he spake,
 were, putting his hands together, “ O my
 “ Father, my Father !” Thus sinking under
 the gradual decays of nature, he gently fell

* Hymn 82. 2d book.

asleep

asleep in Jesus, the 14th instant, in the 74th year of his age.

Such was the happy and joyful exit of this great and good man, who having fought a good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith, is now possessed of a crown of righteousness that fadeth not away. — It remains that I address myself in a few words to this audience in general, and to you my friends of this church, and the sorrowful family of the deceased in particular.

Death is the common lot of all mankind. It is the awful and just consequence of sin: and is to every individual the gate either to endless happiness or misery. Wherever it happens therefore, there is a loud call to all concerned to consider their ways, to examine their hearts, and to enquire what ground they have to hope they shall escape the tremendous consequences of it to the impenitent and unbelieving. But there is something peculiarly awakening in such providences as these, I mean the decease of so excellent and venerable a person as him, upon whose character and death I have been now addressing you. Surely, Sirs, there is a reality in religion: and those great truths,

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which

which the Scriptures reveal, which are the sources of comfort and holiness to Christians in their way through life, and afford the only effectual support to their hearts in the hour of death; these grand truths, I say, do deserve our most serious attention. How stands it then with us? Are we sensible of our guilt, impotence, and misery? Do we cordially believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone can deliver us from the second death? And are our hearts by a divine influence formed into the love of God and true holiness? These are questions of the most interesting nature. Let me beseech you not to trifle with them. And O! may God, of his infinite mercy, by this event so fix your attention to them, as that you also may be ready to meet the summons whenever it shall come!

As to you my friends of this church, I am sensible your loss is very great, you feel it, you are deeply affected with it. But remember, though your friend, your minister, your father is taken from you, *Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.* Put your trust in him. Offer your fervent and united prayers to him to repair this breach, by

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sending

sending you a Pastor after his own heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. Remember him who had the rule over you, his instructions and counsels, his example and prayers. Be united among yourselves. Let fervent charity prevail in your breasts towards each other. And, while you steadily adhere to Christ and his gospel, let there be a noble emulation among you, which shall outvie the other in love and good works. And so may the peace of God dwell in your hearts by faith, and the comforts of the Holy Spirit abound there!——

And now, to the sorrowful and affectionate relatives of the venerable deceased what shall I say? I sympathize with you my friends in all the grief you feel on this sad and tender occasion. You have lost an affectionate and indulgent parent. And your loss is the greater, as it hath been your distinguished felicity, in the course of providence, to spend your lives in so intimate a connection with him under the same roof. But let not your sorrow exceed. Be thankful to God that his life was so long spared to you. Think of the bliss and glory he now possesses in the heavenly world. And, while you often
call

call to mind the excellent counsels he hath given you, and are walking in the path he trod, comfort yourselves with the joyful and transporting prospect of meeting him again, ere long, in the realms of light and glory above.

T H E E N D.

H 2

T H E

THE
A D D R E S S

DELIVERED AT THE
I N T E R M E N T

I N
The Burial-Ground at BUN-HILL,
OCTOBER 23, 1771.

By BENJAMIN WALLIN, M. A.

Howl Fir-Tree, for the Cedar is fallen! Zech. xi. 2.

THE
ADDRESS
AT THE
INTERMENT.

IN this vault are deposited the remains of an elder and venerable Brother; who, having fulfilled a long course of labour in the service of his God, is called up to the presence of our Divine Master, where mortality is swallowed up of life.

The grave we surround, is not of a common person, or ordinary saint.—It is the receptacle of an earthen vessel; alas! now broken! Late the habitation of a chosen spirit, charged with a treasure from on high, in the wise and faithful dispensation of which, by the power of the Holy Ghost, many eyes were enlightened, many hearts, we trust, subdued to the sceptre of Jesus,
many

many fair epistles in Christ universally known, and not a few in the work of the ministry were assisted, to the praise and glory of that grace, by which our departed friend was what he was.

On this solemn occasion I might with freedom and decency expatiate on the superior, natural, spiritual, and acquired talents of the deceased; the general firmness of his mind, his clear understanding, penetrating judgment, tenacious memory, great knowledge in the scriptures, and other writings subservient to their explanation and improvement. These, in connexion with the blessing of God on his unwearied diligence from his youth, produced those large and numerous publications, by which, “ He, being “ dead yet speaketh,” and will appear in future generations, as considerable an instance of proficiency in his character, as can be met with in an age.

It pleased God, who called him early by his grace, so to enlarge his understanding in the mystery of the gospel, and inspire him with such an ardent zeal for promoting the knowledge of the truth, that, being sent forth, he approved himself an able minister of the New Testament, at a time of life

when the generality of those who are partakers in the same gift, if under a profession of religion, are comparatively as babes:— Thus furnished and animated our young divine, like David, when a stripling in nature, went out to fight the Lord's battles.— In the name of the Lord he did valiantly!— The weapons of his warfare were not *carnal*, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds, casting down those proud imaginations, or reasonings of the flesh, which exalteth itself against the sovereignty of God in the ways of his grace, that he might bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and with what success, in many instances, to the confusion of the adversary, and the joy of the faithful, let Zion declare.

Nor is it the least part of his public character, that however he excelled in various respects, he never thought himself too great for the station of an ordinary pastor in a particular gospel society or church; he justly esteemed it an honour to be invested with the oversight of a people gathered in the Lord, according to the dictates of the spirit in his word; he aspired no higher, in point of office, and though the fruit of his studies

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were,

were, by the press, extended to others, even in distant parts of the world, his personal ministry from the pulpit, and otherwise, was regular and steady in the community over whom he presided; there he stood, being rarely absent, more than half a century, as a diligent and faithful shepherd feeding his flock, dearly beloved, as “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”—A sacred regard to this divine institution is of the greatest importance; without it the visible kingdom of Jesus can never long flourish or even exist in any nation under heaven, for this is the manner established, in every place, by the inspired first ministers, whom the risen Lord commissioned to teach his disciples to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them; saying, “Lo I am with you always to the end of the world.”

The writings of our eminent author chiefly turned on the most interesting points; he did not trifle away his gifts on matters of speculation, or on subjects foreign to the design of his mission: No, they were nobly exerted in the defence or representation of those divine mysteries, of which every christian minister is a steward: The salvation of
God

God by his Son, the only begotten of the Father, through the agency of the Holy Ghost, was the substance of his theme; he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, in the choice of a people to glory, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, but, being determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified, dwelt much on the glory of his person, who is the express image of the Father, the nature and importance of every office in his mediatorial character, his compleat atonement, everlasting righteousness, and all-sufficient grace, the holy ends and blessed effects of his mercy to sinners, and the sacred ordinances and means for perfecting the saints in a life of faith: These, and every other article relative to the gospel, did this excellent person handle with fidelity and skill, diffusing his knowledge in the mystery of Christ, to the satisfaction and advantage of many, now rejoicing on earth, or in heaven; who will be his crown in the last and great day, and some, who never will see his face in the flesh, are assisted by his labours in the work of the Lord, to the edification of his people.

But, alas! — What is man! — What is the prince of a man! Of a man to whom the Lord hath given largeness of heart, or an exceeding understanding! — What though he be invested with all authority, and every opportunity is afforded for his long extensive usefulness; though he advance as a tree planted by the waters, that spreadeth her roots by the river; yea, though year after year, and that for an age, his leaves are ever green, and in his season he produces much fruit, and satiates many; yet, alas! he is the Son of Adam; he is taken from the ground; soon “his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish!” Lo, here an instance! — Behold and lament! — He that spake with the enemy in the gate; whom the adversary feared; a principal shepherd of the flock is fallen, and no more! He is veiled in silence and darkness; his face is now covered for ever! Alas! those eyes once intent night and day, neither weary nor dim to the last, in perusing the oracles of God, and other books subordinate to his work, are now closed in death! Those lungs and lips so long exerted in blowing the joyful trumpet of the gospel are sealed up and motionless,

less, and the precious hand that guided the pen of a ready writer is perished in the dust ! Alas ! his breathless corps we resign to the grave ! Yet, blessed be God, in a good hope of its part in the resurrection of the just, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, and reward his faithful servants with a crown of glory which fadeth not away ! Then, we are persuaded, our departed friend will appear among the wise, who have turned many to righteousness, and shine a star of the first magnitude in the kingdom of our Father ; for he believed, and therefore spoke, and died in the faith of Jesus whom he preached. In the near views of eternity he was so highly favoured as to have not the least shadow of a doubt concerning his security in the blood and righteousness of the Son of God, on which he had placed all his dependance for justification from sin, and acceptance with the Most High, though he had been honoured as an instrument of great service to the church, which shall not lose its reward ; for we know that “ blessed are the dead who
“ thus die in the Lord ; yea, saith the Spirit,
“ they rest from their labours, and their
“ works follow them.”

Thus

Thus went *this* man!—And shall we not mourn? Jesus wept, may I say, on a less sorrowful occasion: It does not appear that the decease of Lazarus was a loss to the public; be that as it may, *this* certainly is: What sensible person, who loves the truth, or seeks the prosperity of Jerusalem, in whatever external habit, can fail of being a real mourner in his heart, when he sees a first-rate minister cut down and numbered with the dead, and especially when there is a manifest and sad decay from the simplicity of the gospel, and from vital religion; as a natural consequence of which, also every kind of wickedness, and a general dissipation awfully prevails, and threatens the land!

What use shall we make of this breach; this affecting dispensation of Providence!—Permit me,

My honoured brethren, in the like public character; let us mutually sympathize: Are we not ourselves deprived by this stroke? Who of us is not ready to say, or may not with decency cry in the language of Elisha, when Elijah was caught up to heaven; “My Father, my Father; the chariot of
“Israel and the horsemen thereof!”—May a double portion of the Spirit of wisdom in-
crease

crease our knowledge of Christ; and since we have a fresh mournful instance that our fathers pass away, and the prophets must die, let us know our own frailty, and, while we exert our utmost in the ardent service of our sacred function, beware lest by any affectation or mistaken zeal we offer violence to these feeble frames, and bring on an untimely incapacity for usefulness, yet persevere with a becoming fervency; still watching for souls, as those who must shortly give account, that we also may finish our course with joy, and the commission we have received to testify the gospel of a gracious God.

Doubtless many come to this place, with an heart full of sorrow, to pay the last tribute, and bid a final adieu to the dead body of this worthy person; once the admiring and attentive audience where he stately laboured; let me speak freely, in love to your souls; you do well in the midst of your weeping, each for himself, to put home this question:—What improvement have I made by the rich means, many years enjoyed, under so able a preacher? Are any of you, after all, not *doers* of the word, but *bearers* only? Deceive not yourselves!—You have heard
this

this great man; and it may be valued yourselves on the choice of his ministry: Be not offended. — The greater your condemnation if you die in unbelief. How often, Sir, did your late teacher urge the importance and necessity of repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and art thou still in a state of rebellion, and without a real or visible subjection to the Redeemer? Take heed, lest his extraordinary abilities, labour, and faithfulness, aggravate thy condemnation in the last and great day, when all they shall perish who obey not the gospel!

But ye, my Christian Neighbours of that church, so long the charge of our excellent Brother, and especially such among you who claim him as your spiritual Father; your loss is great, and many feel with you! — Come, behold where he lies, whom you followed as an he-goat, your guide! See him passed before you through the dark valley, and over the swellings of Jordan, on the eternal shore of the heavenly country! Hear the voice of his grave! It loudly calls on you to remember him that had the rule over you, and all his life so faithfully spoke the word of God to you. Doth he not say,
from

from the mouth of this cave, “ Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ?” Tears, however becoming, are not all that is due to the memory of a man who brought a singular credit to the community over whom he presided : let patient resignation to the divine will, your order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ, your unanimity and judgment in the choice of a successor, your love to one another, and the whole of your spirit and conduct, hold forth the word of life, and manifest that your late pastor ran not in vain, nor laboured in vain : It is the *practice* of those holy truths he diligently taught you that will honour *his* character or vindicate your *own*.

As for you, my dear friends, the near relations of the deceased ; it is a relief that you share with him in the blessings of grace : Let your consolation under this trial be drawn from that covenant, which is ordered in all things and sure : May the connexion with which you have been honoured in providence prove subservient to your present and future advantage ; the few remaining days of this transitory state improve the talents you are endowed with, in promoting the same glorious cause of God and truth,

in which your worthy parent was embarked, and of which he was so able a defender, that in the end you may enter the rest, where his separate spirit, unclothed of this body of sin and corruption, and free of all imperfection and weakness, is solaced before the throne, and the Lamb, in fulness of joy.

And now ; what man in this large assembly, however induced to join the spectators, can go unconcerned from this field of death, and the funeral solemnities of so extraordinary a person ? Do I speak to a thoughtless fellow-mortal in his sins ? O friend, I beseech thee, take warning ; if thou hear not that gospel published by this herald of life, and which continues to be proclaimed in thine ears by surviving preachers of the word ; if thou believe not in the Lord Jesus Christ, thou must shortly go down to the dust without hope ! There is no exchange for thy soul, unless thou partake in the redemption of Jesus, who having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself is sat down at the right hand of the Father, and is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.

Finally, Beloved, let us comfort one another that the gospel, so nobly testified by

our dear departed brother, is everlasting. Ministers die, yet the word of the Lord, and his statutes which they report in his name remain alive and in power: In this living word of the eternal gospel we see death disarmed of its sting, and have a certain prospect of a resurrection unto an endless life. The haughty king of terrors may boast when the faints, and still more when the prophets of the Lord fall under his dominion, for a season, but we know that his triumph is short: True, there is no discharge in this war, but thanks be to God he hath given us the victory! The last enemy, however insatiable or threatening, is doomed to an inevitable destruction, as it is written; "O death I will be thy plagues! O grave I will be thy destruction!"—Nor is there any delay of this blessed hope, for "He which testifieth these things saith, surely, I come quickly." O that every soul attending this tomb could cordially reply, Amen; even so come Lord Jesus!

F I N I S.