

1. Look for communion with Christ in the way of free grace and unhired love; that he may come over mountains to you, mountains of guilt and unworthiness, as undeserving such a high privilege.

3. Seek it resolutely in all means of his appointment, going from one mean and ordinance to another till ye find him, as the spouse did, Cant. iii. 1. and downwards. So may ye, persevering, succeed, whatever difficulties be in your way.

3. Be diligent observers of providences, and make a due improvement of them as means of communion with him, Psal. xcii. 4. and cvii. ult.

Lastly, Be habitually tender in your walk; keeping off from every thing that may grieve his Spirit, and provoke him to depart; acting in this case as the spouse did, Cant. iii. 5. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please."

READINESS FOR OUR REMOVAL INTO THE OTHER WORLD OPENED UP, URGED, AND ENFORCED.

The substance of several Sermons preached at Ettrick in the year 1730.

Luke xii. 40.

Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

AFTER all we have heard of the other world, what will it avail, if it issue not in preparing for our removal into it? That is certainly the use which all of us are to make of it, which we have in the words of the text. In which we have two things:

1. An alarm to be ready for the removal into the other world, "Be therefore ready also," In the parable of the rich man, ver. 16—21. our Saviour had shown the dreadful surprising removal of secure sinners into it, when they are not at all ready for it, but dreaming of a long continuance at ease here, which puts preparation for it out of their heads. And thence he proceeds to caution against inordinate care for this uncertain life, and to stir up to be ready, to be on the wing, for the other life, ver. 35.; and to be

always ready, as those that are at an uncertainty as to the time of their removal. This is to be ready also, as well as the goodman of the house would be if he knew what hour the thief would come.

2. The reason why we should be ready, always ready, never unprepared: "For the son of man cometh at an hour when we think not." Because we know not when we may be called off, more than one knows what time of the night the thief will break in on his house. Now Christ the son of man comes as a thief, at a time uncertain to us. There is a twofold coming of the Son of man. (1.) At the general judgment. (2.) At death. Both are to remove us into the other world; the word is general, agreeing to both; and in point of our making ready they come to one, because whatever readiness they can be in for the general judgment, must be made before death, there being no access after that to make ready any more, but as the tree falls it lies. So we shall consider it as his coming at death, to carry us off hence. There are two things here:

1st, The certainty of our removal into the other world,—“The Son of man cometh;” he will certainly come, how long soever he may delay his coming. That is a tryst that cannot be broken.

2dly, The uncertainty of the time of it, as to us, however precisely it is appointed in the divine decree; he has not told us when it shall be, more than the thief tells the good-man when he is to make an attempt on his house. So that if there be any time when we are not ready, he may for any thing we know, as readily come then, as at any time.—From the text ariseth this weighty point of doctrine, viz.

Doctr. Such is the certainty of our removal into the other world, and the uncertainty of the time of that removal, that we ought always to be ready for it.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Premise some things imported in it.

II. Consider the certainty of our removal into the other world.

III. The uncertainty of the time of it.

IV. The readiness for that removal.

Lastly, Apply in some practical uses.

I. I shall premise some things imported in this doctrine.

1. Great is the weight that depends on our being ready for a removal into the other world. Eternal well or woe depends on it; for according to the situation we are found in at our removal, so will we be received and lodged there; in the upper part, the region of bliss, or the lower part, the region of horror, to remove no more. And this makes carelessness to prepare for it absolutely unaccountable.

2. We are naturally unfit, and unready for that removal. Were it a matter indifferent which part of that world we should land in, we could at no time be reckoned unfit and unready for it; for they that are not ready for eternal light above, are ready for eternal fire below. But it can never be indifferent to a rational creature, which of these shall be its portion. And therefore they that are not ready to be inhabitants of heaven, are not ready for their removal; and such are we all naturally, having no title to it, Eph. ii. 3, 12, and no meetness for it, till we get it anew by grace, Col. i. 12.

3. Now is the time, and here is the place, of getting ready, 2 Cor. vi. 3. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." We are set into this world, to make ready for the other; and time is given us to prepare for eternity. If time be once over, and we be turned out of this world, we have no more access to make ready for the other, Eccl. ix. 10. "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." So it is with us, now or never.

Lastly, We ought always to keep ourselves in readiness, that we be not surprised and taken at a disadvantage; hence says our Lord, Luke xxi. 34—36. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." One may be ready at one time, who is not ready at another as he ought to be; falling carnally secure, after he has bestirred himself to prepare. But at that time when he is least looking for the removal, it may be nearest; and whatever unreadiness it trusts him with, so great will the loss be.

II. We shall consider the certainty of our removal into the other world.

1. It was the other world, and not this, that man was chiefly and in the first place designed for, as to his settled abode. When God made this world, he made it but as a thoroughfare to the other, a place through which man should pass into the other, Matth. xxv. 34. The other world was always the home, this was but the place of the pilgrimage, where at no time man was to stay for good at all, but only to sojourn. For consider,

(1.) This world was ordained to be the place of trial, the other the place of retribution, according to men's works. The trial cannot always last, otherwise it would be no trial; but the retribution

may very well last for ever, and really will do so. Therefore we must necessarily remove out of this world as the place of trial, into the other as the place of retribution, which therefore must be looked on as our settled abode, Matth. xv. ult. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

(2.) This world never had in it, that perfection of either happiness or misery, that was designed for man according to his behaviour in it. Even in paradise there was a want, and in the deluge there was an ark. But God will perfect his work of whatever kind. Therefore the settled abode is there, not here.

Wherefore it is a fatal mistake ever to look on this world as our home, whether we be saints or sinners; that is the use of the other world only.

2. The man Christ is removed into the other world, never to come back to dwell in this; and to that world where he is we must needs go. The happiness secured for his own people, who must be taken to the place where he is, John xiv. 3. and the misery ensured for his enemies, who must be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord," 2 Thess. i. 2. brought thither and slain before him, Luke xix. 27. make this necessary. Therefore, as sure as Christ hath removed into that world, we must follow.

3. Men must be for ever, but this world will have an end; therefore our removal out of it into the other world is most certain. "This is not your rest, because it is polluted;" and because of its pollution, it must be burned up, 2 Pet. iii. 10. Now the soul is immortal, and the body shall have a resurrection, and so the man must be for ever; he must be in some world, and since this will be destroyed, he must certainly remove to the other.

4. Our life in this world is a journey through it, ending in a going out of it, and therefore into the other world, Psal. xxxix. ult. We enter upon it at our birth, make progress therein in our life, and come to the end of it at death, which is the passage into the other world. All things are in motion here, and every thing undergoes changes; but none does more so than man, who springs up, and quickly goes down again; and at length his place knows him no more.

4. Death, the passage into the other world, is appointed to all, Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed unto men once to die." All must pass through that dark and shady vale, and then they are in the other world; and have no more concern in what is done under the sun. And the certainty of our dying, we may not only read in our bibles; but in our very bodies themselves, where every gripe, pain,

and weakness we feel overtaking us, are tokens of death approaching.

Lastly, The experience of all ages since the beginning confirms the certainty of this removal. Where are the generations that have been before us? They are no more to be seen in this world, more than if they had never been in it. Yet God's word assures us that they are in being, the godly ones of them happy, and the ungodly miserable. They are gone then into the other world. And do we not see by daily observation, that the course of dying is continuing as before? And are there any of us all, who have not some that were our acquaintance in this world, already removed into the other before us? And are we to expect the rocks to be removed for us?

III. The next head is to consider the uncertainty of the time of this removal. And here I shall shew,

1. How this uncertainty of the time of our removal is to be understood.
2. How it appears.
3. Why the Lord has kept men at this uncertainty.

FIRST, I am to shew how this uncertainty of the time of our removal is to be understood.

1. It is not to be understood, as if the time of our removal were absolutely uncertain, and undetermined with God. No; it is determined exactly and precisely to the least moment, at what time each of us shall make our removal into the other world, how much time we shall pass in this life, and beyond which we shall not go, Job xiv. 4. "His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass." However uncertain it is as to us, it is as certain before the Lord as anything can be. This is evident; for,

The decree of God reacheth the least of things, even to the very numbering of the hairs of our head, Matt. x. 30. And can we think that he who numbers the hairs of our head, numbers not the days of our life that we shall fulfil? Truly they are soon numbered to him, being "as an handbreadth, and as nothing before him," Psal. xxxix. 5. and he knows them exactly, Job xiv. 5. How else could he foreshew certainly men's death, as he did Moses's, Deut. xxxi. 14. and that of Jeroboam's child? 1 Kings xiv. 12, 17.

It is certain, that man cannot subsist a moment, but as God holds him in life; so the withdrawing of his support must put an end to it, Psal. xc. 3. And he knows certainly what he will do, Acts xv. 18. And who can doubt, but he certainly knows when he is to receive his own people into glory, and when the day of his enemies

will come? Fifteen years were added to the years that Hezekiah had lived, but not to the term of life appointed of God. But,

2. This uncertainty is to be understood, with reference to us. Though it is certain in respect of the decree of God, yet it is uncertain in respect of our knowledge of it. Men may conjecture about it by signs; and no doubt God may as he sees meet discover the time of one's removal, either to himself or to others. But otherwise, it is most uncertain to us.

SECONDLY, I shall shew how this uncertainty of the time of our removal appears.

1. Our removal depends entirely on the will of another, quite concealed from us, Luke xii. 36. It is so with us, that we cannot go when we please, were we never so fond of the other world, or weary of this. It is the will of his command revealed, that we wait the will of his providence for the removing, in all cases without exception, Ex. xx. 13. It was the peculiar prerogative of the man Christ, to be Lord of his own life, John x. 18. And though desperate proud sinners invade it, he can by his providence draw a bar before them, that either in mercy or in wrath shall oblige them to wait his time, of both which there have been instances; howbeit sometimes in wrath, the will of his providence attends their will, and gives them their swing. But however, our removal depends not on our own but his will, not to be discovered but by the event; which therefore makes it utterly uncertain to us.

2. We plainly perceive that God does not keep one time for the removal of men into the other world. Had he appointed one certain term of years and days, to which every one should come, and nobody fall short of; then we would have had no more ado to know our time, but to have counted what we were short of that common term of life; but there is no such common term appointed, but some are removed sooner, others later; and there is no stage of life whatsoever, infancy, childhood, youth, middle age, old age, but some are removed therein. And which of them we have not seen shall be ours, we know not. So we are kept uncertain.

3. As there is no period of life, so there is no state of health, that may not be brangled by sickness, and overthrown by death. When men are in a fixed state of health, strong, lively, and vigorous, they seem to be farthest removed from death; but how often do we see death at the heels of such a state? How many strong and lusty go off as soon as these that are weak, groaning under various infirmities? Job xxi. 23—26. We have an instance, in the rich man that fared sumptuously every day, as well as the beggar which was laid at his gate full of sores, Luke xvi. 22. Nay, often

the weak and sickly prolong their life, while the strong are moved down and carried off one after another, Job iii. 20, 21. "Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul? which long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures?" Compared with Luke xii. 19, 20. "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." What uncertainty appears there?

4. Oft-times when death is least minded, and farthest out of one's thoughts, it is at the door; the removal into the other world comes when men are thinking of nothing, but fixing themselves and enjoying the pleasure of this, 1 Thess. v. 3. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape," Luke xii. 20. just cited. How many have revelled away into the other world, going down to the sides of the pit, as with tabret and pipe! how many drunkards and debauchees have never come to themselves, till they were removed out of this world! going into that world without a capacity for a previous thought of it! So utterly uncertain are men.

5. Man's life is liable to various accidents, for taking it away, Eccl. ix. 12. "For man also knoweth not his time, as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them." What though you are in perfect health, and no cause of death appears from within? There are so many things from without, that may beat up your quarters in this world, and hurry you into the other, that ye are still at an uncertainty; "as when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour that he die, Deut. xix. 5; Luke xiii. 1, 4. Fire, water, stones falling or lying in the way, beasts of the field, fowls of the air, &c. a thousand unforeseen accidents may be instruments of our removal, blowing out life.

6. How often do men seeking life find death; and labouring for their stay, hasten their removal; Such uncertainty are we kept at. Sensual men pamper the body, with design to keep it up; and by their intemperance in eating and drinking, destroy it; laying on so much fuel that they put out the fire. And where that is not the case, how often is death found in physic, and in necessary food, taken with a design to preserve life? 2 Kings iv. 40. A morsel at

a meal has choked some, and removed them from their covered table into the other world. A hair in milk, and a stone in a raisin, it is said, has done the business.

Lastly, Where there has been no visible cause from without, nor sensible cause from within, how many have suddenly dropt down dead, to the perfect surprise of their relations and neighbours aware of no cause thereof! Our life is in the hand of the Giver always, as a ball in the hand of him that holds it up; there needs no more but to withdraw that hand, and that moment we fall, Psal. xc. 3. "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men, and civ. 29.

THIRDLY, It remains on this head to shew why the Lord has kept men at this uncertainty. No doubt God could have made the time of our removal into the other world as open as the time of the setting of the sun, &c. But he has concealed it from us. It is meet to consider why. We pretend not to give a reason moving the divine will; but the reasonableness of it, or for what causes the Lord has willed the concealment of that time from us, we may consider. The reasons are these,

I. It is best for his own glory and honour, the chief end of all things. Hereby he shows,

(1.) His mastership over mankind, who of right are his servants, however refractory most of them are. Every master thinks it his right to have his servants at his call, without a previous tryst, Matt. viii. 9. How much more is God's right over us, to call us off when he will, from the place where he has set us, to the place he has appointed us for after? Our Lord teacheth us this, that he claims this as a Master to come when he will, and that his servants be ready waiting on, Luke xii. 36, 38. "that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

(2.) The efficacy of his authority, Eccl. viii. 8. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war, neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it." He has revealed the will of his command to men, in his laws; and that is disregarded in great part by all, and wholly by some, in life. How necessary then is it, that the authority so often trampled on by mortals in life, should be vigorously executed at length, in obliging them to obey the will of his providence, without knowing beforehand when? He sets trysts with men for duty, which they regard not;

the vindicating of his authority requires their removal to give account, upon sight of his summons.

(3.) His sovereignty. It is a sign of his sovereign dominion over us. Solomon observes, Prov. xxv. 3. that "the heart of kings is unsearchable." Kings of the earth have their secrets of government, which their subjects are not to pry into, but obey orders: God has a sealed book of decrees, which none but the Lamb is worthy to open the seals of. It proclaims his sovereign dominion over mankind, that he keeps such a momentous point concerning them concealed, ver. 20. And it is apt to strike an awe of him on those who consider it, as of an absolute Lord, whom we are to obey without disputing and upon the first call; with the depths of whose counsel concerning us, we are not to meddle, Deut. xxix. ult.

2. It is best for the good of mankind that it is concealed. Were the book of the decrees laid open before the world, and a liberty given to every one that would, to turn it up, and look out the time of mortals' removal; fools would readily run to it, but wise men, I think, would start back. That the time of our removal into the other world is kept a secret with God, closely concealed, is of good use. If ye ask what use is it for? It is of use,

(1.) For a badge of our dependence on God, every moment. Hereby we are taught, that we are his debtors for every other breath we draw, and pulse that beats; we see we are mere precarious beings in the world, tenants-at-will, not knowing when we may be charged to remove. By this means great and small, old and young, are obliged to see how they wholly depend on the will of God as to their continuance here; a lesson we need to have inculcated on us, we are so apt to forget it.

(2.) For a token to remember the other world. It is natural for them that must remove, and know not how soon, to be often thinking on the place they must remove to; so our uncertainty as to the time of our removal out of this world to the other, natively leads us to think of that world. How ready are we to spend our days in a forgetfulness of the world we are going to, as matters now stand! And how much more would it be so, if we were sure that death were at so many years distance as sometimes it is!

(3.) For a curb to our lusts, to check and bridle our unruly affections. This concealing is of good use to keep us from indulging ourselves in sloth, to still our anxiety, and repress all carnal earthly affections. He that considers the uncertainty of the time of his death, is furnished with an useful means to cool his affections in the pursuit of this world, which otherwise he would be apt to give the loose unto.

(4.) For to be a balance between the rising and standing generations, the young and the aged. While both are kept at an uncertainty, that is not known, which of them shall bury the other, and bury their heirs, this is a mean to keep both in due affection to, and concern for one another. While there is so much unnaturalness in the world, as matters now stand, what would it be if that were certain, that is now but probable?

(5.) For encouragement to people's regular pursuit of their worldly affairs, tending to the good of society. If men were certain as to the time of their removal, it would no doubt make them very slack in their business, and at length cause them quite to give it over, unless pure necessity obliged them thereto; and this would tend to their family's disadvantage, and the prejudice of the public. But God has in wisdom concealed that matter so that to hope of enjoyment, causeth men to be doing till God bid them stop.

(6.) For a seasoning to the comforts of life, that men may get the allowable comfort in them, and the sap may not be from the beginning squeezed out of them. If when the child is born, it were certainly known it were to live but so many days, weeks, or months; or that the parent must leave it at such a certain time; where would the comfort of the relation be? How often would the view of the day of the parting extinguish it? But God, by keeping it out of sight, prevents these sorrows.

(7.) For a band to oblige men to act, not according to future events, but the present call of providence, and so to make them subservient to the designs thereof. Had Jacob known beforehand that Joseph's brethren would have cast him into the pit, and sold him for a slave, he would not have let him go. Who would ever entertain the thought of putting that comfort to their mouth, which they certainly knew would be presently snatched from them, and leave them pierced with many sorrows, which yet often falls out? But God will have men's acting to be regulated, not by events, but the present call of providence. And men may have peace in that, which providence pointed them to, though the event be heavy.

Lastly, For a memorial to be always ready and on our watch. It is reasonable we should be so, and that at no time we should give ourselves to carnal security; but did we certainly know the time of our removal, we would be apt to fall asleep for the time it were at a distance, and think it would be enough to watch and be on our guard when the time were at hand.

Learn we from all this to be well satisfied in the divine conduct as wise and good, in concealing from us the time of our removal; and answer the ends of that dispensation, in acknowledging our

continual dependence on God, taking it as a token to remember the other world, &c.

IV. We are next to consider the readiness for that removal. And there is a twofold readiness for it, habitual and actual.

First, Habitual, in respect of our state. In the state we are in by nature, we are by no means ready for that removal; if we die in that state, we perish. We must be out of it in the state of grace, if ye would be ready, 1 Thess. v. 4. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day shall overtake you as a thief." Col. i. 12, 13. "Giving thanks unto the father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." This is necessary for our safe passage and arrival in the other world. There is no getting into the state of glory, if we are not first brought into the state of grace. To die in the state we were born in, will bury us in the pit. This readiness consists,

1. In being brought into a relative state of grace, whereby the relation we stand in to God by nature, which is a reasonable one, may be changed into a saving relation to him. And this lies especially in four things.

(1.) A state of justification, pardon and absolution. By nature we are God's criminals, under his curse, Eph ii. 3. How can we be ready in that case, for the other world? What can we expect going into it in that condition, but the sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" Matth. xxv. 41. Therefore, if we would be ready, we must see to be justified persons, Rom. v. 1, 2. We must sue out a pardon in God's way, and not rest till we be accepted of him, as righteous; for it is such only can have access to heaven, from whom the curse of the broken law is removed. Then, and not till then, is the bar in our way removed.

(2.) A state of reconciliation and peace with God, Amos iii. 3. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" There can be no walking with him here nor hereafter without it. We are born in a state of enmity with God; there is a legal enmity on the part of heaven against us, a real one in our part; should we remove to the other world in that condition, what could be the issue, but that, Luke xix. 27. "Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me?" Therefore to be ready for the other world, we must be in a state of peace and friendship with the Lord of it. If we be for Abraham's bosom, we must be as he was, "the friends of God," Jam. ii. 23. This is

the design of the gospel, that we be "reconciled to God," 2 Cor. v. 20.

(3.) A state of adoption into the family of God, 1 John iii. 2. by nature we are children of the devil, John viii. 44. If we remove in that state to the other world, what can we expect but to go home into our father's house? Therefore if we would be ready, that relation must be dissolved; and we must be adopted into the family of God, that when we fail, we may be received into everlasting habitations with his family. If we are not of God's family in the lower house, we will never be of it in the upper; for they are all but one family, Eph. ii. 15.

(4.) A state of peculiar interest in God as our own God. When the man Christ was going to heaven, he says, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God," John xx. 17. God himself is the reward of his people, who therefore must be theirs ere they can be ready to remove into the other world, Gen. xv. 1. In our natural state we are without God, Eph. ii. 12. And should we die without him, where can we expect to land in the other world, but without where are the dogs, &c. in outer darkness? Wherefore, to be ready, we must before removing have our Maker to be our Husband, God our Creator to be our God in covenant, according to Heb. viii. 10. "I will be to them a God." For there lies heaven's happiness, Rev. xxi. 3.—"God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

This relative state of grace is necessary to found our right and title to heaven, Matt. xxv. 34. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom," &c. And certainly we can never remove into the other world, till once it is expected. No body can expect to invade it by force, to get into that part of the other world which they have no right to. No man could judge himself ready to remove into a farm or heritage here, or settle there, till once he had got a right to it; and shall one imagine himself ready for the other world, while he has no right to heaven?

2. This readiness consists in being brought into a real state of grace, whereby the temper and disposition our souls are in by nature, quite unfit for heaven, may be changed into a heavenly one, 2 Cor. v. 5. This lies in two things: (1.) The quickening of our dead souls, Eph. ii. 1. We are by nature spiritually dead; God the soul of our souls is departed from us; so we are lifeless and moveless; dead to God, as really as our departed friends are dead to us. Should we remove in that case to the other world, what issue could be looked for, but that he should bury us out of his sight, as we do our dead

friends? Therefore to be ready, we must be quickened by the return of the Spirit of Christ into us, Rom. viii. 2.

This is called the first regeneration, whereby there is a new principle of action put into the soul, by which the soul believes on Christ, and actively unites with him, John i. 12, 13. and is thereby brought into the relative state foresaid.

(2.) The sanctifying of our natures throughout, 1 Thess. v. 23. By nature we are unholy all over, Tit. i. 15. The soul in all its faculties is wholly defiled; and consequently the body in all its members. Sin reigns in the natural man, living lusts have the mastery of him. What a removal can one have in this case, where the image of God is defaced, Satan's image set up, and sin bears full sway, but that in Prov. xiv. 32. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness?" To be ready then for the other world, we must be sanctified all over; the mind must be enlightened, the will turned towards the will of God, the affections regulated, and we renewed in the whole man.

This is called the second regeneration, whereby the soul being in Christ by faith is changed into his image, and so made a new creature, 2 Cor. v. 17. Receiving grace for grace in Christ; it has new habits implanted in it, fitting for the doing of good works, Eph. 2. 10.

This real state of grace is necessary to our being meet or fit for heaven, Col. i 12. 2 Cor. v. 5. forecited. Without it we are no more meet for it, than fishes for meadows, an idiot for an estate, or a dead man for a feast. Men look on heaven as a place of ease and rest; without considering it as a holy rest from sin, and an eternal exercise of holiness in heart and life; if they so considered it they would soon see their unmeetness for it, and that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. xii. 14.

Lastly, This readiness consists in persevering in that state, relative and real unto the end, Mat. xxiv. 13. "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Rev. ii. 10. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Apostates cannot be ready for the other world; if one removes in apostacy, what can be expected, but as Heb. x. 38. God's "soul shall have no pleasure in him?" Therefore the perseverance of the saints is insured by the strongest security, John x. 28, 29. "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." So that whosoever do make never so fair an appearance, but afterward fall away, they discover that they never were in a state of grace, relative nor real, 1 John ii. 19.

Secondly, There is actual readiness in respect of our frame and

circumstances, Luke xii. 35, 36. The former gives us a safe, this an abundant entrance into the better world, 2 Pet. i. 10, 11. Now one may be habitually ready, who is not actually so; though not contrariwise. But we are called, both by God's word and our own necessity, to actual readiness for that removal. This lies in two things.

1. Putting our house in order, Isa. xxxiii. 1. It is a piece of necessary preparation for the other world, to have our affairs in this world, in such a state, as we may fitly leave them; and no man of business can be excused in a slothful leaving his affairs in confusion, while he is not sure at what time he may be called off. For thereby others may be wronged; and if it be sinful to wrong others in life, it cannot be blameless to wrong them at death, when there is no more access to right them.

2. Keeping our soul's case in order, Luke vii. 35. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning." Though in conversion the gracious state of our souls is secured; yet it will require much diligence to keep our soul's case right for our removal, and slothfulness may put us out of case for it, Eccl. x. 18. The being of grace is sufficient for the one, but the exercise of grace is necessary for the other. Now an orderly case, fit for one's removing to the other world, lies in these seven things.

(1.) Keeping up actual communion with God, in the course of our life, Cant. ii. ult. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away; turn my Beloved, and be thou like a roe," &c. Thus was Enoch ready for his removal, Gen. v. 24. "Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him." He who would be actually ready must walk with God in ordinances, in providences, and the whole tenor of his life; being spiritual in religious duties, an observer of providences, accommodating himself thereto, and setting God before him in the course of his actions. Thus he will serve an apprenticeship for the better world, and will be in a case for a removal, since that will only be to him a change of his place, not of his company.

(2.) A heart weaned from this world. Col. iii. 3, 4. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." David was in case for removing, when he said, Ps. cxxxi. 2. "My soul is even as a weaned child;" and Paul, when he said, Gal. vi. 14. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." When one is quick and lively in his affection to this world, easily and feelingly touched with its smiles and

frowns, he will be at death like unripe fruit, that takes a sore pull to pluck it off the tree ; but the weaned believer will, like ripe fruit, drop off easily. So God's blasting men's worldly comforts, exercising them with infirmities, pains, and sickness, are kindly designed for this end.

(3.) Purity of conscience, Acts xxiv. 15, 16. "And have hope towards God,—that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man." Hereby it is provided, that there is no standing controversy betwixt God and the soul ; in which case one is not fit for removal. This is obtained by a strict and tender walk in every thing, whereby the conscience is so far kept from defilement, Psal. lxxvi. 18. 1 John iii. 20, 21. And by a daily use-making of the blood of Christ, whereby defilements, which we will inevitably contract, are wiped away, John xiii. 10. A thorn of unpardoned guilt in a believer's conscience, renders him in ill case for the great journey.

(3.) Diligence in our generation work, Luke xii. 43. "Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh, shall find him so doing." David had a kindly removal upon this, Acts xiii 36. "After he had served his own generation by the will of God he fell on sleep." That man has lived long enough, who has got his generation work allotted him expediated, though he do not live to any great age ; and they that through sloth neglect it, will find themselves carried off ere they are ready, though they become very old. Happy is the man, that is found so doing, doing still on, as one that sees death at his back ; and it is kindly, if the Master soonest loose the sorest wrought servant.

(5.) Willingness to remove and be gone at the Master's call, Luke ii. 29, 30. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word. For mine eyes have seen thy salvation." They who are mortified to life in a Christian manner, resigned to the divine disposal as to their staying and going, leaving to him the time and manner, are in case for removal. In the soul's closing with Christ, there is a dead stroke given to the love of this life, Luke xiv. 26. But there is a need of repeating the stroke, till the soul be in case to come freely away.

(6.) A well-grounded expectation of a better life in the other world, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day ; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." For men to pretend willingness to

remove without that, argues either a brutish stupidity, or a delusive security, or a desperate impatience; in all which cases, men are not ready for the removal, however willing. But where there is a Christian assurance or well-grounded hope of a safe landing, that is a piece of the readiness required, 2 Pet. i. 10, 11.

Lastly, Watchfulness and waiting, Luke xii. 37. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching." Our Lord has told us, that he will come, but has not told us when; this requires us at all times to guard against spiritual sleep and carnal security; and follow Job's resolve, chap. xiv. 14. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." They are not ready who are caught unawares.

Now these things make an actual readiness, which is necessary.

[1.] To fit us for what kind of death it pleases the Lord to remove us by. Hereby we will be in case to remove by sudden death, as good old Eli did, by a raving sickness, as well as by a composed one; or by a violent toss of sickness, or lethargy. For then our work is done, all is ready; we have nothing ado but to go.

[2.] To prevent a hurry, when death is come to the door. Though one is habitually ready, if they are not thus actually ready, the heart in that case is put in confusion with the alarm; and then there are many things to do, and little time to do them in. And that makes a sad hurry, whereas there might be much composure obtained by this method.

[3.] For our comfortable passage, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, above cited. The neglect hereof occasions even God's children sometimes either to go off in a cloud and set in a mist, or else to have a sore struggle about their case, ere they get their ravelled case righted. We are not to limit sovereignty, which may leave at any time the most watchful Christian in a damp, as the sun sometimes in a moment gets under a cloud; but surely this is the ordinary means for a comfortable removal.

Lastly, For our greater glorifying God in our removal, as the worthies, Heb. xi. of whom it is said, ver. 13. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises," &c. We should study not only to live, but to die to his glory. That is our last opportunity of acting for God in the world; and it is pity we should be out of case for it. Now when we are thus actually ready beforehand.

(1.) We will have the more time to act for God's honour, our own safety being already secured, as in Stephen's case, whose last breath was spent in praying for his murderers, Acts vii. ult. They that have much to do for their own case on a death-bed, will have little time to spare for the behoof of others to be left behind.

(2.) We will have the more heart, and be in better capacity for consulting God's honour and the good of others; as good old Jacob, while blessing his sons, lifts up his soul in that devout ejaculation, Gen. xlix. 18. "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." A clear and comfortable state of our own soul's case, will be oil to the wheels in that matter. I shall now make some practical improvement of this subject.

USE I. For instruction and information. Learn hence,

1. That this world is not our home, but the place of our sojourning; but our home is in the other world, Heb. xiii. 14. We are here as strangers in an inn by the road; but the grave is our long home, and the other world our everlasting home. When men go abroad in this world as travellers, they lay their account not to stay abroad; but sometimes they settle abroad for good and all, so that their return home is uncertain; but our removal from this to the other world is absolutely certain, without all peradventure, it cannot fail.

2. It concerns us nearly, to keep loose grips of this world, and not to dip too deep in it; but to use it passingly as those who are not to stay with it, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 31. The comforts and conveniences of life, are like servants in an inn, who wait on us to the door, but return to wait on other strangers when we are away. It would be folly for the traveller to set his heart on the inn; for that would make his removal from it but the greater grief.

3. It will be our wisdom to acquaint ourselves, as much as may be, with the other world, Job xvii. 13, 14. Were one but to remove into another farm, he would surely acquaint himself with it beforehand; and shall we, who are to remove into the other world, live strangers to it? Nay, let us often visit it, by thinking of it. Though we cannot see it beforehand with the eye, we may by faith; though we cannot go thither for trial, we have the map of it in the Scriptures.

4. It concerns us carefully to acquaint ourselves with the passage to it, 2 Cor. xv. 31. Death is that passage which we must certainly all take. And our happy or wretched landing on the other side, depends entirely on the course we steer through it. What need have we then to be taking instructions about it, fixing them on our hearts timeously, that when we come to pass it, we may take the passage right, where so many are shipwrecked? It is indeed the business of life to learn to die.

5. It is in vain for us to be carnally secure, and to promise on time to come; for our removal is uncertain. In all our projects, hopes, and expectations of things of this life, we should balance

them with the view of the uncertainty of our time, Jam. iv. 13—15. It is folly to boast of what we are not sure of, Prov. xxii. 1. How many a beautiful web of contrivance in the fancies of carnal men has been suddenly cut off, perishing in the thought without ever going further? Ps. cxlvi.; Luke xii.

6. It is folly to be lifted up with prosperity in the world; for it is certain it will not last, and so uncertain when it will come to an end, that it may end ere we are aware, Prov. xxiii. 5. If we begin to nestle in a well feathered nest, we may quickly be tumbled down out of it; and we will get nothing of it with us to the other world. Worldly prosperity makes indeed easy living here; but it is so en-snaring, that it is hard to make the way through it to the happy part of the other world, Mark x. 23.

7. It is needless to be cast down with adversity in the world; for that will not last neither. The world's smiles and frowns, both of them pass away like the foam on the water, Eccl. ix. 6. If one meets with sorry entertainment in an inn by the road, he comforts himself, that he is not to stay with it. In your adversity, your relief may be nearer than ye are aware; your removal is uncertain. Lazarus was cured of his sores, and his hard lair at the rich man's gate, when carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.

Lastly, We can at no time be safe, unprepared for the other world; for what may come at any time, we must be ready at all times, if we would be safe indeed; because whatever time we are not ready, it may come and surprise us unprepared.

USE II. Of reproof, and that to three sorts of persons.

1. Atheists and unbelievers of a future state, who pretend that when men die they are done; and that there are no future rewards and punishments. Such were the Sadducees of old, who judging the soul nothing different from the temperament of the body, held the soul's perishing with the body, and that there was no resurrection, and consequently no removal into another world, Acts xxiii. 8. The whole divine revelation witnesseth against this, so that our Lord proved the resurrection from the Pentateuch, Matt. xxii. 31, 32. The being and nature of God as holy and just, and Governor of the world, overthrows it; since it is evident, that it is not consistent therewith, that evil men should be always the most prosperous, and the good the most afflicted; yet so it must be, if there is not a removal into the other world, where the scales will be turned; "for if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable," 1 Cor. xv. 19. Besides, this has a witness against it in every man's breast; that it is not to be doubted if any man can reach to be fully satisfied in this principle, Rom. ii. 15. con-

science accusing even for what they are in no hazard for in this world.

There is a lamentable growth of such principles at this day, that the foundations of Christianity were perhaps never in the time of the greatest darkness so much struck at. Of which I shall say only these three things.

(1.) The prevalence of a spirit of profaneness and enmity against serious godliness and practical religion, has turned the bent that way, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. When men are set on their lusts, to follow them at any rate, they must seek a shelter under which they may most peaceably enjoy them; hence these principles are greedily drunk up in the generation. The inundation of profaneness makes such a flood, as throws down before it the foundation principles of religion standing in their way.

(2.) The obscuring of, and finching from the doctrine of Christ crucified, his righteousness and grace, has made the progress of such principles more easy. The manifestation of the mystery of Christ to the world, is the great divine ordinance for its reformation. This the apostles used among Jews and Pagans, and therewith succeeded, 1 Cor. i. 23, 24; Eph. iii. 8; Acts xvii. 18. The Pagan moralists advanced fine reasonings without this; but they could not prevail. Yet at this day, not the former, but the latter method is most insisted on; as if men were more apt to be made religious by force of reason, than by discovering to them the righteousness and grace of Christ. But that method will be found but a betraying of the cause of religion; as lamentable experience this day declares.

(3.) The growth of such principles is a sad prognosticate of some uncommon stroke abiding the generation. There is no mention of Sadducees in the Old Testament; but they swarmed among the Jews in the time of our Saviour and his apostles. And on the back of that, that nation got such a ruining stroke, as they never before met with. And the Sadduceism of this day, and daring strokes at the root of Christianity, are terrible signs foreboding some uncommon stroke.

2. The bold and curious intruders into the divine secrets, to reach a certainty of that, which God will have uncertain as to us. God will have us uncertain, whether we shall live long, or short while, when we shall remove. How dangerous must it be then to use unlawful arts for the discovery of these; and consult fortune-tellers on these or the like future events? Deut. xxix. ult. What good use can be made of such pretended discoveries? If one is answered according to his wish, he is ready to be turned secure, and carried off depending on providence, and disappointed at length. If other-

wise, what a snare and rack do people bring themselves into by that means.

3. The secure and careless, who are at no pains to make ready; but live as if they were never to remove hence. This is the prevailing temper of the world, Matt. xxiv. 38, 39. "For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." It is a world of sloth, wherein most men consider little of the world to come. Solomon sends such to the ant, to learn a lesson of foresight and provident care, Prov. vi. 6—11. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise; which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathered her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep?" &c. Men make ready for tomorrow in this world, for days and years to come in it, which oft-times they never see; but slight the most necessary preparation for the other world.

USE ult. Of exhortation. Let us then be exhorted and stirred up so to prepare for our removal into the other world, as to be always ready for it. I shall branch out this into three particulars natively arising from the text, viz.

1. Make ready for our removal.
2. Delay not to make ready.
3. Having made ready, keep ready.

FIRST, Make ready for your removal into the other world. Since it is so certain that we must all remove, and uncertain when, we must sound the alarm to all to make ready for it. Therefore awake and bestir yourselves to put matters in order for the removal. Here I shall,

1. Suggest some motives to press you to make ready.
2. Consider the impediments of people's making ready, to be removed out of the way.
3. Give directions or advices for making ready.

First, I am to offer some motives to press you to make ready. Consider,

1. Our removal is certain, there is no escaping of it, Psal. lxxxix. 48. "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" There is a time appointed for our removal precisely; and when that time comes, ready or unready, we must go; the grim messenger will not wait, Eccl. viii. 8. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit," &c. Sometimes people sit at home, because they are not ready to go away when they are called, or the caller will

wait till they make themselves ready. But when the hour appointed for our removal comes, the messenger death will neither wait till we be ready, nor go away without us.

2. We are all naturally unready for that removal, quite unready and unfit for it. For, (1.) We want a title to heaven, the place of happiness in the other world, and are bound over to hell the place of misery there, by the curse of the broken law, Gal. iii. 10. Eph. ii.

3. How can we venture into that world in this case? We have the breaking of that bond of wrath to seek, and getting of that title to heaven constituted. Till this be done, we are utterly unready. (2.) We are nowise meet for heaven, but meet for the pit of destruction, being yet in our sins. How can the natural man, that is yet under the guilt, dominion, and pollution of his sin, be ready for the King's palace, but his prison, in the other world?

3. Our eternal state in the other world depends on what readiness we are in for removing to it, Eccl. xi. 3. "If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north; in the place where the tree falleth there it shall be." They that are made ready for heaven, will be received into it; they that are not, will find the gates thereof shut on them, Mat. xxv. 10. And without there is outer darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth, chap. xxii. 13. Since such a weight hangs on our being ready, what unaccountable folly is it not to make ready?

4. There is no making ready there, Eccl. ix. 10. "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." Men may go from home in no fit condition to appear and shew themselves in a strange place; but they may get themselves fitted out there where they are going; but it is not so in this case. There is no buying of oil more for the lamps, when once the Bridegroom is come. If death strip us not of the body of the sins of the flesh, which it certainly will not do, if we are not begun before to put off the old man; it will go with us into the other world, and hang about us for ever, Prov. xiv. 32. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness."

5. There is no coming back again, when once we are removed, Job xiv. 14, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Could we expect a return into this world, to mend what was amiss in our former removal; that if we were not ready the first time we went away, we should be sure to make ready the next time; the matter would be the less. But it is not so. The removal out of this world that we must make, is never to return. Sure that is a loud call to make ready for it.

6. The nature of the removal requires a making ready for it.

We make many removes in this world that are so insignificant, that they require no preparation for them; but in the meantime, we make some, that it would be unaccountable not to make ready for them. Much more is it so in this case: for it is,

(1.) A going a great journey, Psal. xxxix. ult. "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." Eccl. ix. 10. What rational man going out of the country or kingdom, though but for a time, will not be making ready for it beforehand? But what is going over the seas, in comparison of going through the valley of the shadow of death? What is going into other countries, compared with going into the other world? It is a long and dangerous journey; and nothing the less weighty, that it is common, being the way of all flesh, since it is a journey we will never come back over again. Wherefore make ready for this journey, make timely provision for it, take your way marks right, and secure a comfortable lodging there.

(2.) A going to a marriage, which you have been invited to, whether ye be wise or foolish virgins, Mat. xxv. The marriage is betwixt Christ and believers. In the gospel sinners are invited to it, and called to make ready for it in this world. In the other world that marriage is solemnized, and there is the eternal marriage-feast, beginning with the night of death's coming on; it is held in Christ's Father's house there, full of glorious light. But without is nothing but darkness. Death is the going away to it; what time they that are ready are taken into the marriage-house, they that are not ready are barred out in outer darkness. Wherefore make ready for this marriage, on which depends your making or undoing for ever more, Rev. xix. 7.

(3.) A going to a judgment-seat, even the tribunal of the Judge of all, Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." We are debtors to the divine justice, and must answer it. We cannot deny the debt, we are unable to pay, the longer it runs on, the more it increaseth; we must make ready, by employing the Advocate, making the Judge our friend now, procuring the discharge of the debt to be produced there; or we must go to the prison, Mat. v. 25. We are criminals, and there must receive the sentence of death, if we get not now a remission to produce against the indictment, and so be ready.

7. The pains of making ready will be fully compensated with the fruit of it, Mat. xxv. 10. "They that were ready, went in with him to the marriage." ver. 21. "His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things; enter thou

into the joy of thy lord." The joys of the heavenly marriage-feast will more than compensate all the painful work of making ready for it. To make sinners meet for heaven, they are to be wrought and hewed with various trials and struggles; right eyes to be plucked out, and right hands to be cut off; but there is no reason to stick at that, 1 Cor. xv. ult. "Forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Lastly, It will be dear bought ease, that is got by shifting to make ready, Prov. vi. 10, 11. "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man." That spiritual sleep and carnal ease will make way for everlasting disquiet and unrest. They who will needs rest now when they should wake and act for eternity, must be deprived of the eternal rest in the other world, Prov. xx. 4. "The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing."

Secondly, I come to consider the impediments of people's making ready for the other world, to be removed out of the way. These I take to be these four chiefly.

1. A vanity of mind, by means whereof men can never be brought from fleeting in the vain things of a present life, to serious thoughts of their removal into the other world. They see others about them carried off, time after time; but it can make no solid lasting impression on them, more than if they were immortal; the vanity of their minds suffers them not to bring it home to themselves, but still they look on the other world as a thing foreign to them.

O lay aside this, if ever ye would be ready, Eph. iv. 17. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind." And act like rational men, seriously laying your account with a certain removal of yourselves into the other world, uncertain at what time, Prov. xxiii. 3. "A prudent man forseeth the evil, and hideth himself."

2. A heart throng of business of this life, whereby no room is left for thoughts of a removal into the other world; as was the case of the old world before the deluge, and of the sinners in Sodom before their utter overthrow, Luke xvii. 26—29. Martha's business hinders Mary's; they are so plunged into the many things, that the one thing needful is jostled out. While this and the other thing is to be done for the body, the soul's case is left a bleeding, and neglected.

But O! why not the main care for the main thing? Ye may see to your necessary business, and your business for the other world

too ; but why should the former enhance your whole time ? Nay, the latter ye ought to do, in the first place, though not leave the other undone.

2. An averseness to think of the other world and a removal thereto, whereby it comes to pass that these thoughts are shifted, till they force in themselves by death at the door. This averseness riseth from conscience of guilt, and prevailing carnality ; and staves off serious thoughts.

But to what purpose is it to stave off thoughts of that which will certainly be in on us at length ? were it not our wisdom to do like that king, Luke xiv. 31, 32, who "going to make war against another king, sitteth down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand ? or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace." Set yourselves then to conquer that averseness, and drive over the belly of it ; getting your hearts, by application of the Redeemer's blood, sprinkled from an evil conscience ; and that will break your carnality.

4. Slight thoughts of what is necessary in order to preparation for the other world, whereby men imagine that they may do that time enough when there is any appearance of their removal. By this means it comes to be put off from time to time, till often in the issue it is out of time.

But did men seriously consider the matter, what necessity there is of a change of their state, for habitual readiness ; what necessity of a gracious orderly frame, for their actual readiness ; they would not look on it so slightly ; but see it a matter of the greatest weight, not to be easily compassed, and therefore to be set to timely.

Thirdly, I shall now give you some directions or advices for making ready.

1. While you are yet in health, set yourselves solemnly to take hold of Christ Jesus in the covenant, for death and eternity. In this lies your security for the other world, whereof he is Lord ; and it is little enough to do it with an express view to the other world and your removal. And it is best preparing for sickness and death, when one is in health ; for it is hard to say, what one may be capable of doing that way, when he comes to a death-bed. But let men toss and wrestle as they will with their sickness unto death ; it will always be well with them that saw to their soul's concern while they were in health, and have not their main business to do, when death is come to the door ; while it would be too much rashness to venture our souls in their soul's stead, who after having spent the time of

health carelessly and irregiously, begin in their sickness unto death to shew a mighty seriousness and concern about the other world. .

For the right managing of this work, be advised,

(1.) To set apart some time for it, more or less by day or by night, as your circumstances will allow ; so will ye get the business for the other world done in health in your chamber, out-house, or field, with more ease and deliberation than in sickness upon a bed. Tenants will take some time off their ordinary business to go and take their land for another year ; servants, to go and hire themselves into another family ; and so others in other cases ; and will people not go a little off their ordinary course of devotion, to make ready for the other world ?

(1.) Begin the work with prayer to God, and then sit down and consider and open out your whole life, in its several periods, before the Lord ; beginning with your conception and birth in sin, proceeding to take a view of the sins of your childhood, youth, &c. And deal impartially with yourselves, in searching out your sins. And when ye have searched out and reproached yourself with all that you can find, know that there are multitudes which have escaped your notice, Psalm xix. 12. " Who can understand his errors ?" And then view the curse of the law justly due to you on these accounts, and thereupon take a view of the remedy in Christ.

(3.) Then go to God in prayer, and confess before him accordingly, what you were in your birth, what you have been in your life, and what you deserve to be made in the other world. Go through the several periods of your life in your confession, and lay out before him the particulars, wherewith conscience charges you. This is the way to vomit up the sweet morsel ; and why should we hide, or stick to confess our sins particularly, since we must all answer before the tribunal of God ? Having thus confessed your sins, confess your desert of hell and wrath for them, and condemn yourselves ; yet looking to God in Christ for mercy and pardon, 1 Cor. xi. 31. " If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

(4.) This done, consider the covenant offered you in Christ in the gospel, with the perfect righteousness, full remission, and right to eternal life, held out to you therein. Examine yourselves as to your believing it, and your willingness to enter personally into it, and to venture your salvation on that bottom ; and to take Christ in all his offices ; to resign yourselves to him as your Head and Husband, to be his only, wholly, and for ever.

(5.) Then go to prayer, and solemnly in express words from the heart, take hold of the covenant, believing, and resting your souls on Christ in it, with an express view to death and eternity ; give

consent to him in the gospel-offer ; taking him in all his offices ; resigning yourselves to him for time and eternity. And ye that can write, may, for your comfort and establishment, write this your acceptance of the covenant, and subscribe it with your hand, Isa. xlv. 5. "One shall say, I am the Lord's ; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob ; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel*."

Lastly, After that you may address yourselves to God as your covenanted God, laying before him particular petitions relative to your removal into the other world, your reception into heaven, and the happy resurrection of your body at the last day.

Such a time well spent, would be the best spent time of all your life ; and this course sincerely followed, ye would be ready for the other world, come the removal when, and in what manner it will, so that ye might say with David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," &c.

2. Put your worldly affairs in order, for your removal ; such of you as have any occasion that way. Be precisely just and upright in the course of your dealings with men, that you may have nothing to leave that is not well come, as ye would not leave a moth or a curse in it. Accommodate your way of living unto your ability, and go not beyond it. One had better live scrippily upon what is his own, than plentifully on what is another's. Keep your business as far as possible from a state of perplexity and confusion, by stating and keeping your accounts clear. And one's testament lying by him, would not in the least make him either sick or sore ; but it would be a great ease when sickness or death comes, to think, that part of one's work is done already. And it would be no great toil, for them that can write, to alter it from time to time, as there is any notable alteration in their affairs.

SECONDLY, The next particular branch of exhortation, which I offer you as native from the text, is, Do not put off or delay to make ready for your removal into the other world ; but immediately set about it, since it is quite uncertain at what time you may remove. To enforce this I offer the following motives :

1. God has allowed you time to make ready, but not one moment

* A form of personal covenanting may be seen in the author's Memorial concerning personal and family fasting and humiliation, annexed to his View of the Covenant of Grace. It appears from his Memoirs, that in the end of the year 1729, he entered into a solemn transaction of this nature, with an express view to his own removal into the other world, exactly following the directions here laid down.

to delay it, 2 Cor. vi. 3. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." Heb. iii. 15. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." All the time you have had, since you came to the years of discretion, has been allowed you to make ready; so that if you should now be removed unready for it, ye will not have it to say, that ye had no time for it. Perhaps it did not come in your head to make ready for the other world, having been so short while in this. But whose fault is that? However, should you put it off but till to-morrow, ye do it at your peril without God's allowance.

2. One hour's delay may be an eternal loss, yea one minute's: for this hour, this minute, you may be removed into the other world. And where then is the next hour, or minute, which you put it off to? Why will men thus let slip the time they have, and trust to a time they have not, and perhaps never shall have? What a venture on eternity upon an uncertainty? Should one cast away in a water, put off till the next minute his taking hold of the rope; we would reckon him a self-destroyer, because ere the next minute he may be in the bottom.

3. Though ye get the time ye put off unto, how are ye sure of grace to help you to improve it? Though the ship be not gone off, the wind may be fallen, and the tide gone; that is an awful word, that may justly strike with trembling, Luke xiv. 24. "I say unto you that none of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper." Indeed delayers to make ready seem to imagine, that it is in their own hand to put themselves in readiness, when they think good. But, alas! they deceive themselves, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Common experience shews, that when such a time comes, men are as ready for a new delay as ever.

4. The longer ye delay, ye make the work of making ready the more hard, Jer. xiii. 23. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." It is like the mending of a dam: take it in time, it will be the easier; but to put it off, the breach grows wider, and will cost far more labour. Alas! it often fares with our souls in this case as with bodily diseases, which if taken timely might be carried off; but at length they grow so inveterate, being neglected, that they spurn all remedy.

Lastly, So far as ye delay, ye are unfaithful and cruel to your own souls, leaving them for the time in hazard of perishing. If ye had a child fallen into the fire or the water, would you delay to pull him out? Thy soul is fallen into a gulf of sin and misery under the curse, and is every moment in hazard, of falling down to the

bottom; why do ye put off? why do ye not presently set yourselves to make ready?

Here I am aware of several objections, which I must answer.

Object. 1. I am but young yet; what needs so soon making ready for the other world?

Ans. 1. And may ye not die young? Are there not in the churchyard, such as have died in childhood? are there not boys and girls in their graves there, young men and maids, men and women in their prime? I suspect, that, on a just calculation, there would be found far more such than those of grey hairs. Therefore delay not to make ready though young.

2. To whom should your youth and strength be devoted, to God your Maker, or the vain world? Whatever extravagant notions obtain among the young with respect to this, I defy them to get a footing for them, but in their vain imaginations, not to be supported but by overlooking God and their Bibles, which lay them under a necessity of solid seriousness, strict walking, and making ready, as well as others. Are they excepted in the divine precepts, and calls to these things; or in the threatenings, in case of neglect? No; Paal. cxlviii. 12, 13. "Both young men and maidens, old men and children, Let them praise the name of the Lord; for his name alone excellent, his glory is above the earth and heaven." *i. e.* Let them praise and serve him with the vigour of youth, and not spend it on the vain world; it is God's gift, let them not sacrilegiously rob him of the use of it, but seriously consider that caution, Eccl. xi. 9, 10. "Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God shall bring thee into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh; for childhood and youth are vanity."

3. It is a rare thing to find such as are bred up under the gospel, and spend their youth without making ready, to get grace to make ready after, Job xx. 11. "His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust." It is an ordinary thing in a vain world, for the young to think with great reason to stave off the seriousness of religion, till once they be married at least. But it is a just and awful observe, that they who living under the gospel vainly and carelessly before, are rarely converted after they are married, but are a step farther back from Christ. It is founded on Luke xiv. 20. "Another said, I have married a wife; and therefore I cannot come." And to confirm it do but observe how many there are who in their youth and single life gave hopeful

signs, wither away when once dipt in the cares of a family. But in case that grace do reach you after that time, ye will readily find it a saving so as by fire, being broken and bruised in your entry to it, at another rate than you might have been before.

Lastly, After all it is a base and disingenuous thing, to put off the answering of the gospel call and serious religion, till once ye are past your best. How think ye God will take that off your hand? Mal. i. 8. You will reserve the dregs of your time for God, and give the flower and cream of your days to the vain world. I beseech you imagine yourselves in these circumstances applying to God, and beginning to make ready; and let conscience guess what is likely to be your answer and success.

Object. 2. My hands are now so full of business that I cannot get opportunity to make ready; but if I were at the end of such and such a business, and freed from such entangling circumstances as I am now in, I would set myself to make ready.

Ans. 1. Is not your business for the other world your main business? Though your other business should go never so well, if that be marred ye are ruined, so as nothing will make up your loss, Matth. xvi. 26. If that were once right, let your affairs in the world be never so unsuccessful, it cannot make you unhappy. How then can ye reasonably put it off longer?

2. Take heed that the business that mars you to-day from your great work, be not succeeded to-morrow with a business that will mar you more. It is ordinary, that he who puts off his great work, to a fitter time than the present, when the time comes he set, it is found less fit than the former. The case of Felix may be a warning here, Acts xxiv. 25.

Lastly, That is at best a great and hazardous venture. Death comes in on men in the midst of business without ceremony, however lothe they may be to break it off to prepare for death, Ps. cxlvi. 4. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish," Luke xii. 20. Wherefore let no circumstances, however perplexed and entangled, move you to delay.

Object. ult. It is time enough to make ready when one comes to a death-bed.

Ans. 1. That is a manifest contempt of God, and of the other world. What? Is the matter of the other world such a trifling thing, as to delay making ready for it, till ye be able no more to pursue the things of this life? Is it so small a matter in your eyes, to obtain the favour of God, and a reception into his family above? You will certainly change these thoughts.

2. Ye may possibly get no death-bed, but may in an instant drop

out of this, into the other world. Death sends not always messengers before, to warn of its approach; many a man in health has by some providential incident been suddenly dispatched into the other world. And delayers have ground to fear it will be their lot in a special manner, as ye may see, Matt. xxiv. 48—51.

3. Though ye get a death-bed, ye may be rendered incapable of making ready, by the nature of your disease. Though ye be capable, you may get enough ado even to die, through a vehement toss of sickness. If there was one thief on the cross that got repentance, there was another that died hardened; and this is most likely to be your case who so delay.

Lastly, Death-bed repentance is seldom sincere. What is recorded of the Israelites in the wilderness may well have weight here, Ps. lxxviii. 34—36. "When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and inquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues." The terrors of death may make a mighty concern about the other world in a graceless heart; but what sincerity there is for the most part in these things, may be learned from the case of such brought to the gates of death, who after all turn just back to their old bias.

THIRDLY and **LASTLY**, The last thing upon this use of exhortation is, Having made ready, keep ready. Your interest as well as duty is concerned in this. Therefore take the following directions.

1. Keep grace in exercise, Luke xii. 35. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. Slumbering virgins, though wise, are not ready to meet the Bridegroom. Let faith be awake, love kept warm, desires astir, &c. And labour to be spiritual in all religious performances.

2. Beware of dipping deep again in this once forsaken world; of being drowned in its pleasures, racked with its cares, glued to its profits, lifted up with its smiles, or sunk with its frowns, 1 Cor. vii. 29—31. "This I say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not." &c.

3. Be careful to keep a clean conscience, as Paul, Acts xxiv. 16. "Herein," says he, "do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." Have you got on your wedding garment? keep it unstained as far as may be; and what spots are daily contracted, be daily washing out, John xiii. 10.

4. Be always busy in your generation work, for the honour of God,

and the good of others, as ye have access; that the Master coming find you not idle, Luke xii. 43. "Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh, shall find so doing."

Lastly, Live in expectation of the better world, and your removal into it Job, xiv. 14. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give at that day; and not to me only but unto all them also that love his appearing." Look for the day of your removal, as a day that will be your redemption-day, your marriage-day, your home going day, the day better than that of your birth.

Upon the whole that has been said touching the other world, I make these two concluding reflections,

1. We will all at length be in that world, of which we have so long had the report; and we will see in it what we have heard about it, however foreign it appears to us now. Some of our brethren and sisters have been carried off into it in the time that we have been on this subject; and certainly it is not for nought that it has so long sounded in our ears.

2. However we may now lightly pass, and make very little reflection on what has been said thereon: I doubt not, we will all have our reflections upon it, when we come there; particularly, whether we land in the upper or lower part of it, looking back on what we have heard of it, we will have this reflection, That the half has not been told. What others we will there have, the day will declare.

THE PECULIAR ADVANTAGE AND BUSINESS OF LIFE OPENED UP,
AND APPLIED.

Several Sermons, preached at Ettrick, in the year 1727.

ISAIAH xxxviii. 19.

The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

It is much to be desired, that men would consider the great business of their life: but few do it, till it is just going or gone out