

A
TRUE BELIEVER'S CHOICE
AND
PLEASURE.

INSTANCED IN THE EXEMPLARY

LIFE OF MRS. MARY COXE,

THE LATE WIFE OF

DR. THOMAS COXE.



TO MY

WORTHY AND MUCH HONOURED FRIEND,

DR. THOMAS COXE.

SIR,

THOUGH your great kindness and care of the health of me and mine much oblige me to you, and your personal worth much more, and your worthy children command my great respect and love, yet none of these should have moved me to say a word of all that I have said of your deceased wife, which I had not verily believed to be true, and it was God's grace in her which much more commanded it than all my debt to you and yours.

She was so exemplary, as that I think it my duty, for the good of others, to make this publication of her character, and of this sermon.

But one great defect is here to be notified to the reader, that almost all her secret way of duty, and particular converse, is omitted, which you that were still with her could have described, for I thought meet to say no more than I either knew myself, or was obvious, and known to many.

The words which I heard but yesterday from the mouth of your brother in discourse, were such as I doubt can be said of few, that in so many years, from the hour of her marriage to her death, she was never known to do one disobliging action, or speak one disobliging word, of or to any one of her husband's kindred or relations.

Had it seemed meet to you, or to your worthy and ingenious son, and your pious daughter (the true image of her

mother,) to have been the describer of the soul and life of this exemplary saint, how much more fully could you have done it than I, that was so much less acquainted with her.

She is gone home, and you and I are at the door. The Lord give us so to live by faith on the promise and love of God, and the things unseen, that thence we may daily fetch our ruling motives, and establishing consolations, and not from a transitory, deceitful world ; and, following Christ and his saints under the cross, may with them possess the incorruptible crown, and be found at his call among those that love his appearing, and be for ever with the Lord. Amen, Amen.

November 19, 1669.

A TRUE BELIEVER'S CHOICE AND PLEASURE.

PSALM cxix. 111.

Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

A TEXT that speaketh of rejoicing, and that in an heritage, and an heritage for ever, may seem unsuitable to a mournful funeral; but it was chosen by our deceased friend, and not without justifiable reason. That which was a day of sorrow to us, was a day of rest and joy to her, and it was meet that she should foresee that joy, and, tasting it in the first-fruits, should commend that to us which she had found so sweet, and would bring us to the felicity which she hath now obtained. If the damned sensualist, (Luke xvi.,) would have had one sent from another world, in hope to save his unbelieving brethren, no wonder if a holy person were desirous that others should partake of her pleasure and inheritance, and, like the lepers that found the siege of Samaria raised, would not feast and rejoice alone. She chose this, no doubt, as that which was most lively imprinted on her own heart, with a just desire that it might be imprinted also on the hearts of others, that so we may not only rejoice with her that now rejoiceth in the heavenly possession, but, as Paul saith, "Every man may prove his own works, and so may have rejoicing in himself alone, and not (only) in another." (Gal. vi. 4.) Let us, therefore, by God's assistance, so improve these words, as may conduce to this desired end.

By God's "testimonies" here is meant that supernaturally revealed law and promise, which was possessed by the church of the Jews, as God's peculiar people, supposing the law of nature, and the common mercies which God had given to all the rest of fallen mankind. Both the precepts and promises are here included, the types, and their signification of the thing typified.

“ I have taken them,” signifieth, I have believed them, implying that God revealed them ; and I have accepted them, implying that God had offered them ; and I have chosen them, implying the preferring them before all competitors ; and I have trusted them, as signifying their special use for the guiding, stablishing, quieting, and saving of the soul.

“ For an heritage,” signifieth,

1. As that which I trust to as my security for an heavenly inheritance.

2. And as that which now is my best portion while I am in the way, including the things connoted.

3. And as that which I prefer before all wealth, and worldly heritage. Alexander and Cæsar had larger dominions than David, but neither of them was king of God's peculiar people, that had possession of his oracles, nor had the promises which he had, that Christ should be his son and successor on his throne.

The words “ for ever,” relate both to the inheritance as everlasting, and also to David's choice, as immutably hereupon determined.

They are said to be the rejoicing of the heart aptitudinally in themselves, which caused him to choose them, and actually, because he had chosen, believed, loved, and obeyed them.

So that this is the sum of the sense : ‘ Worldly men make choice of a worldly inheritance, and hopes, and on this they trust ; and in this they seek their chiefest pleasure : but I, though blessed largely with thy bounty, have suffered many afflictions in the world : but thy word hath been my guide, and thy promises still fulfilled to me ; and experience hath confirmed my faith and resolution to lay all my hope upon thy word or covenant, both for this life and that to come, and from it I seek and fetch my comfort : it hath been my joy in all my sorrows, and in it to the last will I rejoice.’ This is the sense of the text, from which we are all taught,—

Doct. That God's covenant or testimonies are the true believer's heritage for ever, and as such are trusted and chosen by him, and therefore, among all the allurements and the crosses of this world, are the support and rejoicing of his heart.

In the handling this I shall show you,

I. What it is in God's testimonies which make them fit to be our heritage and our joy.

II. How they are called an heritage for ever.

III. How they are so taken by believers.

IV. How far they are their joy.

I. In God's covenant or testimonies there is, 1. The Author. 2. The Mediator. 3. The applying Agent. 4. The ascertaining revelation. 5. The donative or benefit given. 6. The guiding doctrine and law. 7. And the persons or subjects connoted, to whom all this is suited, to be an heritage for ever, and the rejoicing of their hearts.

1. The author is God, the Lord of us and all, in whose hand and will is our soul and body, our life and death, our health and sickness, our joy and sorrow; whose loving-kindness is life, and better than life; (Psalm lxiii. 3;) who, if he will, can make us whole and happy, and who hath told us what he will do by his covenant. He wanteth not love, for he is love itself; essential, infinite self-love, communicating to his creatures such love as his wisdom seeth meet for them to receive. The love that gave us the Mediator and the covenant, will certainly perform it; it was of mercy that he promised, it is now of mercy and justice that he performs it. He wanteth not wisdom to rule the world by truth and goodness, and needeth not deceit and falsehood hereunto, nor to flatter such worms as we into obedience. Nor doth he, that maintaineth heaven and earth, want power to make good all his word; nor is there any adverse power to make it difficult, and hazard the success. Indeed, he that seriously considereth the divine perfection, will think it were more strange and incredible that God should not bless and glorify the faithful according to his word. If it be credible that the sun sends forth its illuminating and enlivening beams so far and wide, to so many millions of various creatures, (though it scorch the unsuitable objects that are too near,) it is credible that God, who is infinite goodness, should bless the capable with heavenly glory. And did we not see that sin maketh many incapable, it would be harder to reason to believe that all shall not be blessed by such a God, than that all the faithful shall be blessed. And we find, that though both be hard to unbelievers, they are of the two more hardly brought to believe the threatenings, than the promises, of God. What wonder is it that infinite power, wisdom, and love, should make some of his creatures blessed by communication, and man in especial, when he hath made him capable of it?

And what greater satisfaction and security can a fearful, troubled, dying man have, than the infallible word of the most

glorious God? Surely he that firmly believeth it to be his word, can hardly choose but believe that it is true, and meet for our most quieting trust.

2. The angels and Moses were the mediators of the Jewish law; but the eternal Word incarnate is the Mediator of the new covenant; promised only before, to Abraham, David, &c., yea, to Adam, but sent, when made man, in the fulness of time. (Gal. iv. 4.) And it must needs be a sure and excellent covenant which is made and confirmed by such a Mediator, named in the prophecy, "Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace:" (Isa. ix. 6 :) of the increase of his government and peace there is no end. He is the heir of all things, by whom the worlds were made; the brightness of God's glory; the express image of his person; and upholding all things by the word of his power; made better than angels, having by inheritance obtained a more excellent name; whom all the angels of God do worship; and for whom they disdain not to minister to the faithful. It is a sure and comfortable doctrine which must have such a Preacher sent from heaven, and a certain covenant which hath such a wonderful Mediator.

3. But it is not like the powerless word of man, but the holy Spirit of the Father and the Son undertaketh to accompany it, and, as the arm of God, to set it home, and make it effectual to its proper ends: we have not only heard this word, but felt it; as we hear and feel the powerful winds, though we see them not, and perceive not whence they come, or whither they go; all have felt this that are born of the Spirit. (John iii. 8.) God spake not like man when he said, "Let there be light;" (Gen. i. ;) and he teacheth not like man, when his Spirit, by his word, doth quicken, illuminate, and regenerate souls. It is a sure covenant that hath such an inward Mediator, such an agent, and advocate, and witness of Christ, speaking operatively from God to man, and speaking prevailingly in man to God.

4. And the sure manner of revelation doth make it fit to be our trust and joy. As it beareth on itself the image or impress of God's power, wisdom, and goodness; so by powerful miracles, and manifold wisdom, and unmeasurable goodness, it hath been delivered, sealed, defended, and propagated; and by a communicated spirit, or life, light, and love, in all sound believers, confirmed to this day.

5. And what is it that with such glory and certainty is de-

livered to us from heaven? It is a deed of gift, (thus sealed by Christ's blood and Spirit,) of grace, and glory; of Christ to be our Head, and Lord, and Husband, and Life, in and with him; (John v. 10, 12;) of the free pardon of all our sins, how many and great soever, and of réconciliation with God, and of justification by the blood and righteousness of our Redeemer, and of the continued teaching, preserving, sanctifying, strengthening, comforting aid of the Holy Spirit; of adoption and title to the heavenly inheritance, that being sons, and having the Spirit of the Son, by it we shall be sealed up to glory, and be made the habitation and temples of God. In a word, it is a promise of this life, so far as that all things shall work together for our good; (Rom. viii. 28;) and of the life which is to come, where we shall live in glory with Christ for ever. This is the sure and blessed covenant of God.

6. And what is the doctrine and laws of God? are they not also suited to our trust and joy? Is it not a delightful thing to read that which no mere man could tell us? How God made man and all the world, and what laws he gave him. How sin came into the world, and death by sin. How God hath governed the world from the beginning, and how he hath redeemed us. What Christ is, and what he hath done, and what he will do. And what man is, and what he should be, and what he shall be, and do, and have for ever.

And what is there in God's laws but that which is our safety, and should be our joy? If good laws be the safety and honour of kingdoms, are not God's laws so to all the world? What an ugly dungeon were the world without them; and what a worse than brutish thing were man! Oh! how happy were man, were families, were cities, were kingdoms, if all had made God's laws their rule, and all men's laws and lives had been ruled by them! Then there would have been none but wise, just, and holy rulers, that would have governed for God, and for the common good, and princes would have been indeed the fathers of their countries, and masters of their families, abhorring all contradicting selfish interests, and all injustice, tyranny, and oppression. Then subjects would have, with reverence, readiness, and fidelity, obeyed God, in obeying and honouring their parents, princes, and masters. Then all men would love their neighbours as themselves, and do as they would be done by; love and justice would reign among all, and injury, partiality, and selfishness would be abhorred. And which of us

cannot say, 'Had I been ruled by God's laws, I had escaped all the guilt, the shame, the corrections, the terrors that have befallen me. It is our sin against that sacred rule, which is the cause of all our sorrows, else what peace might we have had in our consciences, in our bodies, in our houses, in our cities, and country, as having peace with God. God's strictest laws are but his strict forbidding us to destroy or hurt ourselves and others, as you forbid fire, and water, and knives, and gunpowder, surfeiting, and poison, to your children, for their preservation.

Oh! how glad would every true Christian be, if God's laws were more fully written on his heart, and he could but be and do all that God therein commandeth. For want of this perfect conformity it is that he crieth out with Paul, "To will is present with me, but to do I find not. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death!"

How joyful should we be if we could but trust God, and love him, and obey him, and be free from sins as much as the law of God commandeth us. We testify, therefore, that the law is holy, and just, and good, while we repent that we break it, and wish that we could better keep it. For this would keep our souls from guilt and shame, and terrors, and our bodies from much calamity and pain; all God's ways are pleasantness, and all his paths are peace. Great peace have they that love his law, and nothing shall offend them; let papists hide it, and accuse it, and let the ignorant and malignant scorn it, yet will believers judge it fit for their confidence and delight.

7 And the rather, because that all this is admirably suited to our necessity. We are undone sinners, and had perished for ever, without a Saviour, and a pardoning covenant. We are dark and foolish, and should have erred to damnation, without this sure and heavenly guide. We are beset with temptations; and how should we overcome them without God's promise of better things than this world can give us? We are under manifold pains and sorrows, and must shortly die; and how should we undergo all this in peace if we had not hopes of future happiness, and of that which will compensate all our losses? We have a life of service to God which must be faithfully and cheerfully done, and how should we so do it without good persuasion of this reward? He that cometh to God, must believe that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Oh! then, what a joyful word should that be to us which is

sent from God himself thus to guide, to secure, to strengthen and comfort us, by the promise of all that we need, and can well desire, sealed by the blood, miracles, and Spirit of Christ, and bearing the impress of God the author, and that to such miserable sinners as we are.

II. But how are God's testimonies our heritage for ever, when in heaven we shall have no need of Scriptures?

Ans. 1. "For ever" sometimes signifieth to the end of my life, as David saith, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," (Psalm xxiii.,) and so oft. And so God's testimonies were taken for his heritage, or chiefest portion, and rejoicing constantly, and to his life's end, as securing him of an everlasting heritage.

2. And the heritage promised by them, and connoted, is everlasting; and the holiness imprinted by them on his soul will be perpetuated and perfected in heaven.

III. What is it for believers to take God's testimonies for their heritage?

Ans. It is supposed that the flattering world, and the pleasures of the flesh, do stand here in competition, and are by many taken for their best, and this because they either think not of, or believe not, the better things of a life to come, and the comforts of a holy prospect and preparation. In this case, every true believer, seriously weighing all, and what can be said on both sides, what the world and flesh will be and do for him, and what God, and grace, and glory will be and do, doth wisely discern and resolve,

1. That the world is vanity, and sin abominable.

2. That God is all-sufficient, infinitely good, and to be trusted, and his word most wise and just and true, and therefore, though his belief have its imperfections and assaults, yet he so far believeth God's promises to be sure, and his precepts to be good and necessary, as that he resolveth here to place his hope and trust for his whole felicity in this life and hereafter, and to give up himself to the study, love, and obedience of God's laws, as the guide and security, and comfort of his soul, renouncing all the flatteries of the flesh and world which stand against it, and are preferred by sensual unbelievers.

In few words, this was David's faith and choice, and this is the faith and choice of all true believers, by which we may

discern whether we are such, though all have not the same degree of trust and fixed resolution, yet all have this much in sincerity.

IV. Quest. But can all say, 'They are the rejoicing of my heart.'

Answ. All of them can say,

1. We see that there is in the word and covenant of God in Christ, unspeakably more matter fit to be our joy, than in all the pleasures, and wealth, and honours of this world.

2. And therefore we prefer it before them all, in our desire and our fixed choice.

3. And we find so much goodness and suitableness to us in this sacred word, as that we love it as our food and our security, though not with the appetite and love which we desire.

4. And though we have not that joy in this our love to it, and in the hopes of promised glory, which a stronger faith and love would cause, yet we find that it is our best, and we perceive more good in it than in sinful pleasures, and the true and chief support of our souls in all our fears and troubles, and in our prospect of another life, is from the love and word of God through Christ.

And though our pleasure in it be not sensual and luscious, it is much more solid and satisfying to our souls, than we find in any other thing.

And the sweetness which we taste in it, is greater at some times than at other.

And the comfort which we have in our bodily health and welfare is much, as it signifieth to us the love of God performing to us his promises, and helping us to serve him with joy and gladness, in order to everlasting joy.

This is the ordinary case of true believers, though extraordinarily: 1. Some tempted, troubled, melancholy Christians, overwhelmed with grief and fears, do not perceive this much in themselves. 2. And the healthfuller, stronger sort of Christians have yet a more sweet and constant pleasure, in the testimonies and ways of God.

Having said thus much for explication, a little more may suffice to show you why and whence it is that believers receive the testimonies of God with this fixed choice, and trust, and pleasure.

1. It is from honest self-love and interest. They certainly

find that it is their best, that it is true and good, and that there is nothing else to be found in this world that will serve instead of it, to be a quieting security, guide, and comfort to the soul. They perceive what they need, and that nothing else can supply those needs. This must be their hope, or they must despair.

2. It is from holy suitableness and love to God, and the goodness which they relish in his word. As God giveth every living creature an appetite suitable to his food and benefits, so doth he to the new creature. Holiness is mostly the soul's appetite to God, and spiritual good. The word which promiseth and guideth us to the incorruptible crown of glory, is an incorruptible seed; (1 Peter i. 3—6;) and it is our milk or food; (1 Peter ii. 2;) and by it we are made partakers of the divine nature; (2 Peter i. 4;) and it is the ingrafted or innaturalized word which is able to save our souls. (James i. 21.) And as the whole stock is marvellously turned to serve a little graft which is planted into it, and as if it had lost its former kind, doth bring forth only the fruit of the graft, so is God's word implanted in us to the change of our nature, and our fruits; and it is no sound appetite which hath no pleasure. No wonder if a strong belief do cause us to "rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, that we may receive the end of our faith, our salvation." (1 Peter i. 6—8.)

All God's commands and promises have, by the divine impression of them on our souls, left somewhat there which is like them, and connatural; even a holy light to understand their truth and goodness, and a holy love to them and the things revealed, to desire them, and take pleasure in them, and a holy liveliness to pursue the good desire. And this is the writing of the law and gospel on our hearts; and in this sense it may be said that God, that Christ, that the Holy Ghost is in our souls, and dwelleth in us, even as an efficient principle, and a beloved object, and desired end. And if this be all that they intend, those called quakers have no reason to accuse us for not preaching a God and a Christ within us. And if this be it that is meant by those who tell the world, that by saying that the Holy Ghost is in us, we are more arrogant than the pope, that claimeth a visible monarchy; we glory in this joyful privilege, this earnest, seal, and first-fruits of heavenly glory, and humbly thank him, who hath vouchsafed it, and assured us of it in his word. (Rom. viii. 9, 11; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. iii. 17; 1 John

iv. 13 ; 1 Cor. iii. 16 ; 2 Tim. i. 14 ; 1 John iii. 24, and iv. 12, 15, 16.) And if the scorers have any belief of the Scriptures, let them read and tremble, " If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his." (Rom. viii. 9.)

III. I have given you the sense and the reason of this doctrine ; we come hither to learn what use to make of it. And I think if I preach also on the copy or impress of this text, whose relics we have laid in the dust, and tell us what use she made of such doctrine, it will be a considerable help to our own application.

I have never loved or used to adorn sepulchres, or hang out specious signs at the door of pride, ambition, tyranny, or worldliness, to entice others to imitate prosperous sinners in their sin ; were I to preach at the funeral of an Alexander or a Cæsar, I had rather say that which may save the living from following them in pride and bloodshed, than to tempt men to the like sin and misery.

To praise damned men, because they had the pleasures of sin for a season, is to be more foolish and uncharitable than the tormented gentleman, (Luke xvi.,) who would have had one sent from the dead to warn his brethren, lest they should follow him to that place of torment, by preferring fleshly pleasure and prosperity, before the life and hope of saints. Our praises ease not tormented souls. It is a mark of the citizens of the holy city, that " A vile person is contemned in their eyes ;" but withal, that they " Honour those that fear the Lord ; for God doth honour them."

My duty, therefore, to God, and my love to holiness and holy persons, and to you in special that are her children and other relations, commandeth me to tell you (though some of you know it better than I) that our deceased friend, in the course of her pilgrimage, did speak of herself by her constant practice, what David professed in this text. Though I speak but from eighteen or nineteen years' acquaintance with her myself, I have full evidence of it for the former part of her life ; and my acquaintance with her by neighbourhood, and mutual esteem, hath been such as hath given me more advantage to know her, than most have had ; though I remember not ever to have spoken with one person that hath known her, that did not take her for an extraordinary and eminent example of the piety and virtues which I shall mention.

If the hypocrites seek the praise of men, verily they have

their reward (a poor reward); but she, seeking first the kingdom of God, and the honour that is of him, had this cast in as overplus. I never heard that any person of any persuasion did speak evil of her, or question her eminent sincerity and worth.

Had she come to this by sinful compliance, she might have feared Christ's words: "Wo to you when all men speak well of you;" (Luke vi. 26;) but as God hath not left himself without witness to the very heathens, so he hath not left innocency, wisdom, love, peace, and piety, without some witnesses in the consciences of the ungodly; few of them have the face to speak against these in their proper names; and if he could not dishonour them by our mixed faults, and by the slanderous affixed names of heresy, schism, disobedience, hypocrisy, fanaticism, folly, and what else ignorance and malignity can devise, the devil knew not how to dishonour holiness and virtue, nor to encourage the blind world to so common a hatred and opposition of them, as they show in all nations of the earth.

When she chose this text, it was from such a suitable spirit, as all men choose the food, the friends and company, the business and discourse, which by agreeableness they most delight in. That she made God's word and covenants (connoting God's love, Christ, grace, and glory, the spring, matter, and end) her best, her heritage, her all, contemning all that stood in competition; and that these were the rejoicing of her heart, she showed to us that knew her, by these notable effects.

I. By her constant, serious, diligent use of the word of God, by hearing, reading, conference, and meditation. Her food was not more constantly used, nor, I believe, so sweet to her. Her hearing in the public assemblies, nothing but necessity could interrupt; and her private constancy her relations know. She practically told us that the blessed man's "delight is in the law of the Lord, and therein doth he meditate day and night." (Psalm i. 2.)

II. She made so much (in esteem, use, and thankfulness) of every little of the help she could get in these spiritual things, as showed that they were her heritage and joy. When some come home with accusations of the sermon, as dry, dull, or weak, she found in it something for profit and solace. I am sure my own conversation and duties have been truly guilty of the foresaid faults; and yet how gladly would she come over the way to us at prayer-time. How much did she value now

and then a little (too dull, unprofitable) conference, and took it for a loss that she could have no more. How glad was she of now and then a too dry and short letter, and how carefully would she keep them; as if, with the woman of Canaan, she had been begging for the crumbs. Alas! our duller appetites seldom so desire after, or delight in, much larger portions of well-dressed food, but fulness hath loathing, and we call it dry manna, which we are weary of; or every little fault in the dressing turneth our stomach against it; full souls loathe the honeycomb, but to the hungry every bitter thing is sweet.

III. She loved and received the word of God from any faithful minister that brought it. It is true that she more frequented and desired some than others; but her religion was not faction, or siding with this party, or with that; she was far from a schismatical mind or practice. When one party separate from all that preach in the parish churches, and another from all that preach elsewhere; she separated from neither.

IV. Accordingly, she loved all persons that feared God as such; not confining her affections or kindness to those of this or that controvertible opinion; but that candour and holy simplicity, and serious practical religion which she had herself, was it that she loved in all others whomsoever.

V. And accordingly her conference was not about controversies or matters of contention, in which too many spend their hours in these times, but that which tendeth to edification, and to administer grace to the hearers. She was not such as Paul oft reproveth for striving about words, and little things, that tend not to edify, but subvert.

VI. Much less was she tainted with any heresy or dangerous error in religion, nor ever drawn from the truth, and her spiritual steadfastness; but cleaved to the form of wholesome words, and the simplicity that is in Christ, and to them that held the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; avoiding the vain janglings of men of contention, pride, and corrupt minds.

VII. She was not of a censorious backbiting temper, nor used, as too many faulty Christians, to make it her discourse to find fault with others, and make herself the judge of controversies cases, actions, and persons which she understood not; but had learned that lesson, "Speak evil of no man;" and to know and be called to it, before she judged.

VIII. She was very desirous of the good of all, and glad of

any thing which tended to promote the conversion and saving of men's souls.

IX. She was charitable and liberal also to their bodies, in an unusual degree; as I am able to say by particular experience, in which I have known it exercised to the poor.

X. Her humility and detestation of pride was manifest, not only in her garb and behaviour, but in her low thoughts of herself, and the lowliness of all her conversation, and great dislike of all that savoured of pride.

XI. She was not morose, nor a refuser of converse and useful visits, when reason required them: but she took it for a great affliction to have much diversion by company, or by matters, from her constant course of better work; and (besides her health) was, therefore, the more inclined to be much in the country, that her mind and time might not be at the mercy of too much intruding diversions, and unprofitable discourse.

XII. Much more was she averse to all sorts of sensuality; such pleasing of the flesh as corrupteth the mind, and turneth it from holy work and pleasure; and such vain recreations as waste precious time, and profit not ourselves or others. Holy things were her food and feast, her work and recreation.

XIII. Her prudence in all matters was very exemplary; being much more against unadvised rashness, and actions which tend to ill effects, than most of us of the stronger sex; and I confess I should think much better of myself if I could equal her herein. In which her acquaintance commonly admired her, though this is a point which all must acknowledge much imperfection in.

XIV. And her gentleness, meekness, and calmness of mind and carriage was very amiable to her friends, and most that did converse with her. She was a great adversary to passionate behaviour, which surely came from that power of grace, which had made love and meekness become a nature in her, seeing no such thing could be else expected in one of her sex, and complexion, and bodily weaknesses.

XV. She did not, as the hypocrite, give God the second place in her heart and life, and the world the first, nor put off Christ with the leavings of the flesh, nor take this world for her best or heritage, and the next only for a reserve when she must needs leave this; she seemed to prize no heritage but God, nor to set much by any transitory vanity whatsoever.

XVI. She excelled in the earnest desire of her children's

good, and in the care of their well-doing and salvation. How oft hath she desired me to pray for them. How glad was she if I would at any time but converse with them, and advise them : they know better themselves (though I know much) how much she prayed for them. How oft and tenderly she counselled them. What letters of serious, holy counsel she would write to them. And how like she was to Job, who prayed and sacrificed for his children when they were merry and feasting together, fearing lest they should forget God, and sin against him.

XVII. This kind of life which I have described, was her calling and trade, and in a manner her only business in the world. It was not now and then in a good mood, like a feast and recreation; but as she knew that one thing is needful, so she chose that better part, which never was, nor will be taken from her. She so lived as if she had but this one thing to mind and do in the world, to please God by obeying him, and to cleave to Christ; and to do good and to be saved. Nothing else seemed to be much in her mind, thoughts, care, and business; her life seemed to be but this one thing. But I must confess that poor and tempted persons, that are under many worldly wants, crosses, and employments, cannot be expected to reach her measure in this; though one thing be their best and portion, they may be tossed with many troublesome cares and businesses. But God gave her both mind, opportunity, and help to live in as even a course of constant holiness in a family, as monks can pretend to or hope for in their community or solitude. Religion was her very life.

XVIII. In this life she had also a constant peace of conscience, bewailing her imperfections, but not living in melancholy, despair, hard thoughts of God, or an uncomfortable sort of religion. I have oft heard her speak of her lamented weakness of faith, love, and heavenly desires and joy; but never, that I remember, one doubting word of her own sincerity and salvation; but her ordinary speech was lamenting that we were all so weak in our belief of the word of God, and the unseen world, and what excellent persons we should be, if herein we had a stronger faith, that were liker unto sight; and how much it should be the business of all believers, to pray and labour for an increased powerful belief hereof, as that which would set all right in us.

XIX. Her patience under her bodily infirmities also was ex-

emplary. Her weakness made her so liable to dangerous coughs while she was in London air, that by this she was constrained to live much from home; and most of all her life she was tormented with a frequent headach; but in her patience in all this she did possess her soul, and patience furthered experience, and experience hope; and she learned more the quiet fruits of righteousness by being much exercised herein.

XX. And as by this she daily learned to die, so the expectation and preparation for death was her continual work and state. She lived, and heard, and prayed, and wrote her letters to her children as at the brink of the grave, and the door of eternity. Not that her diseases did seem to us to be very mortal, or threaten this sudden change; but she knew the brevity of man's life, and that death is ready to remove us all, and what a moment it is till that certain hour.

And as she lived holily and in peace with God and man, so she died with ease and little likelihood of the ordinary miseries of fear or pain. A little soreness and swelling of her leg, and pain towards the hip, turned to two swooning fits, and in the third or fourth, having been in quiet discourse with her husband, she as quietly sunk and died away, desiring that I should be sent for to pray with her: she was dead before I came, without any signs of nature's striving. And she had said to her daughter after her former fits, she did not think that one could have died so easily as she had almost done. A death thus expected, and thus prepared for, is not to be called sudden. Thus God can make death easy to some of us, that are apt to over-fear the antecedent pain. And, now, what can be more (almost) desired in this world, than such a life, and such a death. Our dear friend is at home with Christ, and God's will, which is goodness and love itself, is so fulfilled; even that will which must dispose of all things, and in which only we must seek our rest.

And having described this true copy of the text, I may boldly speak of it to the several sorts.

I. I may ask again both quakers and scorners, whether the Holy Spirit do not dwell and work in such among us, as our dear friend now deceased was.

II. I may ask unbelievers and Sadducees, whether these operations of the Spirit of God on believers be not a sign that God owneth the gospel by which he thus worketh; and that Christ.

liveth and reigneth, who can thus still send a sanctifying Spirit into believers' souls. And whether it be not blasphemy to think and say, 'Either that these excellent endowments of souls are not of God, or that he giveth them all in vain, and that believers are all deceived by God, and labour and hope all their days, for that which hath no being; and that the better God maketh them, the more deluded, vain, and frustrate he maketh them, and ruleth and amendeth the world by falsehood.'

III. I may ask the papists, with what face they can say as they use to do, that they never heard of a Protestant saint? And whether we may not be as religious in the places that God hath set us in, as if we turned recluses, monks, or nuns, and shut up ourselves from doing any good in the world?

IV. I may ask the malignant, that call all serious godliness hypocrisy, whether such a life as this doth savour of dissimulation? and whether such seriousness and hypocrisy are not contraries, and hypocrisy be not a profession without that seriousness, which is sincerity? And whether they that in baptism solemnly vow to take God for their God, and Christ for their Lord and Saviour, and the Holy Ghost for Christ's advocate and witness, and their Sanctifier and Comforter, and to renounce the flesh, the world, and the devil; and, when they have done, perform none of this which they vowed; but to live to the flesh and world which they renounced, and take a holy life as needless, yea, and hate it; I say, whether these be not the impudent hypocrites that vow and profess that holiness which they abhor, rather than they that, with all their diligence, perform the holy vow which they have made. And if wives promise fidelity to their husbands, servants to their masters, and subjects to their princes, are they the hypocrites that are serious and keep their promise? or they that were never serious in it, but scorn the keeping of it?

V. And as to those malignant persons that take this strict and serious diligence for men's souls to be but scrupulosity, or the character of some over-zealous bigots or puritans who are most inclined to schism, and to be troublesome or dangerous to states, I ask them,

1. What is there in all the description which I have here truly given you, which is injurious or dangerous to church or state, or any person? Will it hurt any one that God and men

are seriously loved? and that God's testimonies are trusted and delighted in and obeyed? and that God's kingdom and righteousness is first sought?

2. Is it not Christ, and Christianity, and Scripture that you accuse? If it be schismatical and dangerous to be serious in performing what we profess and vow, surely it is bad in baptism to vow it, and still by calling ourselves Christians to profess it. To accuse, hate, and scorn the serious practice of your own professed religion, is to be the most foolish self-condemners, and, in some respects, worse than Mahometans, infidels, and heathens.

VI. But my most earnest desire is to you the loving husband, and beloved children of our departed friend, that you will not overlook,—

1. The correction,
2. The sin,
3. The mercy,
4. Or the duty which God now calleth you seriously to consider.

(1.) I need not persuade such as are rather apt to overmuch sorrow, not to despise this chastening of the Lord, but rather not to faint under his rebuke. But I cannot dissuade you from a sense of your loss; we that are your neighbours feel it: but you much more, to whom it is much greater. What saints in heaven do know of us, or think of us, or do for us, we shall better know when we are there: but here you are deprived of the daily prayers which she sent up for you; of the continuance of her loving care of your souls, and watchfulness over you; of her wise and faithful counsels to you, and of her imitable example, as it was still before you; a husband of a pious, prudent helper, and children of a tender affectionate mother; your great sorrows tell me you feel your loss.

(2.) And all correction is for sin, which is worse than suffering. Oh! fall down before God, and with penitent tears bewail your sin, which hath caused your loss. Humbly confess how unworthy you were of such a mother, and beg of God to forgive that sin.

(3.) But mercy also, as well as sin and loss, must be acknowledged. Your sorrow must give due place to thankfulness and comfort. Your mother is taken from you, but remember,

1. What a mercy it was, and is to you, that you are so related to such parents, seeing God hath promised special mercy

to the faithful and their seed; and if any of you miss it, it will be through your own ingratitude and contempt.

2. What a mercy is it that all her prayers for you are yet in force, and more of the answer of them may yet be sent you, if you reject it not.

3. You have yet all her holy counsels to remember, and they may profit you while you live.

4. And though she be gone, I hope her example will never be forgotten by you.

5. And what a mercy is it that, under all her infirmities, you enjoyed her so long.

6. And yet how much greater cause of thankfulness have you that she so lived and so died, and that you may think of her with comfort as being with Christ, and hope to be with her for ever. Every one hath had a mother, but every one had not such a mother as you have had.

(4.) And I have intimated your duty, while I have mentioned your loss and mercy.

1. Think over often what sin she reprov'd in you, and what counsel she gave you; and now revive your resolution to obey it.

2. Remember what she was wont to pray for on your behalf; and let it not now be along of your neglect or wilfulness, that you are without it.

3. Remember her humble, moderate, holy example; and think whether your souls have not as much need of the greatest care and diligence as her's had? And why should not you be as studious to please God, and make sure of heaven as she was? Bless God that you have such a pattern, that hath so long dwelt with you, for your imitation, next your imitation of Christ. Holy simplicity is despised by the world, but it will prove the only wisdom at the last.

I have told you what use to make of the example of our deceased friend. Let me now tell you what use of the text which she so much loved, transcribed, and chose.

1. And, first, here you may learn the nature of true faith and sound religion. It taketh God's testimonies and promises for our heritage, and for the comfort of our hearts. It is not true faith, unless we so trust God's promises for this life and that to come, as to take what he promiseth for our best, and our inheritance, and his promise for our best security and title, and his law for our governing rule that we may obtain it.

So that, 1. Here you see how we differ from infidels that do

not trust their everlasting hopes and happiness on the promise of God.

2. And how we differ from hypocrites who speak best of heaven, but really look for their best on earth, which Christ calleth "trusting in their riches," because that is, indeed, their trust, from which they have their greatest expectations, and for which they most labour and will leave all: this a believer doth for promised happiness; and this the worldly hypocrite doth for the prosperity of the flesh on earth.

3. And here you see that faith and godliness are not melancholy, uncomfortable things, as the devil and the flesh would persuade inexperienced fools and unbelievers, unless it be sad to have security from God of a heavenly heritage, and rejoice therein.

And here you see the differences between the mirth of a fleshly infidel, and of a believing saint. One is like a drunkard that is merry for an hour in a brutish kind of befooling pleasure; or like one that hath a pleasant dream, or one that heareth a jest or merry tale, or seeth a pretty comedy or show. The other is more rational and heart-contenting than it should be to any of you to have good security for many hundred years' life and health, and prosperity here on earth. Such a birth-right do profane fools sell for such a morsel, not knowing that the fear of God caused by true faith is the beginning of wisdom.

Hence, therefore, we may learn how to try our sincerity of faith. Doth it make us take God's promise and the thing promised, as our heritage? Though we are not without temptations to doubting, nay, nor without the remnants of unbelief, but our hearts are troubled, when we look beyond death, with many fears; yet if we so far trust God's word, as resolvedly to take it for that which we will adhere to, and lay our chiefest hopes upon, we have a faith that will entitle us to the promised benefits.

Object. But some may say, 'I cannot say that it is the rejoicing of my heart.'

Answ. 1. Can you say that you take it for that in which you place and seek your joy, though you cannot yet attain it; and that you prefer any other pleasure in your esteem and choice and seeking? If so, you show that you truly believe and trust to the faithfulness of God's word, though yet you reach not what you seek. Desire is the first-fruit of faith and love, and holy joy is the flower and perfection.

2. Cannot you say that it is this word that maketh you hope that there is for man a better life, and that you shall not perish like the beasts, and that your fears and sorrows are somewhat abated by the promises of God?

3. Cannot you say that you perceive a pleasing goodness in the word of God, which maketh it welcome and acceptable to you?

By what I have mentioned, you may find,

1. That the word hath not been in vain unto you, when it hath caused such effects.

2. And that the same Spirit is in you which wrote the word, or else you would not love and desire it, and take it for suitable food and pleasure, yea, your heritage and joy.

3. And you may hence perceive that you are not without the love of God himself, though you see him not, and have not such sensible conceptions of him as you have of men and things which you have seen; for if you love truth and goodness and holiness in God's word, because it is such, you sure love best the greatest truth, goodness, and holiness, and that is God.

4. And hence you may perceive that though our nature love not death, and a weak faith will not overcome all fears, when we think of coming into an unseen world, yet really you are lovers of heaven, in that you are lovers of that which constituteth heaven and is its desirableness to man; even holiness and God's love, and glorious presence, and our perpetual joy herein. If you desire this, you desire heaven, though the fear of death do make you doubt of it.

5. And hence you may find that you are not worldly hypocrites, else it is not God's promises and law that you would take for your heritage and joy; but worldly prosperity and fleshly pleasure, and God and heaven should have but the leavings of the flesh, for fear of an after-reckoning at death.

6. And though your joy be small, you may know that it is of the right kind, when it is chiefly sought in God's love and promises; and you would not let go the word of God, and lose your part in it for all the vanities of this world.

III. Hence also you may learn why all true Christians so much value the testimonies or word of God? Why they so much read it, think of it, talk of it, and hear of it, and are loth that papists should corrupt it, or conceal it in an unknown tongue, or that any should deny them the necessary use of it, or

silence the ministers that preach it to them? who would willingly be deprived of his heritage or heart rejoicing?

IV. Yea, indeed, hence we see how much we should set by it, and use it, how dear it should be to us, how strictly we should obey it, with what delight we should read and meditate in it, how diligent we should be to confirm our belief of it, and how we should fetch our hope and comfort from it in life and at our death?

V. And you may see hence that it is no wonder that the devil and all his servants in the world are enemies to the word of God, because they are enemies to our heritage and joy: and there are few better signs while many pretend to be for Christ, to know who are really for him, and who are against him and his greatest enemies, than to judge of men as they further or hinder, love or hate, the word of God as to its proper use, as the heritage and joy of holy souls.

VI. But the chief part of my application is to commend this wise and holy choice, and solid comfort, to you all; and to beseech you presently to imitate David, and turn away from all inconsistent pleasures. If you live in sorrow or deceit, and die in desperation, it is not for want of an offer from God of better things. Have you lived hitherto as thus resolved? If you have, the Lord confirm you; and, be sure, such hopes shall not deceive you. If you have not, what will you now choose and do? If you live not to some end, you live not like men, according to reason. If you have chosen what end to live for and seek, what is it? Consider, I beseech you, of these things following, before it be too late.

1. What will you take for your heritage, or your best, if not the future promised joys, and what will you take for your security but God's word? What is it that you place your chiefest hopes in? Shall health and wealth, and pleasure to the flesh, and honour among men, be taken for your heritage? Dare you, under your hands, make a covenant for these to quit all your hopes of the life to come? If not, which is it you prefer, and which would you quit, if one must be hazarded or lost? Which hath the nearest and highest place in your hearts? Which seek you first, and make all other things give place to? O sirs! it is a shame to our stupid hearts, that we have need to be so often told by preachers that we must die, and that our flesh must shortly lie neglected in dust and darkness, till the resurrection, and that we, and all the deceitful trifles of this world, are ready

to part for ever ! It is a shame that we must be oft told that which every fool and child, at the use of reason, may know, how poor and how short an heritage, or pleasure, all those have, who have no better than this world can give them !

What say you ; will you die in hope, or in despair ? If unbelief make you hope that there is no hell, yet hope of heaven you can have none, unless you trust the word of God. The light of nature, indeed, is such a natural word, or revelation, as may tell us much of a future life of retribution ; but God's supernatural revelation is so much clearer, that we cannot expect that he will see by a lesser, who wilfully rejects a greater light. Sure all men would live for ever if they could, and all would be for ever happy. You would not sure die like dogs, without any hope of a better life hereafter, if you could have good security for such hopes ? And what better security is there to be found by mortal men than the promises of God, confirmed by Christ's blood and miracles, and by the seal of his Holy Spirit.

In a word, without all doubt, either heaven must be your heritage, or you must have none that is worthy of a serious thought, and enough to keep a man from wishing that he had never been born ; or been a brute that had not reason to know the matter of his griefs and fears : and either God's word seconding the light of nature, must give you hopes of a better life, or you must live and die in mere despair. And shall that be your wilful choice ?

2. Consider how invaluable a mercy it is to man, yea, to sinful, miserable man, that God should vouchsafe to give him such an everlasting heritage, and such security for it ; and that on the mere thankful acceptance of the sinner. And how worthily will they be undone that, by wilful refusal, are deprived of freely offered felicity.

3. And, consider how suitable an heritage and security it is that is offered us, and how fit for our joyful acceptance and esteem.

The thing promised is no less than endless glory with God our Redeemer, and all the blessed. It is in the world where we must be for ever : it is the perfection of that which every holy soul desireth. It is our best, our all : it must be that or nothing ; that or hell.

The word or covenant which is our trust,

1. Is God's own word.

2. It perfecteth and secondeth natural revelation and hope.

3. It beareth on itself the impress of God, even his power, wisdom, and love, in wonders, prophecies, and grace. It is sealed by the blood of Christ, by his own and his disciples' multitude of miracles, and by the gift of his sanctifying Spirit to all true believers, to the end. It is confirmed to our souls by the experience of the power of it, and the blessed effects, and this indwelling spirit, the witness of Christ; and by the answer of prayers, by many providences, and by the experience of all believers to this day.

It is excellently suited to all our needs, to our wants, our dangers, our fears, our doubts, yea, and our sinful unworthiness in the freeness of God's mercy, and all his gifts.

Indeed, man had rather live by sight, and would fain know, by seeing, whither souls go, and what they are, and have and do, hereafter. But it is not we, but God that is the ruler, and fittest to choose both the gift and means, the end and way. If we thankfully trust and improve a promise, we shall quickly see and have possession. Blessed be God for the light of his gospel, to guide us up to the light of glory! O that we had hearts to trust it, love it, and rejoice in it, as we have just cause!

4. And is it not a great mercy of God, that he hath herein called us to a life of happiness and present joy. If he had bid us only weep for sin to the last breath, the condition had been easy, as for pardon, and hope of endless mercy; but he hath given us a word which he would have to be the rejoicing of our hearts, and do we not love joy, or have we any better?

I have not now time, and I much more want myself such a mind and heart as I should have, to tell what cause of daily joy God hath given us in his word and covenants. But this I will tell you, that our want of joy is our daily sin and shame, as well as our loss and suffering, and among all the discoveries of the sinful weakness of our faith, hope, and love, our want of rejoicing in the word of promise, and hope of glory, is not the less. O what an enemy is death in this respect, that standing between it darkeneth and affrighteth us from our joys! but Christ hath conquered death to deliver those that through fear of it are subject to bondage. (Heb. ii. 15.) And though we cry, 'O miserable men! who shall deliver us?' we yet thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And I must second the testimony of our deceased friend, in professing for your encouragement my own experience; I have

taken God's testimonies for my heritage, and they have been these fifty years, or near, the pleasure of my life, and sweeter than honey, and more precious than thousands of gold or silver. As we tell men, in charity, of the things which we have found good, the medicines that have healed us, and commend the persons that have been friendly to us; and as man's nature is inclined to propagate the knowledge, and communicate the good which we partake of, and grace increaseth this inclination, so I take it to be my duty to add herein my own experience, if it may contribute to the determining of your choice; and reason teacheth all men to regard that means and remedy good the more, which many have had experience of, and it is not to be taken for vain ostentation to profess that which all must have in some degree that will be saved.

Though the natural and sinful fears of pain and death too long deprived me of much of the joy which I should have had in the thoughts of the unseen world, and too much doth so to this day, yet I must say that the word of God, and the persons that love and practise it, and the holy way of life and peace, and all things that here savour of heaven, have been so good and pleasant to me, as enableth me to assure you, that on earth there is nothing so worthy of your desire and joy.

And to encourage you, I will tell you, by my own experience, what benefit may be expected from this kind of delight, agreeable to David's and our friend's experience.

1. By this means my life hath been almost a constant pleasure.

2. This pleasure hath much upheld me under almost constant bodily infirmity and pain.

3. It hath made all my sufferings from men, and crosses in the world, to be tolerable, and very easy to me; had not God's word been my delight, I had lived uncomfortably, in constant pains and sorrows, and had perished in my trouble.

4. It hath saved me from the snares of sinful pleasures; man's nature will seek for some delight, and they that have it not in good will, seek it in things hurtful and forbidden; it is only greater things that can overcome our mistaken choice of lesser. In my childhood, I was sinfully inclined to the pleasure of romances, and of childish sports, but when I tasted the sweetness of God's testimonies and ways, I needed no other, but spit out those luscious, unwholesome vanities. And though common knowledge, called learning, be pleasant to man's nature, and I cannot say that I have not overvalued it, yet I

must say, that the relish of these greater matters hath made me see how much of it is vanity, and hath saved me from the pursuit of that part of it which doth but please curiosity and fancy, and tendeth not to use, and to greater things, and sensual pleasures I had no need of.

5. It hath by this means made that pleasure which I had to be such as my reason did approve and justify, whereas if I had sought it in preferment, wealth, or sensuality, a foreseeing conscience would have affrighted me out of all my pleasure, and I should have had more of the pricks than of the rose, of the sting than of the honey. Of this pleasure you need not fear too much, but of the sensual pleasure, we more easily catch a mortal surfeit.

6. This sweetness of God's word hath made also my calling and daily labour sweet, so that it had my heart, and not my forced hand and tongue.

7. And this hath helped my constancy herein, for when we have no delight in our work, we grow weary, and weariness tendeth to give it over, or to do it heartlessly, and slubber it over in unacceptable hypocrisy.

8. And this hath much saved me from the sinful loss of time; pleasure cureth trifling and delays. Who needeth vain pastimes that delighteth in God's word and work?

9. And this hath been to me an excellent help for the increase of knowledge; for the mysteries of godliness have still more to be learned by the wisest man; and as boys at school, so the scholars of Christ, learn best who have most pleasure in their books.

10. And this pleasure hath much confirmed my belief of the truth of Scripture, when it hath borne its own witness to my mind, and I have tasted that goodness which is agreeable to its truth. I easily believe him that commendeth a thing to me, when I taste or feel that it is good.

11. And this pleasure hath helped me against vain thoughts and talk, while the truths of God were sweet, and so continually welcome; it is easy to think of that which we delight in, and sinful delights corrupt the thoughts and speech with constant sin.

12. And this pleasure hath somewhat fed my daily thankfulness to God, in the constant experience of the goodness of his truth and ways.

13. And it cured the error of my beginnings when I strove

for nothing so much as to weep for sin, and perceived not that the joy of the Lord is our strength, and the flower of holiness, and likest to the heavenly state; and that the Spirit sanctifieth, by making God and goodness pleasant to us.

14. And hereby it made me find, that the praises of God are the sweetest and noblest exercises of religion, when before I placed more in lamenting sin and misery.

15. And this maketh many things needless to me that else would seem needful. I want not more company; I want no recreation but for my body. If I have not what I would have, I see where only it is to be found.

16. And I am assured that the constant pleasure of my mind hath not only kept me from melancholy, but from greater sicknesses, and tended to the lengthening of my life, (as Scaliger saith pleasant studies do,) for constant pleasure must needs tend to health.

17. And this taste hath made me long for more, and had I not felt that it is good to draw near to God, and very desirable to know him and his will, I should never have so earnestly begged for clearer light, and more near and sweet communion with him. Pleasure is the cause of strong desire.

18. It hath been one of my greatest helps against many temptations of subtle enemies, that tempt men to sadducism, and doubt of the life to come.

19. It hath made me more communicative to others, for we would all have partakers in our delights.

20. And it hath greatly furthered my repentance and hatred of sin, when I have tasted what pleasure it depriveth us of, and the abhorrence and loathing of myself that can delight in such a God, and Saviour, and word no more. When I taste how good it is, and see so much reason to rejoice in it, and the hopes of glory a thousand fold more than I do, none of all the actual sins of my life do make me half so much loathe my naughty heart, as to think that my want of greater joy in so great and near a good, doth show so much weakness in my faith, and hope, and love. O that I had more faith and love, that I might have more of this delight!

Hearers, I have sincerely told you what comfort you may have, if you will not refuse it, from the word of God, and from the experience of David, and (because things near are aptest to affect) from the experience of our deceased friend, and of myself, and; indeed, of all God's servants in their degree. You would live in

joy, you would die in joy; we need it in a life of so much trouble, and for a change that else is terrible, and it is sure and near. O sirs! we need another kind of comfort than sport, or appetite, or wealth, or any such fading vanity, will give us; you may have some of it, if you will. And though joy be the top of grace which we arrive not at with a wish, nor in an hour, yet the nature of the new creature relisheth, or savoureth, the things of the Spirit. (Rom. viii. 5—7.) And the spirit of adoption is a spirit of filial love, and crieth Abba, Father, and the love of God the Father, the grace of the Son, and the communion of the holy Spirit, which are the believer's part, are all of them the greatest comforters, and Christ giveth believers that seek and trust him, that spring of living waters which tendeth to everlasting satisfaction, and cureth indigent and sinful thirst.

Will you then have any portion, heritage, and joy, which will be worthy of a man, and shall go further with you than the grave? If you will you may; God and this congregation are witnesses that it was offered you. But think not to refuse it, and prefer the transitory pleasures of sin before it, and at last have it, and find that which you refused, or which you sought not first. (Matt. vi. 33.) Nor to find a treasure in heaven where you never laid it up, or sought it. The hopes of the wicked perish, and the hypocrite's hopes are as the giving up of the ghost; but the righteous hath hope in his death, and therefore may die in peace and joy. (Job viii. 13, 14, and xi. 20; Prov. xi. 7, and xiv. 32.)

Perhaps some will say, that such a discourse of rejoicing is unsuitable to the mourning of a funeral. I think not of such a funeral, in which we commemorate the holy life and death, and believe the present and everlasting joy, of such a friend, and one with whom we have long joined in seeking and waiting for that felicity, and hope, ere long, and for ever, to rejoice with Christ, and her, and all the blessed. And funeral sermons are not for the benefit (though for the due honour) of the dead, but of the living, to teach us all to prepare for death, which, indeed, is so much of the business of our whole life, that all the rest is but a vain show, and foolish trifling, or much worse. And wherein doth our preparation for death so much consist, as foreseeing what so great a change will need, and what a trial it will put our faith and hope to, to seek and get such security for our everlasting state, and such sound belief of it, and settled content and comfort in it, which the fears of death, judgment, and hell,

may not shake or overcome; that so we may finish our course with joy, and pass through the valley of the shadow of death, and fear no evil, but may comfort one another and ourselves with this, that we shall for ever be with the Lord, and may say with Paul, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness," which God, the righteous Judge, will give to me and to all that love Christ's appearance, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that do believe, and shall say, "Well done, good and faithful servant! Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Wo, and for ever wo, to every soul of you that shall finally reject or neglect the offer of such an heritage and joy! And blessed be that grace which hath caused all true believers to prefer it in their highest esteem, and choice, and seeking. I have looked about to see if there were any better and surer to be had, and I am fully satisfied it must be this or none. I offer you but what God hath caused me, and all that he will save, to choose; and Lord grant that I may never look back to any other! Let the love of God, my heavenly Father, the grace of Jesus Christ, my Lord, and the joy of the sanctifying Spirit, sealing up the promise of God as my security, and writing his law and gospel in my heart, be my heritage and joy, and I shall never envy the most prosperous sinner their portion in this life, but shall live and die in the thankful praise of the God of my salvation, who is essential, infinite, joyful love. Amen, Amen.