

A
Sermon
Occasioned
By
The Death
Of
Elizabeth Gill
1 THESSALONIANS 4:13, 14
by
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*A SERMON OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH
OF ELIZABETH GILL*

Preached June 4, 1738.

To which is added, An Account of some of her Choice Experiences.

{1 THESSALONIANS 4:13, 14}

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.

I need not tell you what is the occasion of my reading these words to you at this time. This is done not so much on your account as on my own. You must permit me, this afternoon, to preach rather to myself and family than to you; though I hope what may be delivered may be of some service among you also. The apostle in this chapter exhorts the Thessalonians to a diligent discharge of several duties of religion, which became their character and profession; whereby they would be serviceable to one another, please God, and adorn the doctrine of Christ Jesus. He signifies, that they needed not to be wrote unto concerning brotherly love, because they were taught of God to love one another. But it seems, it was necessary, that they should be put in mind of some principal doctrines of Christianity; such as concern the state of the pious dead; the resurrection of the just; the second coming of Christ; and the everlasting glory and happiness of the saints with him; in order to alleviate their grief, mitigate their sorrow, and support their spirits, under the loss of their dear friends, or near relations. It is not to be supposed, that they were entirely ignorant of these truths; but they were much out of sight, were not taken notice of and improved by them, as they should have been on such an occasion. So hard a thing is it for us to keep the doctrines of the gospel always in view; and harder still to make use of

them, and live up to them, when we most want them. What can have a greater tendency to moderate our trouble, which naturally arises from the departure of our dearest friends, than to consider, that they are laid down to rest for awhile; that they are asleep, and asleep in the arms of Jesus; that they will awake in the morning of the resurrection fresh and cheerful; that Christ will bring them with him at his second coming, when we shall meet together again, and never part more, but shall be for ever with the Lord? With such words or doctrines as these, the apostle would have the persons he writes to, comfort one another under their present sorrowful circumstances. With this view he delivers what he does in the words before us, and in some following verses; and in order to pursue the same design, let us attend to,

I. The representation the apostle gives of the state and condition of the pious dead, that they are asleep; and asleep in Jesus.

II. The knowledge that living saints may have, and the notice they should take, of this their state and condition; I would not have you to be ignorant, etc.

III. The nature, rule and measure, of that sorrow, which is to be expressed on the account of departed saints; that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope.

IV. The comfortable assurance believers may, and should have, of the resurrection of the just, from the death and resurrection of Christ, which may serve as a proper allay of their grief and sorrow; for if we believe, etc.

I. It is worth our while to consider, and in our meditations a little to dwell upon the representation here given, of the state and condition of the pious dead; of those that die in Christ. As,

1. That they are asleep. It was in common use among the eastern nations, particularly the Hebrews, Chaldeans, and Syrians, when they spoke of

their dead, to say, they were asleep. We have many instances of this way of speaking both in the Old and New Testament; frequently we read of such an one, {1 Kings 2:10;11:43}, as David, Solomon, etc. that he slept with his fathers, and was buried; that is, he died as they did, and was interred among them. This phrase is indeed sometimes promiscuously used of good and bad; as, when it is said, And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt; {Daniel 12:2}, but most commonly it is applied to good men; Our friend Lazarus, says Christ, sleepeth, but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep; {John 11:11}, that is, he is dead, and I go to raise him from the dead: So Christ is said to be the first fruits of them that slept, {1 Corinthians 15:20}, not of all mankind, but of them to whom he is an head, who are members of his body, and die in him.

Now, when the dead are said to be asleep, this is not to be understood of their souls, but of their bodies only. Some have given into this stupid and uncomfortable notion, that when the body dies, the soul falls into a deep sleep, and continues in a state of insensibility and inactivity until the resurrection; but the soul being immaterial is incapable of sleep, that only belongs to bodies; and it is easy to observe, that when the body is asleep the soul is awake, as appears from dreams and visions of the night; and when the body lies as it were dead, as in ecstasies and raptures, the soul is active; yea, the soul being freed from the body must be more active in spiritual services, than when in it, that being often an hindrance to it in the present state of things. Besides, when it is separate from the body it is most like to the angels, who rest not day and night, saying Holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty. Add to this, that if the souls of believers after death were to remain in a state of insensibility and inactivity, the case of departed saints would be much worse than that of the living; nor would the apostle Paul have been in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, had he known he must have remained in such a state; for it would have been better for him, and for the churches of Christ, to have continued on earth till the resurrection, than for his soul to be sleeping, senseless, and inactive: no, the souls of believers, as soon as separated from their bodies, enter into

paradise, return to God, are with Christ in a state of happiness and joy, and are employed in praising the Lord, and singing the Lamb's new song. Were those passages of scripture which speak of the saints sleeping in death, to be understood of their souls, they would prove more than what is contended for; namely, that their souls die, since by sleep in all such places is meant no other than death. But these are to be understood of their bodies, which only are capable of it. Death is signified by sleeping, because there is a great resemblance between them. Sleep is a lively representation of death; an Heathen could take notice of this, and say, "O! foolish man, what is sleep but the image of cold death?" As in sleep, so in death, there is no exercise of the senses; one fast asleep can neither see, nor hear, nor feel, etc. Death also closes the eyes, stops the ears, deprives the body of feeling, and is an entire cessation of the senses, and all the operations that depend upon them. Hence the wise man gives this advice to such as are in life and health, Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest. {Ecclesiastes 9:10}.

In both, persons are at rest; sleep is taken in order for rest, and rest is often taken in sleep. The grave is also a resting-place for the saints; There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest; {Job 3:17}, that is, from the troublings of the wicked, whether wicked men or devils, or a wicked heart: They hear no more the cry of violence, nor feel any more the hand of the oppressor; wherefore Solomon says, I praised the dead, or, as the Chaldee paraphrase renders the phrase, I praised those that lie down to sleep, which are already dead, mere than the living which are yet alive. Death cures them at once of all the distempers and diseases of their bodies, and sets them free from all their pains and agonies: They that die in the Lord, or sleep in Jesus, rest from their labors and fatigues both of body and mind, and their works do follow them. Moreover, such as are asleep, they do not sleep always, they awake again out of sleep: So they that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; particularly, those that sleep in Jesus, when he shall call unto them, they shall hear his voice, saying, Awake and sing, ye that dwell in

the dust; they shall then rise immediately with the utmost pleasure, in perfect conformity to the image of Christ; which will be their great satisfaction; as the Psalmist says, As for me I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness. {Psalm 17:15}. Again, as the sleep of a laboring man is sweet to him, it refreshes nature, revives his spirits, and restores his strength; he lies down in the evening fatigued and weary, he rises in the morning brisk and cheerful, and fit for business: So the saints at the resurrection will awake out of their sleep to great advantage; the body, which is sown in corruption, will be raised in incorruption; which is sown in dishonor, will be raised in glory; which is sown in weakness, will be raised in power; and, which is sown a natural body, will be raised a spiritual one, and so fit for spiritual employment and service. Add to all this, that both sleep and death are common to all men.

Sleep is necessary for man, what he cannot do without, and is a blessing of nature that all more or less enjoy. Death is become necessary for all; the grave is the house appointed for all living. It is the decree of heaven, that man should once die, or pass under a change that is equivalent to death; for though we shall not all sleep, that is, die, yet we shall all be changed: And though death is the wages of sin, and so is a curse of the law entailed upon mankind, yet to them that die in the Lord it is a blessing; the curse is removed from their death, the sting is taken out of it by Christ; so he gives his beloved sleep, in a different manner from the rest of men. For,

2. The pious dead are not only asleep, but asleep in Jesus. Some join the phrase in or by Jesus with the word bring, and read the sentence thus, them that sleep, by Jesus will God bring with him; intimating, that God will raise up the dead bodies of the saints by Christ, as God-Man and Mediator; for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; and that through him he will bring them to eternal glory, and save them by him, the Lord their God, alone; by whom he resolved, determined, and appointed from all eternity, to save them. Others read the words, them that sleep for or through Jesus; f5 that

is, who die for the sake of Christ, and so restrain them to the martyrs of Jesus; who, they suppose, only will have part in the first resurrection, and are the dead in Christ that shall rise first, and whom God will bring along with Jesus at his second coming: But it should be observed, that the apostle in this epistle speaks of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints; f6 they shall all come with him, not only the martyrs, but all the rest; wherefore I think the words are best rendered, as they are by our translators, them that sleep in Jesus; and it is the apostle's language elsewhere, then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished, {1Corinthians 15:18}, and to be understood of all that die in the Lord, that is, who are interested in him; for we are not to limit such expressions to those who die in faith, in the lively exercise of faith on Christ. Many indeed have died in this comfortable manner, which has made their death easy to themselves, and delightful to their friends. So David died, as his last words testify; Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. {2 Samuel 23:5}.

So good old Simeon died in the arms of Jesus; I was just ready to say, with Jesus in his arms, expressing himself thus; Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. {Luke 2:29, 30}. Thus died the great apostle of the Gentiles, who, as he could say in life, I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day; {2Timothy 1:12}, so when the time of his departure was at hand, with the greatest cheerfulness, and with full assurance of faith declared, saying, 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 to me at that day. {2 Timothy 4:7, 8}.

But this is not always the case of God's people; some of them are in the dark in their last moments, and go from hence under a cloud, and yet go safe, and may be said to die or sleep in Jesus, interested in him, and in union with him, which this phrase in Jesus is expressive of. Union to

Christ may be considered either as secret or open. God's elect had a secret union to Christ from all eternity, for they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world; and were as early blessed in him with all spiritual blessings; grace was given to them in him before the world began; and on account of this union were preserved in him in time, notwithstanding the fall of Adam; were represented in him, and by him, when he was crucified and slain, when he was buried in the grave and rose again; hence they are said to be raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. {Ephesians 2:6}.

Now this secret union to Christ becomes open and manifest in conversion; I knew a man in Christ, says the apostle, above fourteen years ago, {2 Corinthians 12:2}, meaning himself, who was converted so many years before the time of his then writing. In this sense are we to understand those words of the same apostle, where he says, that Andronicus and Junia were in Christ before him; {Romans 16:7.} which cannot be said of their election in Christ, and federal relation to him, which commenced together. With respect to these things, one person cannot be said to be in Christ before another; but one man may be converted before another, and so appear to be in Christ before the other does, which is what the apostle means. Now this union is not dissolved by death; such as are once in Christ, are always so; they that are in him while living, are in him when they die; and will be found in him in the resurrection-morn, and day of judgment. Those whom Christ betroths to himself, takes into a near conjugal union and relation to himself, he betroths for ever. Love is the bond of this union, and there is nothing either in life or death that can unloose it. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that has loved us; for, adds the apostle, I am persuaded, that neither death nor life — shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. {Romans 8:35, 37-39}.

The bodies as well as the souls of the saints are united to Christ, and remain in union to him, even when they are asleep or dead; for though death dissolves the union between soul and body, it does not dissolve the union between the body and Christ; our bodies are the members of Christ, and continue to be so in the grave, as elsewhere; hence whilst there, they are at rest, and in the greatest safety, being under the inspection, care, and guardianship of Christ; to whom Jehovah, the Father, has declared it as his will, that of all which he hath given him he should lose nothing, no not any of their dust, but should raise it up again at the last day; and by virtue of this union will the pious dead be raised. Christ is the first-fruits of them, which represents, sanctifies, and ensures the whole lump: Because he lives, who was dead, they who are dead and sleep in him shall live also. This is what the apostle strongly argues in the words of our text, If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, then we should believe also, that them that sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him; for if the head is risen, the members shall be raised also. But let us proceed,

II. To consider the knowledge that living saints may have, and the notice that they should take, of the state and condition of them that are asleep in Jesus: I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them that are asleep. And,

1. We may be assured that they are, that they are in being, that they do exist; for, though they are gone from us, they are somewhere else. We are not to consider them as non-entities, as annihilated, as reduced to nothing, because they are departed from us. It is said indeed of Rachel, that she was weeping for her children, and refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not; {Jeremiah 30:15}, that is, they were not with her, they were not on earth, in the land of the living; but then it follows not, that they were not any where else. It is observed of Enoch, that he was not; that is, he was not on earth, conversing among men as before; he was in heaven with God, for God took him. Thus, though the places of our dear friends and relations, who die in the Lord, know them no more; though their families and acquaintance know them no more

after the flesh, yet they are still in being; their souls are immortal and never die; and as soon as their bodies die, their souls return to God that gave them: as soon as these are separated from their bodies, as swift as angels can bear them away, they are carried by them into Abraham's bosom; they are lodged in the embraces of Christ, and continue with him in the heavenly paradise, till the last trumpet sounds, and the dead arise. Nor are their bodies, which are laid in grave, crumbled into nothing; they return indeed to the dust but there is a wide difference between returning to the dust, and being reduced to nothing. These earthly tabernacles indeed are unpinned and taken down, and their several parts separated from each other; but then they are not utterly destroyed; and they will be put together again in a better frame and order than ever they were before; and so become fit and everlasting habitations for their souls to dwell in. The bodies of the saints are the purchase of Christ's blood, are members of his body, and the temples of the holy Ghost, and therefore can never be brought to nothing. Christ will not lose his purchase, nor any part of his fullness; nor will the Spirit of God lose his dwelling place.

2. We should consider, and bear in mind, not only that they are, but that they are asleep, yea, asleep in Jesus, and so at rest and in safety. Such a view of the state of the dead serves to render death very easy and familiar to us; and to take off the horror, and those frightful apprehensions which are often entertained concerning it; for the death of a believer is but like a man's lying down on his bed at evening, where he takes a comfortable nap till the morning light, when he rises refreshed and satisfied. In this light Job represents it to himself and others, Man, says he, lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more; {Job 14:12, 14, 15}, which general case of man he particularly applies to himself, and explains what he means by such expressions, saying, If a man die, shall he live again? Yes, he shall live again; wherefore, says he, all the days of my appointed time, that is, in the grave, will I wait, with patience, until my change comes, at the time of the glorious resurrection; when thou shalt call, as one man may call up another in the morning to rise out of his bed, and attend his business, and I will answer thee; I shall

awake at thy call; I shall rise at thy word of command, when I shall hear thee say, “Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment;” for thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands, to see it raised and restored to a more glorious form than it now exists in: Hence he could say to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister: And where is now my hope? As for my hope, who shall see it? They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust. This consideration of the state of the dead, as of persons asleep, and at rest, serves also to moderate our grief and sorrow for the loss of any of our friends. Very pertinently may those words be applied to our present case, which our Lord spoke to the parents of the maid he raised from the dead, and others with them; why make ye this ado and weep? *THE DAMSEL IS NOT DEAD, BUT SLEEPETH*. {Mark 5:39}. What master of a family can be uneasy at finding his family, his wife, his children, his servants, in a sound fast sleep at midnight?

May he not expect they will rise in the morning well and healthful, and ready to go about any service that may be proper for them. Sound sleep supposes healthfulness; and in case of illness and indisposition it promises a deliverance from it; as the disciples observed concerning Lazarus, when Christ said, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; Lord, say they, if he sleep he shall do well. {John 11:12}. The saints who are fallen asleep must needs do well; they cannot do otherwise than well, who not only sleep, but sleep in Jesus. Should it be asked, How shall we know that our friends died in Christ, or sleep in Jesus? It may be replied, Did they live in Christ? Did they live to him? If so, they died in him, and died to him; for none of us, that is, of the saints, liveth to himself; and no man, of that fort, dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. So that from hence it may be strongly concluded, that, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. {Romans 14:7, 8}. Since therefore our life, and that of our friends, is hid with Christ in God; though we shall die, and they are fallen asleep in Jesus, yet, when Christ who is our and their life, shall appear, we and they shall appear with him in glory. {Colossians 3:3, 4}.

3. It may be known, and should be considered, that the pious dead, though they are at present asleep, they will not sleep always, they will awake again, they will rise from the dead. Nothing is more certain, than that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust; and as for the dead in Christ, they will rise first; they will have the start of the wicked dead by the space of a thousand years. The resurrection-day is the day of the Lord; and one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. {2 Peter 3:8}. The saints will rise at the beginning of this day, in the morning of it, as soon as ever the sun of righteousness is risen, or Christ is come; but the rest of the dead, {Revelation 20:5, 6}, the wicked dead, shall not live again till the thousand years are finished; they will not rise till the evening of this day, towards the expiration of it; like sheep they are laid in the grave, death shall feed on them, and retain them under his power all this long day; and the upright, the righteous ones, who are found in Christ and his righteousness, shall have the dominion over them in the morning. {Psalm 49:14}.

Happy then are they that are the Lord's, that die in him, they will share all the glories and advantages of the resurrection to eternal life: blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests to God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, as it serves to support the people of God under present afflictions, and when in the view of death and eternity; as it did Job, who could say, though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me; {Job 19:26, 27}, so it tends to assuage that grief and trouble which attend the removal of our friends from us; and for that reason should be observed and considered by us.

4. We may assure ourselves, that the saints, while their bodies are sleeping in Jesus, and before they awake in the resurrection-morn, in the meanwhile, during this interval, their souls are in a state of happiness:

they are mixed with the spirits of just men made perfect; they are attended with, and surrounded by an innumerable company of angels; they are in the presence of, and enjoy uninterrupted communion with God, Father, Son, and Spirit; in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore: they are blessed with the vision of God, are employed in singing the hallelujahs of the lamb, enjoy the society of glorified spirits, and are in perfect peace and rest. If it should be said, how shall we know that this is the case of our departed friends? Could we be satisfied of this, we should sit easy under the loss of them; let this single question be put, is there any reason to believe the grace of God was bestowed upon them? If this is a clear point, the other is out of all doubt; for nothing is more certain than this, that to whom God gives grace he also gives glory. We may be assured of the happiness of our friends in the other world, from their having tasted that the Lord was gracious to them in this. Vocation, justification and glorification, are inseparably connected together; whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. {Romans 8:30}.

5. Add to all these considerations one more, that in a little time we shall meet together again, and never part. Our friends are gone but a little before us; we are hastening after them as fast as the wings of time can carry us. The conduct of David is worthy of our imitation; While the child was yet alive, says he, I fasted and wept; for I said, who can tell, whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. {2 Samuel 12:22, 23}. Or should the coming of the Lord prevent our going to them; for, who knows how soon he may come? He will bring all his saints with him, and we shall have a glorious meeting with them. Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be together with the Lord; wherefore we should comfort one another with these words. And seeing we cannot be wholly ignorant concerning them that are asleep; yea, we may assure ourselves of their happy state and condition; let us dry up our

tears, and cease sorrowing, especially in any immoderate way, and what is unbecoming our Christian character. Which brings me,

III. To inquire into the nature, rule, and measure, of that sorrow, which is to be expressed on the account of the decease of our friends and relatives; That ye sorrow not, says the apostle, even as others which have no hope. All sorrow for them is not denied and condemned; only such as was used by others, oi loipoi “the rest,” who were no Christians, but unconverted Gentiles. The apostle’s view is not to encourage and establish a stoical apathy, a stupid indolence, and brutal insensibility; all which are contrary to the make of human nature, and to the practice of the saints, and even of Christ and his apostles. Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her; Joseph made a mourning for his father seven days; the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; David lamented the death of Saul, Jonathan, and Abner; Christ wept over the grave of Lazarus; devout men that carried Stephen to his burial made great lamentation over him; and our apostle, who gives the instructions in our text, signifies concerning his friend Epaphroditus, who was sick nigh unto death; that if the Lord had not had mercy on him he should have had sorrow upon sorrow: But excessive, immoderate sorrow, and all the extravagant forms of it the Gentiles ran into, are here forbidden. The Jews were not allowed to mourn for their dead after the manner of the Heathens; it was a standing law in Israel, Ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead; {Deuteronomy 14:4}, practices, it seems, which were used among the nations of the world: Though these people, as they were always prone to imitate the Gentiles, so they did in their forms of mourning for the dead; for as the Romans had their Praeficae, and the Grecians their ihlemiveiai, so they had their twggqm “mourning women;” see {Jeremiah 9:17}, who by their disheveled hair, naked breasts, and mournful voice, moved upon the affections, produced tears from others, and set them mourning and sorrowing: Such methods as these the apostle would not have Christians give into, and especially such as carried in them rather marks of distraction than of affection; such as covering themselves with mud, dirt, and filth, tearing of their

mouths and cheeks, smiting their heads, breasts, and thighs; which kinds of mourning were condemned by the wiser sort of the Heathens themselves; particularly by Cicero, who pronounces them detestable; of this sort was the mourning of Alexander for his friend Hephestion, who, when he died, cast his armor, gold, silver, and precious garments, into the fire with him; shaved his soldiers, and pulled down the tower and walls of the city of Ecbatana, where he was; upon which the Heathen historian himself observes, that he epenqei barqaeikwv, “mourned in a barbarous way,” or after the manner of the Barbarians, the more savage and uncultivated nations of the world; but these were the extravagancies, and furious transports of men that had no hope; when their friends died, they looked upon them, as entirely lost, as no longer in being; they had no expectation of seeing, meeting, and enjoying them any more, and this drove them into those madneses and excesses.

They had no notion of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; they were without hope of that, they looked upon it as a ridiculous principle, and judged it incredible, and so despaired of ever seeing their friends alive again: But we, who believe the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, should not sorrow as they did, and mourn over our friends as though they were lost, and never to be enjoyed more; this is to act contrary to our character as Christians, to the doctrines of Christianity, to the gospel of Christ, in which life and immortality are brought to light, and set in the clearest view before us. Even Seneca the Heathen may shame us out of such a conduct as this; who having some little notion of the immortality of the soul, and its future existence in a separate state, though none of the resurrection of the body, in a consolatory letter to Lucilius, on the account of the death of his friend Flaccus, thus expresses himself; “The thought of deceased friends is sweet and pleasant to me; for I have enjoyed them as one that was about to lose them; and I have lost them as one that may have them again.” Had this man known and embraced the christian doctrine of the resurrection, how would he have improved it to the consolation of himself and friends on such an occasion as ours? Let us not sorrow then as such who are without any knowledge of this doctrine, and hope of this blessing. This I

take to be the sense of the apostle, who is not to be understood of other Christians who had no hope of the spiritual and eternal welfare of their deceased friends; not but that the sorrow of those who have a good hope of the future well-being of their dear relations, must, and ought to be greatly different from that of others who have no hope at all. But the apostle is speaking of other Gentiles, who were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. {Ephesians 2:12}.

I go on,

IV. To observe, the comfortable assurance that believers may, and should have, that the souls of their pious friends will be brought along with Christ; and that their bodies will be raised from the dead at his second coming ; in which they may be confirmed by his death, and resurrection from the dead. We may hope, and should believe, that them that sleep in Jesus, God will bring with him; that is, either Jehovah the Father will bring them with his Son, or Jehovah the Son will bring them with himself; for the Lord our God shall come, and all the saints with him. {Zechariah 14:5}. When Christ shall move from the third heaven, where he now is in his glorified body, all the blessed spirits of men made perfect shall attend him; when he shall descend into the region of the air, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, the dead bodies of the saints that sleep in him shall awake and rise out of their dusty beds, and be reunited with their souls; when they shall proceed with Christ, at the close of that day, to the judgment of the world: For not only the twelve apostles shall be seated on twelve thrones, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel; and all the holy martyrs shall have thrones set for them, and judgment shall be given them; but even all the saints shall be some way or other concerned in that awful work: Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? {1 Corinthians 6:2}.

And when Christ has presented all his elect ones to himself as a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, and has taken a full view of them, he will take them up with him into the third heaven; he

will introduce them into his father's house, and fix them eternally in those mansions which he has prepared for them; when he will see and enjoy with satisfaction the whole fruit of his labor, blood, and purchase, and have all his prayers and intercessions effectually answered; which have been made in such form as this, Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. {John 17:24}.

Now of all this the death and resurrection of Christ are a pledge and confirmation; for if we believe that Christ died and rose again, which are things beyond all doubt and question; these are the principal articles of the Christian faith, that Christ was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification; then we ought to believe, that Christ will bring the saints with him, for whom he died, and raise up their dead bodies to everlasting life. He himself is risen from the dead, and has the keys of hell and death; he can and will unlock the graves of his people, and set them free; he is the resurrection and the life; he is both the efficient and meritorious cause of the resurrection of the just: He is the first-born from the dead, and the first-fruits of them that sleep in him. His resurrection is a pledge and earnest of the saints resurrection. As sure as his dead body is raised, so sure shall theirs be raised also, and be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. {Philippians 3:21}.

Since therefore, from Christ's resurrection, we may strongly conclude the resurrection of the saints; then we ought not to sorrow as those who are without hope of it, and may firmly believe, that those of our dear friends, of whom we have good hope through grace, that they have had an experience of the grace of God, that these sleep in Jesus, and shall be brought with him, and shall come forth to the resurrection of life. And, blessed be God, this is the case before us, which has been the occasion of this discourse; we have not only hope, but faith, even full assurance of faith, as to the truth of the work of grace upon the soul of our dear child. My affections will not permit me to give you an account of the ground and reason of this hope, this faith, this confidence; perhaps I may

communicate it to you in another way. I find I must break off at once. Consider what has been said, and the Lord give us understanding.

*AN ACCOUNT of some Choice Experiences of
ELIZABETH GILL*

*Who departed this Life May 30, 1738, having entered the Thirteenth
Year of her Age.*

ELIZABETH GILL, daughter of JOHN and ELIZABETH GILL, was born March 14, 1725-6. She appeared from her infancy to be a child of a sweet disposition; of great solidity and thoughtfulness; of a quick understanding, and retentive memory. She was much reserved, and greatly delighted in retirement and solitude; was not addicted to play as children usually are, and if at any time she amused herself with the innocent diversions of her age, it was not in company with the rude and vain, but with the more sober and civilized sort of children.

As she grew up, she took much delight in reading good books; such as, BUNYAN'S Pilgrims Progress, JANEWAY'S Token for Children, and others of the like kind; and would observe the difference there was between some children and others; how, that some as soon as they began to speak, and before they could speak plain, learned bad words, and took the name of God in vain; when others were religiously inclined, and thoughtful about a future state; of which number she earnestly desired to be. She took great notice in hearing the word, and would afterwards repeat many things to her mother. She was a diligent observer of what passed in christian conversation; and among other things remarked, that the conversion of the people of God was sometimes occasioned by dreams, which put them on close thinking about the welfare of their immortal souls. This made her greatly desire, that the like might be the means of her conversion: Accordingly, some time after she dreamed, and in her dream hid a view both of heaven and hell; the smoke of the

latter came out in a most dreadful manner, and greatly terrified her; when she spied, as she thought, her schoolmistress, a gracious good woman, in heaven, having some reviving drops in her bosom; thither she wanted to get, and at length did get to her; where she thought herself in a most glorious place, and happy condition. Some time after she dreamed again, that a man on horseback appeared to her in a most terrible manner, threatening to kill her; at which she thought she was not at all daunted, but quietly and cheerfully submitted to the stroke of death; when, on a sudden, she found herself in a most delightful place, where were abundance of people walking to and fro; but she observed that they took no notice of one another, nor said anything to each other. When she awaked, she wished herself again in that pleasant place. This was about two years ago. Now, though she had had many thoughts before about a future state, after this she began to think more closely of it. This put her upon seeking and praying to God, that he would, as she expressed herself, give her grace; to which she was encouraged by those words, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. {Matthew 7:7}.

It pleased God now to show her vileness, sinfulness, and unworthiness, the wickedness of her heart and nature; for notwithstanding all her solidity and sobriety, which seemed to be as it were natural to her, she thought herself one of the wickedest creatures upon earth. When one heard that her schoolmistress before mentioned should say of her, "Surely that child was sanctified from the womb;" she thought within herself, "Am I, Oh! she does not know how bad I am; what a wicked heart I have."

A remarkable instance of her sense of sin, and the tenderness of her conscience, as well as of God's sealing his pardoning grace to her soul, is what follows; at a certain time her brother standing in her way, she bid him remove; instead of doing which, he smiled at her, and gave her no answer; upon that she says to him, "The boy stands like a fool." But, O! What work did that word fool make in her poor conscience: She had no rest night nor day, for some time after; until it pleased God to apply to

her, whilst she was crying alone by herself, those words, I will pardon thine iniquity, and will remember thy sins no more; {Jeremiah 31:34}, which calmed her conscience, and quieted her mind.

Her desires after Christ, and an interest in him, grew very strong; she found in her soul a very great affection for him; she would sometimes say within herself, “I love him; methinks, I could hug him in my arms.” She thought it was a hard thing to come to Christ. But she sometimes hoped she had an interest in him, though she durst not say she had, for fears attended her. But on her death-bed, discoursing with her father about divine things, she dropped those appropriating words, Christ died for me; which being observed by him, he said to her, “My dear, can you say, Christ died for you?” Yes, said she, “Christ died for me.” Nay, one time she said, she thought she even saw Christ; when those words were made of wonderful use to her, for yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. {Hebrews 10:37}.

She had many sweet words of scripture brought home to her soul, which yielded her much spiritual refreshment. Among the rest, that portion of scripture, I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, {Isaiah 41:10}, was made very useful to her in a time of great distress; for being in great indisposition of body, and knowing what was coming upon her, and what she must go through, was much discouraged; but those words being set home upon her heart, she was much encouraged, cheerfully went through what she so much feared, and felt but little pain.

Sometimes she would be afraid, that the passages of scriptures which came to her mind did not come in a right way, and from the Spirit of God; but were what she had heard or read, and so thought of them again. She would listen with great attention and pleasure to the people of God, when discoursing about their experience of the grace of God; and would oftentimes observe to herself, that her case and theirs was alike, and that she felt and experienced the same things as they did; which gave her great satisfaction. She had a great desire after, and a wonderful esteem

of the grace of humility, both in things temporal and spiritual. She admired it in others, and wished for it in herself. She desired not to have a proud look, or carriage, or to behave herself proudly, in any respect. She thought within herself, that should she live to be a woman, and God should bless her with anything of this world, she should choose to go neat and clean, but would not spend her money in fine clothes; but what she could spare would give to good people that were poor. And as to things spiritual, she was always fearful, lest any pride or vanity should appear in her: Hence she was shy of speaking of what God had done for her, lest it should seem, or be thought to arise from pride, and so be a matter of boasting. Hence she studiously affected to retire into corners, to read good books, and to desire of God to give her his grace. Frequently her bed, and time of sleep and rest, were the place and time of her serious and deepest meditations; for then, to use her own words, she could privately speak to herself. And God did clothe her with humility, and gave her the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in his sight of great price: And to the last she entertained a mean and low opinion of herself. When it was told her, that such an one had prayed for her, and such an one had prayed for her, she would say, “What, think of me! What, pray for me! Such an unworthy creature as I am!”

She expressed a very great veneration and respect for the hearing of the word, and other ordinances of the gospel. When at any time under hearing the word, she found her heart wandering after, and her thoughts diverted to other things, as she sometimes did, whereby she lost much of what was spoken, it was a grief and trouble to her. And since her illness, how has she longed to enjoy opportunities of hearing the gospel preached, which she hoped to do with more attention and profit. Her father repeating in the family one Lord’s Day evening the heads of a sermon he had preached that day on {Proverbs 8:34}. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my door it was made of much use to her. Two things she particularly observed; the one was, the necessity and usefulness of hearing the word, in order to the knowledge of Christ, and faith in him, which was proved from {Romans 10:14}. How shall they believe in him, of whom they

have not heard? And the other was, the encouragement given to poor souls to wait upon the ministry of the word, taken from the instance of the poor man's waiting at the pool of Bethesda, who had an infirmity thirty-eight years, and at last had a cure.

At a certain time she and her brother having seen the ordinance of baptism administered by their father, they talked together about it; her brother said, he should not care to be baptized; he should be afraid. But, thought she, within herself, if things were but right with me; if I had but a true knowledge of things I should not be afraid, I should gladly be baptized. And sometimes she would think with herself, what a delightful thing it would be, should she go to the Lord's Supper, and partake of it, with the saints and people of God. When she related this to her father on her deathbed, he being somewhat fearful, lest she should then labor under any discouragements, because he had not been baptized, nor had partook of the Lord's supper, told her, that though these are ordinances of Christ, and ought to be complied with, and submitted to by all that believe in Christ, who are proper subjects of them, and are satisfied of their right to them, as they have health and opportunity, yet salvation does not depend upon them; persons may be saved without them, through the grace of Christ, who have not an opportunity of submitting to them; to which she assented, and seemed very well satisfied.

She was greatly affected with the goodness, grace, and mercy of God, in taking such notice of, and giving his Son for such a sinful, unworthy creature, as she thought herself to be. She expressed much thankfulness for temporal mercies, and took great notice of the common mercies of life. When she rose in a morning she would think with herself, what a mercy it was, that she had been refreshed with rest, and preserved in the night season from fire and other dangers. Her afflictions, pains and agonies, which were many and great, were borne by her, in her illness, with much patience; though she would sometimes complain, she had not, and was fearful she should not have patience enough. Sometimes she would think of the holy martyrs, and of their sufferings: "O! says she, What did they suffer! How were they burnt for Christ? With what

patience did they endure? O! that I had but patience to bear what God is pleased to lay upon me.”

Death was no king of terrors to her; she did not seem to have the least fear of it, nor in any respect, or on any account to be intimidated by it. She often expressed her willingness to die, and her readiness to submit to the will of God; and would observe, that God sometimes makes persons willing to die before they do, which was her case; nor could she see, she said, anything in this world that was desirable, for which she might wish to live. And if at any time she signified any desire of living, she added, it was only for her mother’s sake, who she knew would be greatly troubled at her death. Yea, she longed to be gone, and would often pour out her soul, in private ejaculations, to her dear Lord, with whom she desired to be. Her sister once observing her lips to move, as they often would when no voice was heard, said to her, “My dear, did you say any thing?” “No, says she, I was not speaking to you, nor to any body else; I was speaking to my dear Lord.” In this frame she continued to the last, as long as she was sensible, and on Tuesday, May 30th, sweetly fell asleep in Jesus, aged twelve years, two months, and sixteen days. The dream she had of the man on horseback, was a lively emblem of her death, and the manner of it. Death seems to be represented by him, at whose awful stroke she was not in the least dismayed, but quietly submitted to it; and no doubt finds herself in that delightful place she thought herself to be in then, where God has given her places to walk among those that stand by. {Zechariah 3:7}.

These things, with many others which cannot be perfectly recollected, were related by her, on her death-bed, to her father and mother, with whom only she had freedom of speech about spiritual things. One thing is very remarkable, that while she was discoursing about these matters, as she sometimes would an hour, or an hour and a half together, she was quite another person; her spirits would revive; a briskness appeared in her countenance; she seemed to have no pain; nor was the least groan or complaint heard from her all the while; nor any appearance of even weariness throughout the whole interval; and would for some time after

continue better, and more cheerful, though before her agonies were very great: and she would also observe, that when she had pleasant thoughts, as she called them, she felt no pain.