

THE IMPROVEMENT OF LIFE IN THIS WORLD TO THE RAISING A GOOD NAME, THE BEST BALANCE FOR THE PRESENT, FOR THE VANITY AND MISERY OF HUMAN LIFE: AND THE GOOD MAN'S DYING-DAY BETTER THAN HIS BIRTH-DAY.

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

 ECCLES. vii. 1.

A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death, than the day of one's birth.

NEVER man more lively represented the vanity of this world and human life, than Solomon did, whose wisdom and wealth gave him the fairest occasion to discover the best that could be made of it. He represents it in its best shapes, as a very heap of vanity and vexation, in the preceding part of this book. And indeed the vanity of human life is undeniable. Man, as to this world, is born crying, lives complaining, and after all, dies disappointed. But is there no remedy, no solid consolation in this case? Yes, but it must be brought from the consideration of the other world, and this life improved for reaching a happy life there. "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

The scope of these words is, to point men away from the vanities of this life, and from this life itself, unto something that is better and will give rest. Is any man affected with the vanity of human life, and would fain know what is best for him? Then let him know,

1. A good name is best, "better than precious ointment," which was a thing highly prized in the eastern countries. A good name is that savoury character among good men which riseth from a good life, casting forth its savour like good ointment. It is said of Christ, Cant. i. 3, that "his name is as ointment poured forth;" but all the saints partake of that anointing, Psal. xlv. 7, "God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Wherever grace is, it exerts itself in the course of a gracious conversation, holy actions, which procure a good name to the party, in spite of all that the malice of the world can do. It is not a mere name, which a hypocrite may have; but a name raised on a solid foundation of grace and true piety.

Now that is "better than precious ointment," *i. e.* the best things of this present world, that carnal men set their hearts on.

(1.) It is better than all the world's wealth, that goes under the name of oil, Deut. xxxiii. 24, "And of Asher he said,—Let him dip his foot in oil." To do a good action, is better than to gain a worldly advantage. A course of piety, and the just character of a holy life, is preferable to riches, Prov. xxii. 1. So the name of poor Lazarus remains savoury, while the name of the rich glutton stinks.

(2.) It is better than all worldly pleasures and delights of sense, expressed by ointment and perfume, Prov. xxvii. 9, "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart." The testimony of one's own conscience for godly sincerity will rejoice the heart more, 2 Cor. i. 12. Lay the perfumed fool on a sick-bed or death-bed, these things avail nothing, while he is galled with the remembrance of an ill-spent life; but conscience of integrity will bear up a man in the face of death, 1 John iii. 21. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." 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; for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow."

(5.) It is better than all worldly honours, for kings were anointed to testify the conferring of that dignity on them. Men cannot carry their worldly honours into the other world with them; death treats the king and the peasant alike; but the character of piety outlives death, and will be owned and regarded in the other world, Rev. iii. 12. When wicked men shall be condemned in their actions in which they applauded themselves, and others flattered them; the saints will receive Heaven's approbation of their holy actions, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

Wherefore the best thing to balance the misery of human life for the present, is to be good, and do good. That is the great lesson that Solomon gives us here. Look on human life in all the periods of it, childhood, youth, middle age, and old age; and ye will find it is but just so many stages of vanity, whereof some are past, and others passing. Look on it in the various circumstances of it, prosperity and adversity, health and sickness, wealth and penury; and you shall find it but vanity cast in different shapes. Turn up what side of it you will, the young or the old, the single or married state, it is larded with vanity on every side. Only consider it as an opportunity of being and doing good, and so it is a substantial thing; and so very substantial in that respect, that it may well balance all the miseries that attend it. But take away that, and it is at best but an useless burden, Psal. lxxxix. 47.

2. Death, the passing into the other world, is best; the dying-day is best, "better than the birth-day." It is hard to believe that; and if men frame their sentiments according to the prevailing opinion of this world, they will never believe it; but if they frame it according to the doctrine of the other world, they must needs believe it as it is represented in this text.

Ye have heard that there is another world; a lower part of it, the region of horror; to which death is the passage for sinners, whose dying day must therefore be their most doleful day, in the view of which ye have been exhorted to cry, "Gather not my soul with sinners." But ye have heard also, that there is a higher part of that world, a region of perfect bliss and happiness, to which death is also the passage for saints or persons that have got the good name; now if you believe that doctrine, you must needs conclude from it, that the day of such a one's death is better than the day of his birth, which is the thing here meant. And since we have offered a view of the dark side of the cloud, the gathering with sinners in the other world; it is just we offer a view too of the bright side of the cloud, the gathering with saints there.

There is a comparison here of two of the days of human life, both of them specially remarkable. The one is the first day of our life here, the birth-day, wherein we come into this world out of the womb. The other is the last day of our life here, the death-day, wherein we go out of this into the other world. The question is, Which of the two is the best day, the most desirable in itself? The subject is determined in the first clause, to be the man with the good name, who has been savoury in his life, being and doing good. And Solomon decides the question with respect to such a one, roundly telling us, The day of death is better than the day of *his* birth, *Heb.* namely, the man with the good name. When he came into the world at his birth, his friends rejoiced, they thought it a good day; when he goes out of this world into the other, they mourn, thinking it a sad day. But think they as they will, it is the best day of the two; and were it not the partition betwixt the two worlds, we would see it to our conviction.

Wherefore the best thing to balance the misery of human life for the future to a good man, is to die, and leave this world and the life in it. That is the lesson we are taught here. The weight of glory that death will bring him to in the other world, will absolutely downweigh all the misery of life here. The bliss of the lodging he comes to there, will more than compensate all the hardships of the way; that he shall say, "O that happy life in the lower world, that made way for my entrance hither into this upper world! Who

would not gladly have embraced Methuselah's tack of that life, for to get this!"

From the text thus explained, ariseth the two following points of doctrine, viz.

Doct. I. The improving of our life in this world to the raising up a well grounded good name and savoury character in it, is the best balance for the present for the vanity and misery attending our life, better than the most savoury earthly things.

Doct. II. To one who has so lived, as to obtain the good name, his dying-day will be better than his birth-day, quite downweighing all the vanity and misery of life in this world.

I shall speak to each of these in order.

Doct. I. The improving of our life in this world to the raising up a well grounded good name and savoury character in it, is the best balance for the present for the vanity and misery attending our life, better than the most savoury earthly things.

In discoursing from this doctrine, I shall,

I. Lay before you some things supposed in it.

II. Shew what is the well-grounded good name, that is the balance of the vanity and misery of this life.

III. What is the improvement of life, whereby that good name may be raised.

IV. Confirm the point, That this improvement of life is the best balance for the present for the vanity and misery attending our life, better than the most savoury earthly things.

V. Make some improvement.

I. I shall lay before you some things supposed in the doctrine.

1. It supposeth that there is a vanity and misery that is the inseparable attendant of human life in this world. No man in life is free of it, nor can be, Psal. xxxix. 6, "Surely every man walketh in a vain shew." No circumstances of life can avail to the shifting it off; it accompanies the crown and sceptre, as well as the beggar's seat on the dunghill, Eccl. i. 2. "Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Psal. xxxix. 5. "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." Men may change their wilderness-station, but while here will still be in a wilderness. They may get out of one vanity and misery, but it will always be but a falling into another.

2. Every man will find himself obliged to seek for some allay of that vanity and misery of life, that he may be enabled to comport with it, Psal. vi. 6. This makes a busy world, every one seeking something to make his hard seat soft. For the whole world is in a

sickly condition of spirit, witness their need of the great Physician, Matth. ix. 12. Hence there is a mighty restlessness, turning and shifting from one thing to another, for some allay of the present uneasiness.

3. It is natural for men to seek an allay to the vanity and misery of life, in earthly things, Psal. vi. 6. "There may be many that say, Who will shew us any good?" They seek precious ointment, as it were, to master the rank savour that is about human life. For this cause the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world are sought after, and employed as plasters for that sore; that, by means of them, they may be enabled to comfort with the vanity and misery of life.

4. But the best of earthly things will make but a sorry plaster for that sore; they will not be able to balance the vanity and misery of life, but with them all life may be rendered sapless, through the predominant vanity and misery of it. All Haman's honours were not able to season life to him, while Mordecai bowed not; neither could Ahab's kingdom, in the want of Naboth's vineyard; nor Belshazzar's festival joys and pleasures, while the hand-writing was seen on the wall. That way it but seeking to allay one vanity with another; a dead fly will make the ointment itself stink; a day's pleasure will not balance an hour's pain; nor honour for years, blot out the disgrace that a moment fixes.

Lastly, Howbeit, the improving of life to the raising a well-grounded good name, will balance the vanity and misery of life effectually; so that he who has reached that kind of living, has what is well worth the enduring all the miseries of life for. There is an excellency and good in it, that downweigh all the evils attending life.

II. I shall shew what is the well-grounded good name, that is the balance of the vanity and misery of human life. It is the name of religion, raised from the reality thereof in the person that has the name. And it is, I say,

1. The name of religion, and no less; for there is nothing truly good separate from religion, Matth. vii. 18. Men have attempted to raise themselves a name from other things, some from their wealth, some from their wit, valour, buildings, beauty, &c. But these may make a vain name, which at death will go out with a stink, without religion. Only religion can make a good name, being the only thing of value with a good God, and among good men; without which all things else will be but cyphers, the name of nothing.

2. It is raised on the reality of religion, and no less; for a mere shew of religion is but a vain and empty thing, which will dwindle

to nothing with other vanities. That will make but a name before men, not before God; "I know you not," said the Bridegroom to the foolish virgins, Matth. xxv. 12. They come under the name of virgins, but Christ will not know them by that name.

We may take up that good name in three parts.

1. *Friend of God*, Jam. ii. 23. That is the part of the good name, that designs the man's state of peace and reconciliation with God through Christ. There is no good name without this, Jam. iv. 4. And this is the name put on all endowed with true religion, John xv. 14. a name better than sons and daughters, in whom men's name is preserved, Isa. lvi. 5.

2. *Faithful to the Lord*, Acts xvi. 15. That designs the man's temper and way towards God. He is a sincere and upright Christian, endeavouring to approve himself to God in all things. He makes the will of God his rule, the word of God his oracle, the love of God his principle, and the glory of God his chief end in life. A noble name, that God will know him by, in the other world, Matth. xxv. 21. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," &c.

3. *Useful to men*, serving his generation, Acts xiii. 35. That designs the man's temper and way towards his neighbour. He is not a common nuisance of society, ensnaring and mischievous to those about him, whereby some make themselves a name that will rot, Eccl. ix. ult. Nor yet an useless member of society, concerned for none but himself. But a profitable member, laying out himself to do good to others as he has access, Esth. x. ult.

This is that good name that is the best balance for the present, for the vanity and misery of human life.

III. We come next to shew what is the improvement of life, whereby that good name may be raised. This is a weighty point that nearly concerns us all, to know those things that will make our life savoury before God and men. I shall unfold it in the following particulars. If you would raise up to yourselves that good name in life,

First, Improve your life by a personal and saving entering into the covenant of grace, and uniting with Christ, by believing on his name. Here are three things which we have access to in this life, as vain and miserable as it is, and in it only; and if we so improve it, we will be called friends of God.

1. Personally entering into his covenant, Isa. lvi. 4, 5. "For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an

everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." The name of your father Adam's house, given you at your birth into this world, is stranger and enemy to God, Eph. ii. 12; Rom. viii. 7. In the gospel God's covenant of peace is offered to you; consider while you are in life, what you are doing, and take hold of that covenant, with all the seriousness and awful solemnity ye are capable of in life. So shall ye get the good name, the new name, friend of God, as confederate with Heaven, Eph. ii. 12, 13. If ye ask how ye shall do that? the answer is,

2. Unite with Christ. He is the head of the covenant, and we enter into it by uniting with him, John x. 9. "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Isa. xlix. 8. "I will give thee for a covenant of the people." Uniting with Christ, thy soul shall be wrapt up in the bond of the covenant of grace, made with him, for him and his; even as thy relation to Adam wraps thee up in the bond of the covenant of works, made with him for him and his. Come then, thou art now in life, improve it to thy union with Christ; so shalt thou have a ground whence the good name must infallibly rise, Col. i. 27. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Make this the business of your life in the first place, to get Christ in you. Live and travail for this, Gal. iv. 19. It alone is able to balance all the misery of life. If ye ask, how ye shall unite with Christ, the answer is,

3. Believe on his name; that is the way to unite with him, Eph. iii. 17. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Believing on him, thou shalt be in a state of union with him, as the branches with the vine, and the superstructure with the foundation; so shalt thou be called by a new name, the good name. John i. 12. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

Ques. But what is it to believe on his name?

Ans. 1. To believe the gospel-report; namely, That Christ is by his Father's appointment the Saviour of the world, and your Saviour to save you from sin and wrath, Isa. liii. 1. "Who hath believed our report?" compared with 1 John iv. 14. "And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world." and v. 11. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." Set yourself to believe this; ye will not find it so easy, as you imagine perhaps. But it is impossible to receive Christ, or believe on him, without believing this first, John iii. 27. "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven."

2. To trust on him accordingly, that he will save you from sin

and wrath, freely by his grace, through his righteousness, blood, and Spirit, Acts xv. 11. "We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved. Rom. i. 17. "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." Set yourself to this; for herein the uniting nature of faith lies, inasmuch as in this act of trusting on him, the soul is, (1.) Divorced from sin, as well as careful to escape wrath; the heart being alienated from sin, set to be rid of it and made holy, which is the immediate effect of saving illumination, the discovery of Christ made to the soul in the gospel by the Spirit working faith, 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5; Matth. xiii. 45, 46. (2.) Carried wholly off its own bottom for these ends, self-confidence, creature-confidence, law-confidence; *i. e.* confidence in any work or good qualification of our own, are all undetermined together by a touch of heaven's hand; so that the soul has not one foot left to stand on, not a twig without or within him to grip to before the Lord but Christ alone, and what is in Christ, his free grace, righteousness, blood and Spirit, Phil. iii. 3. (3.) Laid wholly on Christ for these ends, as the stones of the building on the foundation, cleaving and clinging to him, relying on him, who if he should fail it, all would come down together. But it is impossible that such an event should take place, since Christ is the foundation stone laid by his Father, to bear all the weight of sinners laid on him; and therefore knits with the soul laid on him, and secures it for ever, 1 Pet. ii. 6.

Improve your life then to a personal and saving entering into the covenant of grace, and uniting with Christ by believing on his name. So you shall have the good name which ye shall never lose, that will balance all the vanity and misery of life, and make your dying day better than your birth-day.

Secondly, Improve your life to a living a life of faith in this world; so shall ye get the good name, "Faithful to the Lord;" Gal. ii. 20, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." Rev. xvii. 14. "They that are with him, are called, and chosen and faithful." All the improvement most men make of life, is to live a life of sense, eat, drink, do worldly business, sport, play, &c. So all that they make of life, is the life of a beast, which have the delights of sense in greater perfection than what they for their hearts can reach. And so their name shall be written, in the earth, an ill name, a disgraceful name, Luke xii. 20. Jam. iv. 3, 4. But live ye a life of faith, and so ye will make of your life the life of a Christian, a saint, a child of God, an heir of glory, a faithful servant to the Lord.

Now to raise up the good name, "Faithful to the Lord," by a

life of faith, your faith must cast your life into the following mould, which will be impracticable but by faith.

1. Let it be a life of believing and dependance on God in Christ for all. Live believing his word in all parts of it, 2 Chron. xx. 20.; believing the divine authority, equity, and goodness of his commands, Psal. cxix. 128. the faithfulness and certainty of his promises, Rom. iv. 20, 21. the justice and truth of his threatenings, Isa. lvi. 2. Depend entirely and trust on him at all times, Isa. xxiv. 4. for all things you need, Prov. iii. 5, 6. for happiness, light, strength, and success in temporals and spirituals. Depend on him alone while ye live.

(1.) For your happiness and soul's rest, Heb. iv. 3. Never expect it from the most promising creature, but look for it firmly from a God in Christ, Psal. xvii. ult.

(2.) For light to know your duty in all the steps of your way. Never venture yourself to your own management, be the way never so plain, Jer. x. 23. for at that rate ye stumble in an even road. But let your hope be in the promise, Psal. xxxii. 8. "I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eyes."

(3.) For strength to perform every duty in life to God or man. Lean not to your own stock of strength and resolutions. The good name is that of a branch, not of a root, 2 Tim. ii; 1 John xv. 5. And so no duty whatsoever that God calls you to, shall be above your reach as to acceptable performance, Phil. iv. 13. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

(4.) For your success in all ye set yourselves to in your temporal and spiritual concerns, Josh. i. 8, 9. Remember always that Heaven keeps the negative over us in all our attempts, Lam. iii. 37. Hence it is said, "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong," &c. Eccl. ix. 11.

2. Let it be a life of devotion, Psal. cxix. 38. That makes a part of the good name in the Bible, despise and scoff at it who will, Luke ii. 25. of Simeon it is said, he was just and devout. And the name of devout Christians will be in honour, when the memory of the profane shall rot. Let it be a life of devotion.

(1.) In respect of the truths of God made known to you, reckoning every truth sacred, and cleaving thereto against all hazards and opposition, Prov. xxiii. 23. I do not advise you to break with every one that is not of your mind, but only to quit no truth to any. This the apostle directs, Phil. iii. 15, 16, "Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Neverthe-

less, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." And devotion leads to it. It is a part of the comfort at death; hence Paul says, 2 Tim. iv. 7. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

(2.) In respect of the worship of God, Phil. iii. 3. If you have a father, you must honour him; if a master, you must regard him; otherwise you will have a very ill name, and you will smart for it. Ye have a God that made you, if ye live regardless of him, where is your good name, what kind of a day can ye imagine the day of death will be to you? But be devout worshippers of him, in secret, private, and public, shewing reverence in the frame of your heart and outward gestures; so shall ye have the good name.

3. Let it be a life of heavenly-mindedness, and contempt of the world, Phil. iii. 20. So Enoch got the good name of walking with God, Gen. v. 24. and the worthies, Heb. xi. 13,—16. Covetousness and worldly-mindedness in professors of religion mar their good name, Phil. iii. 19. It was a noble testimony that Luther had from his enemies, *Germanica illa bestia non curat aurum*. Friends of the world cannot be faithful to God.

4. Let it be a life of Christian deportment under trials and afflictions in life. Every body will have something laid before them for their trials, wherein they must stand candidates for the other world, to be disposed of there as they acquit themselves in their trials for it here, Rev. iii. 21. So patience, resignation, holy cheerfulness under the cross, are necessary to raise the good name, Jam. i. 4. And by an unbecoming carriage under the cross, people may lose all the good name they had before, Mark x. 21, 22. Wherefore the exhortation is, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him," Heb. xii. 5.

Lastly, Let it be a life of uprightness, the same where no eye sees you but God's, as where the eyes of men are upon you. The faith of God's omniscience leads to this; hence Joseph said when tempted to sin by his lewd mistress, Gen. xxxix. 9, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" O what name do the practisers of secret wickedness think they will have with God, who are at liberty to sin if they can do it unseen of men? God will read out their name with disgrace before all the world at length, Prov. xxvi. 26, "Whose hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness shall be showed before the whole congregation."

Thirdly, Improve your life to the living of a life beneficial to mankind, profitable to your fellow-creatures, diffusing a benign influence through the world, as ye have access; so that when you are gone,

the world may be convinced they have lost a useful member that sought their good; so shall ye have the good name, "Useful to men," Acts xiii. 36. But there is a fourfold life that will raise this name.

1st, The *noxious* life, that some live in the world like foxes in the mountains, biting, devouring, and worrying others; they cause their terror in the land of the living, but will leave their name for a curse. Better one had never been in the world, than to be in it for mischief; to be in it, as mice and rats are in it, destroying much good.

2dly, The *trifling* life, that some live in the world, like the leviathan in the sea, Psal. cvi. 29; laughing, sporting, playing, idling, and trifling away a lifetime, without doing any substantial good for themselves or others. Such make their life a dream, and their death will be a terrible awakening.

3dly, The *selfish* life, that some live in the world, like the oyster within its own shell, careful for nothing but their own sweet self, Phil. ii. 21. The world will be at no loss for the want of them, reaping no advantage by the having of them. If they were to go out of the world, there is none before them in heaven that ever they helped a step forward to it, to receive them into everlasting habitations, Luke xvi. 9.

4thly, The *carnal earthly* life, that some live in the world, like the mole ever digging in the earth, never looking upward. These are busy in life, but doing nothing, nothing to the purpose of a better world. They may indeed be some way useful to others, but then it is only as the brutes are useful in things of this world. But that will never raise to men the name of Christian usefulness.

But there is an edifying life that will raise it, 1 Cor. viii. 1, "Charity edifieth." The love of our neighbour springing from the love of God, will set men to seek the good of their neighbours, and so edify or build up the world, in which live so many to destroy and pull down. If we live to ourselves, we will die to ourselves too. But let us know that we are to live in this world for the honour of God, and for the good of mankind our fellows in it; and we miss the most noble end of human life, so far as we miss of these.

There is reason that every one ask himself, For what use am I in the world? How do I fill up my room in it for the common good? And if we mind for happiness in the other world, we must set ourselves to be useful to men in this world, and live to be useful in it, Rom. xiv. 19, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Chap. xv. 2, "Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good

to edification." We are members one of another; and that member that is not useful for the rest, is a rotten member, to be cut off.

Object. Magistrates and ministers may, but what access have we to be useful to the world, or to raise up that good name to ourselves? *Ans.* Follow these rules of life, and ye shall raise to yourselves the good name, how private soever ye be.

1. Cast the world a copy by your good example, Matth. v. 16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Many an ill example is set before them for their destruction, Matth. xviii. 7. Give them your good example yet for their edification; and live as meanly and privately as ye will, ye shall be as useful in the world, as a beacon is at sea letting shipmen see the rocks they are to hold off, Phil. ii. 15, 16, "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." And give them a good example,

(1.) Of *devotion* and piety towards God, in a strict and religious observance of your duty towards him. This will be a practical testimony for him, a light that will condemn the world's profane contempt of him, Prov. xxviii. 4.

(2.) Of *exact justice* and truth, in all your doings and sayings with men, Zech. viii. 16, "Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates." The world is sunk in a gulph of injustice and falsehood, and the multitude of those that make no conscience of justice in their deeds and truth in their words, is so great, that they are thought nothing of. Come, row against this stream.

(3.) Of *sobriety* in moderating your own passions, with a spirit of peacefulness, meekness, and forbearance, Matth. xi. 29. This is necessary for the good name, and without it it will be marred, Prov. xxv. ult.

This is a life-preaching of the gospel to the world, to which every one of you has access, Tit. ii. 11, 12, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." And that is an useful man in the world, that on good grounds can say, when he is to leave it, with the apostle, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe," 1 Thess. ii. 10.

2. Be of a beneficent disposition, disposed to do good to mankind as you have access, Gal. vi. 10. Some are of the household of faith,

have a special concern to do good 'to them ; others are not, ye must have a concern for them too ; though they are not saints, they are men of the same common nature with yourselves, Luke vi. 35. We should greedily embrace an opportunity of doing good to others, thinking with ourselves, That is the proper business of our life. And be disposed to do good,

(1.) In temporals as ye have access, Heb. xiii. 16. " But to do good, and to communicate, forget not ; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." There is nobody but some one time or way or other may be profitable to others. The duties of humanity are of great usefulness in the world, being kind, merciful, and compassionate to them that are in distress, or need, Col. iii. 12. It has a great encouragement by promise, Prov. iii. 9, 10 ; Psal. xli. 1, &c.

(2.) In spirituals. There are none of the children of Adam, but have immortal souls that must live for ever. And true grace is natively communicative, as one candle serves to light another, Gen. xviii. 19. " I know him," says God of Abraham, " that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." And says the woman of Samaria to the men of the city, John iv. 29. " Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did ; is not this the Christ ?" So ye should be ready to be useful to others, according to their spiritual exigence, instructing the ignorant, warning the secure, encouraging good motions, bearing down bad ones, &c.

3. Lay out yourselves to forward the usefulness of others, 1 Cor. xvi. 10, 11. Whomsoever ye see disposed and employed to be useful, help them forward, facilitate their work, strengthen their hands what you can, so shall ye be useful to the greatest purposes at second hand. The water cannot grind the corn, but it can turn about the wheel, and the wheel the millstone, and so the millstone will grind it, and so the water is useful for grinding, in such sort that when it fails there is no doing it. So the meanest of the Colossians could be useful for declaring the mystery of Christ, Col. iv. 3. " Withal, praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds." People generally think little of weakening the hands of those that are useful ; but I have often thought that it is one of the most miserable uses of being in the world, to be in it for a weight hung upon them that would be useful, Matth. xiii. 13.

Lastly, Be conscientious in the performance of the duties of your station and relations, 1 Cor. vii. 24. " Brethren, let every man wherein he is called, therein abide with God." That is the sphere

of usefulness that God has allotted to you ; every one may be useful that way ; and no body can be useful otherwise, whatever they may vainly imagine. It is exemplified in the case of the priests, Mal. ii. 6 ; of wives, 1 Pet. iii. 1 ; and of servants, Tit. ii. 9, 10. To pretend to usefulness without our sphere, is the effect of pride and presumption, and is the same absurdity in moral conduct, as it would be in nature for the moon and stars to set up for the rule of the day, the sun contenting himself with the rule of the night.

Thus ye have the improvement of life, by which the good name may be raised.

IV. I proceed to confirm the point, That this improvement of life is the best balance for the present, for the vanity and misery attending our life, better than the most savoury earthly things. And here I shall shew,

1. That it is the best balance for the present, for the vanity and misery of life.

2. That it is better than the best and most savoury earthly things.

First, I am to shew, that this improvement of life is the best balance for the present, for the vanity and misery of life.

1. Hereby a man answers the end of his creation, for which he was sent into the world ; and surely the reaching of such a noble end is the best balance for all the hardships in the way of it. The merchant toils in travelling, the husbandman in plowing and sowing ; but the gaining of their end downweighs all that toil to them. The chief end of man's life in the world is to enjoy God as our friend, to be dutiful and faithful to him as our Benefactor, and useful to men our fellow-creatures ; if we reach that noble end, what matter what hardships we made through unto it ? If we miss it, we have nothing that will counterbalance them.

2. It brings such a substantial and valuable good out of our life, as will downweigh all the inconveniences that attend our life in the world. Gather the vanities and miseries of human life together, its frailties, weaknesses, disappointments, crosses, &c., they will make a great heap ; and put them in the balance with bare life itself, with mere worldly comforts and conveniences, they would downweigh it, Psalm lxxxix. 47. One may say, these comforts are not worth the living for, at the rate of that vanity and misery that attend them. But here are three things, namely, our own happiness in God's favour, the honour of God, and the good of mankind ; any one of these, and much more all of them together, is worth living for under all the inconveniences of life, and will downweigh all the misery of life in this world ; there being more good in the one, than there is evil in the other.

3. It brings such valuable good into our life, as more than counterbalanceth all the vanity and misery of it. And that is, (1.) A present comfort and satisfaction, within one's self, 2 Cor. i. 12. The soul-satisfaction there is in the reflection, that God is one's friend, that they have got something done for the honour of God, and for the good of their fellow-creatures, is enough to counter-balance the vanity and misery of life, Prov. xiv. 14. (2.) A future prospect, namely, of complete happiness, which must needs turn the scales entirely, be the miseries of life what they will, Rom. viii. 35—39.

Lastly, That good name well grounded is a thing that may cost much indeed, but it cannot be too dear bought, Prov. xxiii. 23. Whatever it cost you, you will be gainers, if ye get it, Phil. iii. 8. Let men and devils raise the market to the highest pitch they can to increase the difficulty of your obtaining it, they can never raise it so high as to give you ground to stop bidding for it. This has been the concurring testimony of all the saints, confessors, and martyrs from the beginning, Heb. xi. 1—39.

Secondly, I shall show that this improvement of life is better than the best and most savoury earthly things.

1. It will give a greater pleasure to the mind, than any earthly thing can do, Prov. iii. 17; Psalm iv. 7; 2 Cor. i. 17. This appears in its bearing up the heart, under the greatest trials and hardships. What can all the delights of sense, profits, and pleasures of the world, avail a dying man? But this good name rejoiceth the heart in the face of death. This made confessors joyful under the loss of their substance, and martyrs cheerfully embrace flames and gibbets.

2. It will last longer than they will all do, Psalm cxii. 6. Abraham was rich in silver and gold, and Job in stocking: but these things of theirs are all gone now, but their good name they raised to themselves is yet to the fore. All earthly things have a principle of corruption in them, rust eats the silver, moths eat the fine clothes, and our bodies themselves will rot; only the good name is incorruptible, and will not be eaten up either by the teeth of malice or time, Is. lvi. 5.

3. It is the only thing we can keep to ourselves in the world to our advantage, when we leave the world. We must all leave the world, and then whatever riches, wealth, honours we have in it, we must leave them to others; only what name we leave behind us, we will keep to ourselves when we are gone, we will be our own heirs in that, Matt. vi. 19, 20. If it be an ill name, there is our disadvantage; we leave nothing to ourselves in the world, but what

stinks in it. If it be the good name, it will be savoury after us, when we are away. So,

4. The good name will, after we are away, be savoury in the world, when the things that others set their hearts on will make them stink when they are gone. How savoury is the name of Lazarus, Luke xvi. at this day, notwithstanding all his poverty and sores? How is the name of the rich man buried with himself, known only by his being a sensual gluttonous man, a name that every one abhors? Days have been, wherein some have been rigid oppressors, and raised wealth to themselves that way; while others were patient under their oppressions. There have been great and honourable men in the world, some of them sitting on a throne, who lived in whoredom, persecution, blood, and murder; while others have Christianly submitted to be pent up in prisons, shot, hanged on gibbets by their orders; they are all gone now, the oppressors and persecutors, as well as the oppressed and persecuted. I appeal to the conscience of every one, which of their names is most savoury now, and which of the two would ye choose for yourselves if ye could?

Lastly, The good name will go farther than the best and most savoury things of the earth. Mary pours a box of precious ointment on Christ, which no doubt sent its savour through the whole house; but Christ paid her for it with the good name, that should send its savour through the whole world, Matt. xxvi. 13. "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." But ye may think, we can have no hope that ever our good name will go that wide. That is a mistake; for if we raise ourselves the good name, it will certainly be published before all the world at the last day, Rev. iii. 5, and we will carry it over the march betwixt the two worlds into the other world, ver. 12. The name of kings, princes, nobles, gentlemen, &c. will go no further with people than this world: there will be an absolute levelling of mankind in the other world; these great names will not take place there, but the good name will, and make the only difference.

I come now to the improvement of this subject.

USE I. Of information. This doctrine informs us that,

1. There is a way to get the vanity and misery of this life balanced even for the present; so that one may get a sufficient sweetening to all the bitterness of it, that they may not quite weary of life, but patiently wait their change. This discovery should be very acceptable, because it is seasonable, to all; and all should set themselves to the improving of it, as needing it.

2. That way is the only way of a religious life, in faith and holiness. By such a course, and no other, can the good name be raised. It is not being great, but good; not being high, but useful, that will raise it. In vain do men think to make themselves a name by their wealth and honour, while they are not careful to improve these to the glory of God and the good of others; for all they will get thereby will be but a blaze of a name, that will soon go out with a stink; or to balance the miseries of life, by the chase of worldly profits and pleasures; but these they will find attended with vanity and misery. But faith and holiness will make a lasting good name.

3. People ought to be concerned for a good name as a most precious thing; and therefore both to be and to appear good, both to have a holy practice and a holy profession; the latter as well as the former being necessary to raise it, and the former as well as the latter. A holy practice without a holy profession is a contradiction; for the one is a necessary part of the other, which is a light that must needs discover itself, Matt. v. 16; Psalm ii. 15, 16. A holy profession without a holy practice is pharisaical and hypocritical; and the name it will raise being without a root, will be but for a moment, and that before men only.

4. The right improving of life is the way to the good name. It is the way to obtain it, and secure it. Thus every one has access to it, Isa. lvi. 4, 5. "For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant," &c. Sons and daughters must die themselves, and their name be extinct; flourishing families may soon be rooted out. But a life rightly improved will leave a savoury name when it is at an end; and will keep up the name of those that have neither son nor daughter, and that for ever.

USE II. Of reproof to,

1. Those who are in no concern for a good name. It is pitiful trifling indeed for men to hunt for an empty name before the world, in the way of vain-glory, Matth. vi. 2. But they that live careless of a well-grounded good name, being careless of their name, are careless of their souls too. They value not what he thought or said of them never so truly, so that they can but please themselves, and satisfy their own lusts for the present; that is the life of brutes concerned only for the present times, not for the time after death. It is a sad life, to live a life of sin, and afterward to leave our name for a curse.

2. Those who set up for a name, but are in no concern to improve their life for the honour of God and good of mankind. They will never get the good name that way; they may get a vain name, or

an ill name. Faith and holiness are the only pillars to rear up the good name upon.

2. Those who, under the vanity and misery of life, seek for this and the other comfort of the world to support them, but never set themselves to a Christian improvement of life to balance their afflictions and hardships. That is to be solicitous for cure, and yet to stand off from the sovereign never-failing remedy.

Use ult. Of exhortation. Let the vanities and miseries attending this present life move and engage you to improve life for raising up to yourselves the good name, as the best thing to balance them for the present. Seriously consider the vanity and misery of life, and let the view of them spur to a Christian improvement. And for this cause consider,

1. What a vain and miserable thing your life on earth is, if you make not something of it for an after life, Psal. xxxix. 6. It is a fleeting, passing vanity, a vapour, a puff of wind that will soon be away. The bloom of youth soon fades, its vigour decays, and man goes as fast down as ever he rose up, and sometimes is pulled down suddenly. Every age and condition is attended with so many miseries thereto allied, that there is no rest in any part of it.

2. There is no cure for the vanity and misery of life to drive them away. Men are still working at that indeed; but in vain, Eccl. i. 15. "That which is crooked cannot be made straight; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered." Ye may as well think to turn the winter into summer, and clear the air of midges flying about in a warm summer-day. The removal thereof is reserved for the other life in the other world; but while men live in this world, there will be vanity and misery attending them.

3. The only thing valuable in this life, is, that it is an opportunity for raising a good name, that may pass with us in the other world. That is an advantage of this life that is not in the other, Eccl. ix. 10. Isa. xxxviii. 19. Take it by this handle, and you have it as a valuable good among your hands; a seed-time for eternity, an apprenticeship for heaven, a tide for Immanuel's land.

4. Every piece of the vanity and misery of this life, that comes on you, is a providential call to you to improve it as such an opportunity. The language thereof is, "Arise, depart, this is not your rest;" Cant. iv. 8. "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the Leopards." Every thorn of uneasiness you find in life, is a warning to you to leave seeking your satisfaction in the empty creation, and to take up your soul's rest in God.

5. To improve it so will give a present ease and relief under the burden; though it will not take it off your back, it will strengthen you, and make you go more lightly under it, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. It will give you more effectual consolation under them, than all the comforts of the world can. Though ye will still be in life but as pilgrims, yet it will give you a song in the house of your pilgrimage.

It will secure you a happy life in the other world, where none of these vanities and miseries shall ever have place any more for ever. Thus ye will lay up treasure in heaven which cannot be lost, Mat. vi. 19, 20. Now is the seed time, then will be the eternal reaping of what is now sown, Gal. vi. 8.

Lastly, If ye do not so improve it, you will never taste the happiness of life. You will lose the present life as to any true happiness therein, though you may deceive yourselves with the shadow of happiness therein; yet the truth is, you have no sufficient balance for the vanity and misery of life, which you cannot miss. And then your life in the other world will be a life of unmixed misery, a thousand times worse.

To help you to this improvement,

(1.) Take some time to consider, what name you bear, and how your name savours, in heaven and earth. It will be of little value, to be savoury on earth, if it be not so in heaven too, Rev. iii. 1. But if it be savoury in heaven, it will in spite of malice be savoury on earth too, in the consciences of men, 2 Cor. iv. 2. Now this will be according to your soul's state before the Lord, and the habitual bent and course of your life and actions, 2 Cor. ii. 15, "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved." John xv. 14, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

(2.) Address yourselves to the living a life of faith and holiness, as the proper work of this life while it lasts, Isa. 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." Dream away life no longer, trifling away precious time; but open your eyes, rouse up yourselves to mind and ply the end of your creation, 1 Cor. xv. 34, "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame."

Lastly, Keep in view the approach of death, as what shuts up and cuts off working time, John ix. 4. Remember it is now or never you must raise the good name. For this present state only is the state of trial; the future state is the state of retribution, wherein each will be rewarded according to his work. As the child born dead into this world, cannot be brought to life by the light thereof; so he that enters spiritually dead, and without the

good name, into the other world, will never have life nor good name there.

I shall now proceed to the consideration of the other doctrine from the text, viz.

Doct. II. To one who has so lived as to obtain the good name, his dying-day will be better than his birth-day, quite downweighing all the vanity and misery of life in this world. This is a paradox, a truth though unlikely. In handling it, I shall,

I. Discover some truths contained in it.

II. Show in what latitude this doctrine is to be understood.

III. Demonstrate the truth of this paradox, this unlikely tale, That the saint's dying-day is better than his birth-day.

IV. Apply the subject.

I. I shall discover some truths contained in this doctrine.

1. However men live, they must die. He that has had a birth-day, whatever he makes of his life, must have a dying day too, Heb. ix. 6, "It is appointed unto men once to die." The careless graceless life of the fool will not ward off death, neither will the well-improved life of the wise do it, Psal. xlix. 10. Both must lay their account with it; they that look and prepare for it will not be disappointed, and those that never mind it, it will certainly overtake.

2. The birth-day is a good day, notwithstanding all the vanity and misery of human life. This is the common sense of mankind about it. And though some have cursed it as the worst of days, that alters not the case, being the effect of a transport of passion. But it is a good day to the relations, notwithstanding the bitterness mixed with it, as our Saviour observes, John xvi. 21, "A woman when she is in travail, hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." And so it is to the party too, as an entrance on the stage of life whereby God is glorified, and one may be prepared for a better life, Isa. xxxviii. 19, "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day," &c.

3. The dying-day is not always so frightful as it looks; it may be a good day too. There may be a kind heart, where there is a stern countenance on occasions. As in scouring a vessel, sand and ashes first defiling it makes it to glisten; so grim death brings in a perfect comeliness. The waters may be red and frightful, where yet the ground is good, and they are but shallow, passable with all safety.

4. Where the dying-day follows a well-improved life, it is better than the birth-day, however it may appear. There is this difference betwixt them, the birth-day has its fair side outmost, the dying-day has its fair side inmost; hence the former begins with joy, but opens out in much sorrow; the latter begins with sorrow, but opens out in treasures of endless joy. And certainly it is better to step through sorrow into joy, than through joy into sorrow.

5. The dying-day in that case is so very far better than the birth-day, that it quite downweighs all the former vanity and misery of life. The angelic guard conveying Lazarus into Abraham's bosom, left not his sometime sore and pinching straits the weight of a feather, being compared with the honour and glory of it, 2 Cor. iv. 17. However heavy their case has been, they remember it then as waters that fail.

Lastly, But it will not be so in the case of an ill spent life. In that case the birth-day will still keep the preference, it will be better than the dying-day, though in the mean time it would have been best of all that such had never been born, Mat. xxvi. 24. For whatever joy or sorrow they have been born to in this world, they will never taste of joy more, but be overwhelmed with floods of sorrow, when once their dying-day is come and over.

II. I shall shew in what latitude this doctrine is to be understood.

1. As to the *parties*, those who have so lived as to obtain the good name. It is to be understood of them,

(1.) *Universally*, whatever different degrees be among them in the lustre of the good name. There are children, young men, and and fathers of that name: it is more illustrious with some of them than others; for though all are alike friends of God, yet all are not alike faithful to God, and useful to men, 1 John ii. 12. But if they obtain that name at all, the day of their death will be better than that of their birth; for the lowest saint in the other world will be in better case than the greatest of men in this world.

(2.) *Inclusively*, of elect infants dying in their infancy, before they are capable of being faithful to God, or useful to men; because having the Spirit of Christ dwelling in them, whereby they are united to Christ, they are the friends of God, and if their organs were disposed, they would be faithful and useful. The seed of faithfulness and usefulness is in them, 1 John iii. 9. Only they lack opportunity, not being arrived at the use of reason, Mat. xix. 14.

Let godly parents who have sometimes laid their infants in the grave, for whom they took hold of God's covenant, know for their

comfort, that though the names of these babes are forgotten in this world by all but them, because they were so short while in it; they have the good name, a shining name in the other world, that will never be forgotten there. And the day of their death, however heavy it was to you, it was really better than the day of their birth; much sin and misery being hid from their eyes that you have felt.

(3.) *Exclusively* of all others. They that have not so lived as to obtain the good name, have neither part nor lot in this matter, Prov. xiv. 32. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness." When men's passions are raised through the miseries of this life fretting them, death appears desirable. So it did to the murmurers, Num. xiv. 2. So to Judas, under horror for an ill spent life. But they are too hasty and inconsiderate there; for be this life as bad as it will, it is the best they can look for.

2. As to the points in comparison, the birth-day and the dying-day, it is to be understood of them,

(1.) In their formal notion as days of passing into a new world. Consider the day of the saint's birth, as a coming out of his mother's womb into our world, and the light thereof that he never saw before; and the day of his death, as a passing into the other world, which he never saw before neither. And the latter is better than the former, it is the preferable passage; it is better for him when he has got the good name to leave his body a corpse, than it was to leave the womb of his mother when he was a ripe infant.

(2.) In all circumstances whatsoever. The saint's dying-day compared with his birth-day, does so preponderate, that no circumstances whatsoever can cast the balance; suppose him born healthy and vigorous, dying in the most languishing manner, or in the greatest agonies; born heir to an estate or a crown, dying poor at a dyke-side, neglected of all; yet the day of his death, in spite of all these advantages of his birth, is better than the day of his birth.

3. As to the preference, it stands in two points.

(1.) The advantages of the saint's dying-day are preferable to the advantages of his birth-day. Cast up the sums of both in any way you can imagine, and the former will far surmount the latter, as the heavens are above the earth.

(2.) The advantages of the saint's dying-day downweigh all the disadvantages of his birth-day. This is more than the former. A man sows his seed, and he gets a crop better than what he sowed; yet perhaps when he has counted all cost and pains, these overgo the profit. But it is not so in this case. Let all the disadvantages of the saint's birth-day be considered, as a continued chain of num-

berless links from his birth to his death; and his dying-day will downweigh them all. It will remain an eternal truth, That such a dying day was well worth wading through all these miseries of life unto it, let them appear in their most frightful shapes, that ever they appeared in unto mortals.

III. We are next to demonstrate the truth of this paradox, this unlikely tale, That the saint's dying-day is better than his birth-day. It appears most firm truth from the following considerations.

First, The day of the saint's birth clothed him with a body of weak and frail flesh, and so clogged him; the day of his death looses the clog, and sets him free, clothing him with a house that will never clog him, 2 Cor. v. 1—3. Do not think your bodies are you; they are something belonging to you, but not you; for you will be to the fore, thinking, moving, acting, when they will be lying rotting in the church-yard. It is the soul that is you, which being housed in the earthly tabernacle, is clogged thereby. Indeed the souls of the wicked are clogged far heavier at death, with anguish and despair. But the dying-day sets the saint perfectly free, like a prisoner out of the prison, or a bird out of the cage, Luke ii. 29. Consider,

1. In the day of his birth he was an helpless infant, that could do nothing but weep and sprawl; the soul being in a sort sunk in a mass of flesh and blood; but in the day of his death, the soul being divested of that body, will immediately show itself intelligent and active, a companion of angels, Heb. xii. 23; Luke xx. 36. And he that could not creep out of harm's way in his birth, will in the day of his death be able to mount upward as on eagle's wings to the highest heavens, like the bird when the stone tied to its foot is taken away, Luke xxiii. 43; for then comes the more full accomplishment of that promise, Isa. xl. 31, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint."

2. In the day of his birth there were many little things necessary to be done about him; he behoved to be washed, and dressed, and swaddled up in clouts; laid to the breast, because he could not lay himself to it; fed, because he could not put the meat in his own mouth. In the day of his death he will need none of these things but flee away dropping his mantle of the mortal body, leaving it to his friends to dispose of it at their will.

3. In the day of his birth he knew not where he was, whither he was going, or to whom; and so he could have neither joy nor grief upon the event, till feeling the change of his condition ungrateful

to the present sense he fell a crying. In the day of death he knows very well where away he is going, and that he is going to Christ which is best of all; and so understanding the happy change, rejoiceth in it, 2 Tim. i. 12. It is true, in the way to death, through the weakness of faith, it may be dark with him; but death having done its work, all the shadows will flee away in an instant.

4. In the day of his birth he had long to wait, ere he should ripen, to be of any use for himself, for others, or for God; several days ere he should be capable to smile, weeks ere he should know his mother, months ere he could speak or go, years ere he could know any thing, but about meat and clothes; so many years in infancy, in childhood, ripening far more leisurely and slowly than young brutes; but in the day of his death he will ripen all of a sudden, he will be at his pitch of glory and happiness in an instant, as when the sun instantly breaks through a cloud, and scatters his beams all over the horizon. There is no infancy nor childhood in the other world, because there is no old age there; but as Adam was created in his perfection, at his full stature; so will the souls of the saints be advanced to their natural perfection as they drop their bodies.

5. In the day of his birth he was exposed to danger, could not miss to catch skaith if all the better care was not taken to prevent it; many a poor child has been stifled in the birth, and careless management of them after their coming into the world has had fatal effects. But in the day of his death he is set beyond the reach of danger; never a gracious soul perished in death, but as soon as the ship of the body was broken in pieces, the passengers were safe ashore; and whatever danger they are in here by Satan and his instruments, they are out of danger when on the other side of death in the other world, Rev. xxi. 25.

Lastly, In the day of his birth he was born to die, and in the day of his death he dies to live. There is a certain affinity betwixt our birth and death, so that there were never any born that did not also die, except two persons Enoch and Elias; and to make that odds even, Adam and Eve both died, that were never born. So our birth is but the preamble of death, Eccl. iii. 2. and when dying comes to an end, being born is at an end too, Luke xx. 35, 36. But there is a certain connection between the saint's death and his life, made by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, Eph. ii. 6. And who can doubt but it is better to die to live, than to be born to die? to put off, than to put on the clog of morality? Now in our birth we put it on, but in our death put it off. Therefore, the day of the saint's death is better than the day of his birth.

Secondly, The day of his birth clogged him with a body of sin; the day of his death sets him quite free from it, and brings him into a state morally perfect, Heb. xii. 23. There was never man born into the world except the man Christ, but he brought a body of sin with him into it, Psal. li. 5. John iii. 9. In the day of our birth, we are born with fallen Adam's own image on us; therefore it is particularly marked of Seth the father of the holy seed, Gen. v. iii. Inasmuch that even those who are sanctified from the womb, are not to be excepted; for they are sanctified but in part, and still have ground for that cry, Rom. vii. 24, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" till death. But then in the day of the saint's death, that body of sin is destroyed and razed quite and clean; and therefore the day of his death is better than the day of his birth.

We may view his case in these particulars.

1. The day of his birth fixed the disease in him, he was born a sinner, Psal. li. 5. Hence it is not as accidental ailments to be removed by human art; but being owing to his birth, it is natural, not to be cured without a miracle, John ix. 32. Job xiv. 4. And coming in by his birth, according to the dispensation and settled order of grace, it is not to be quite removed but by death.

2. The day of his conversion began the cure, loosed sin at the root, though it did not root it up. Thus was the day of his new birth, better than the day of his first birth, 1 Pet. i. 23. "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." On good grounds is this day preferred to the birth-day, Ezek. xvi. 4, 8. "As for thy nativity in the day thou wast born, thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold thy time was the time of love, and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." Here the man mismade in his birth-day was new made; mismade after the image of fallen Adam, new made after the image of the second Adam, 2 Cor. v. 17.

3. The intervening days between the day of conversion and the dying-day, the cure is a carrying on. There is a struggle with the disease in order to its removal, which in a measure prevails, though not altogether, Gal. v. 17. And as it is better, there is something to struggle with the disease than that it should bear full sway; so these days, however troublous they are, are better than the birth-day, as it is more hopeful to be groaning on a sick bed, than to be silent in the grave.

Lastly, But the day of his death roots up the disease for good and all, and perfects the cure, leaving not the least remains of it in the soul, Heb. xii. 23. The leprosy was in the walls of the house, no scraping nor plastering would remove it, but still it broke out and spread again; but in the day of death, when the walls of the body are taken down and carried out, then there are no more vestiges of the leprosy left to remain. The seventh day of the compassing of the accursed walls of Jericho was the best day of the seven, and the seventh time that day the best time; for then the wall that had stood so long unmoved, fell all down together.

Thirdly, The day of the saint's death carries him into a better world, than the day of his birth did. The other world where Christ is, is a better world than that where we are; in the faith thereof Paul desired to die, that he might enter into it, Phil. i. 23. The day of his birth brought him into this world, a wilderness; the day of his death takes him into the other world, a Canaan, a better country, a paradise. What was the wilderness to the Israelites in comparison of the promised land? Such is this world to the saints in comparison with the other. Take a swatch of the difference.

1. The day of his birth brought him into a world of uncertainty, set him down on slippery ground; the day of his death takes him into a world of certainty, sets his feet on a rock. When he was born, whatever he was born to, he was born to uncertainties. His health, wealth, ease, yea his life itself, hung always at an uncertainty; he might have been this moment in health, but sick at heart the next. His reputation and character was at an uncertainty; while a man is on this side of the grave, his character in the world is not so established, but by some wrong step or other it may yet be blemished, that he may set in a cloud, that has shone bright. But when the man with the good name dies, he is set beyond all uncertainties more. He is so well that he can never be ill again; the kingdom he receives cannot be moved, Heb. xii. 28. However tossed his life was here, he is established there, Rev. iii. 12. Death comes up the last of the train of all his uncertainties, establishes his welfare, and seals his good name and character, as no more liable to be blemished.

2. The day of his birth brought him into a world of sin and defilement; but the day of his death brings him into a world of purity, Heb. xii. 23. From the time he was born into this world, till he dies out of it, he breathes in and out an infectious air; his own plague sores are running on him; and sees those of others running too; and wherever he is, and with whomsoever, he is in hazard of snares and defilement. But from the moment of death he

breathes the pure air of Immanuel's land, where there are no clouds nor vapours; where all diseases are healed, and no unclean thing can enter. Spotless purity reigns there; there is no hazard more of ensnarement or defilement, Rev. xxi. 25.

3. The day of his birth brought him into a world of toil and labour; but the day of his death brings him into a world of rest, Rev. xiv. 13. Much toil there is for the back and belly, and some have more of it than others. But nobody wants it altogether, nor not those who go with an even-up back, Gen. iii. 19; Eccl. i. 8. They are liable to weariness as well as others, an evidence that their very pleasures, ease, and recreations are a labour. But the other world is a world of rest to the people of God, Heb. iv. 9. and of refreshing, Acts iii. 19. As God did the works of creation in the six days, and rested the seventh day, so they having improved life laboriously to the obtaining of the good name, shall there have eternal rest. They will rest from all the business this world is now throng about. There will be neither labouring the ground, nor tending cattle in the other world; nor any servile work whatsoever there. There will be no labour of the mind, nor painful study there; but as Solomon lay down and slept, and awakened a wiser man than ever one was by study; so they sleeping the sleep of death, will awake with a pitch of knowledge as far above that which they have at their best now, as the knowledge of a man is above that of a child. The toilsome and laborious duties of religion will have no place there; there will be no watching, no combat, &c. Act they will for ever, but never know weariness more; their work will be their reward, their eternal recreation.

4. The day of his birth brought him into a world of care and sorrow; but the day of his death brings him into a world of ease and joy, Matth. xxv. 21. Though a man be born to a crown, he will find himself born to cares and sorrows; for as the fairest rose wants not its prickles, so the most plentiful enjoyments of the world want not their thorny cares, sorrows, and vexations attending them. And often does the most piercing and racking vexation rise from what was taken for the spring of the greatest comfort. But death puts an end to all these in the case of the man with the good name. A drink of the well of life at death extinguishes all care and sorrow for ever, fills with joy unspeakable. Those of them that sighed most here, will sing eternally there; they will sing for ever the song of Moses and the Lamb on the other side of death, though they groaned on this side.

5. The day of his birth brought him into a world of disappointment; but the day of his death brings him into a world surmount-

ing expectation, 1 Cor. ii. 9, "Eye hath not seen. nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." Man is born to disappointments in this world, especially good men, for whom the Lord minds better things in the other world. All worldly things are greater in expectation than in fruition.

Hence it is the young and unexperienced that have the greatest expectations from them, and fondness for them; because they are not yet cut with so many disappointments, as the aged. This holds in the very brutes, where the young ones are the most lightsome in their kind, the old being as it were cut with disappointments, and cloyed with finding the same thing over and over. But death brings the good man to heavenly things, that will be greater in the fruition than in expectation; as the queen of Sheba said to Solomon of his magnificence, 1 Kings x. 7. "Behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard." But a greater than Solomon will be found there. And death will bring them to a happiness in that world, that has neither brim nor bottom beyond what they could either hear or conceive.

Lastly, The day of his birth brought him into a world of death; but the day of his death takes him into a world of life, Matth. x. 30. This is a dying world we are born into, where some are still coming in, and others going out to make room for them; the children coming in as with a warning away in their hands to the parents, as their children will do to them in their turn. But in the world that death carries him to, there are no marriages, births, nor burials. There the father lives as long as the child, and there is no difference betwixt them more, both living eternally.

Fourthly, The day of his death settles him among better company, than the day of his birth did, Heb. xii. 22. and downwards. The comfort of one's being in a place depends much on the society there; unpleasant society or neighbourhood will make the most pleasant place disagreeable. Great is the difference betwixt the society the man was in, in this world, and that which death carries him to in the other world. Let us consider the odds a little,

1. The day of his birth landed him in the arms and embraces of his mother, if she died not in bringing him forth, in which case he behoved to want that kindly reception into the arms of a mother. But in the day of his death he is received into Abraham's bosom, more kindly and warmly than that of any mother, and which death never makes cold and stiff, Luke xvi. 22.

2. The day of his birth brought him into the arms of his glad father, if he was not dead before he was born; but in the day of his

death he is presented to, and received by his heavenly Father into his embraces, whose love and affection to his children is above that of earthly parents, as the heaven is above the earth. God in Christ is an affectionate Father, even love itself, 1 John iv. 16. Christ will then receive the soul he died for with a satisfaction surpassing that of the most tender mother, Is. liii. 11. and the Father of our Lord Jesus will behold it as bearing the image of his own Son, and his own image.

3. The father and mother that lovingly embraced him in the day of his birth, may yet come afterward to frown on him, beat him, be bitter against him, they having little comfort in him, or he in them; but when the day of death is once come and over, the child of God shall see no more frowns, beating, nor bitterness. His minority will then be overpast, even the discipline of the covenant, the rod will be for ever laid by. He shall be eternally indulged and comforted. Isa. lxvi. 13.

4. The day of his birth brought him at most into but a small company of brothers and sisters; perhaps he was an eldest child, or an only one; but the day of his death lands him in a numerous family, whereof each one with him calls God in Christ Father, Rev. xiv. 1. The saints are divided in many families on earth, but in heaven they make but one family, from Adam to the last saint that shall come there, Eph. iii. 15. They may look on every saint there as a brother, which will be a comfortable sight of the heavenly multitude, Rev. vi. 11.

6. Brothers and sisters afforded him perhaps but a coldrife welcome in the day of his birth, either through a defect of wit to set natural affection astir, or through ill nature, that on the score of interest made them look on him with a grudge; or however they embraced him affectionately in the day of his birth, there were not wanting animosities and heart-burnings in their after-life now and then. But in the day of his death there will be a kindly welcome from all. The parent's affection on earth, and his substance is limited to a certain measure, and the more there are to part them among, the less every one gets; but the love of God, and the treasure in heaven, is infinite and boundless, fills all to the brim, and yet they cannot exhaust it. So that if there were ten thousand more worlds of saints created, it would rather add to, than diminish from the happiness of every one that is now there. There love is perfected; and as no seeds of hatred are left within or without they will live together in eternal uninterrupted love.

6. In the day of his birth he had the welcome of a few neighbours present at the birth; in the day of his death he will have the

welcome of angels, whereof not one only, but several shall carry him into Abiahah's bosom, Luke xvi. 22. with a warmer affection than any woman can receive the new born infant, as the love of angels is more glowing than our earthly love. They will carry him into an innumerable company of them, Heb. xii. 22. in whose presence there was joy at his repentance, and much more must there be at his coming home to stray no more, Luke xv. 10.

7. Whatever welcome he had in the day of his birth from neighbours or relations, the joy was but on one side; though they rejoiced in him, he could not rejoice in them, for he knew them not; but in the day of his death the joy will be mutual; he that in the day of his birth was not equal to imperfect men, will in the day of his death be equal to the angels. He will know God and Christ, the saints, and angels, and will rejoice in them, as they will rejoice in him.

Lastly, Whatever welcome he had into the world in the day of his birth, he had much uncomfortable society there in the days of his after life, that made him often see himself in his neighbourhood in the world, as in Mesech and Kedar, Psal. cxx. 5. yea dwelling among lions' dens and mountains of leopards, Cant. iv. 8. But in the day of his death he will bid an eternal farewell to all uncomfortable society, and never see more any in whom he will not be comforted to be with them.

(1.) He was born into a world, where there was a seed of the serpent to turn against him as heart enemies, whenever he turned to God, John xv. 19. His living with them, and dealing with them, wove many a snare to his soul, made him many a weary day; and often did he find deep wounds from them, Psal. lviii. 4. But he will die into a world of profound peace and love, where none of that seed can have access; a world peopled entirely with the seed of the woman, all united to Christ the head by the same Spirit, and among themselves by the firmest bands of love.

(2.) He was born into a world, where even saints had their blemishes, their faults which made their society uncomfortable, and hardly tolerable; so that he had much ado to dwell even with some in whom the grace of God dwelt. But he will die into a world, where saints have no blemish left in them, where there will be no unkindly, peevish, or touchy saints to mar the comforts of society; but all will be perfect in knowledge and love.

(3.) He was born into a world where men have their particular interests to drive, and selfishness causes them to over-drive their neighbours, over all bounds of justice, equity, and love; the greater swallowing up the lesser, till they be planted alone in the earth.

But he dies into a world, where there is no divided interest more, but all centre in the glorifying that God, who allows them all a perfect happiness in the enjoyment of him, furnishing all as the sun does this world, without withholding from one what is afforded to another.

(4.) He was born into an ensnaring world, brought into society where he received infection, and did infect again; where he was a temptation to others, and others were a temptation to him; the consideration whereof made him often weary of the world. But he dies into a world where there is no more of that: were he once past that step, he will be no more a snare to any, nor will any be a snare to him. The leaves of the tree of life are for healing, but there is no more sin nor death.

Fifthly, The day of his death brings him into a better state than the day of his birth did. As the state of glory is better than the state of this life, so is death to one who has well improved life, better than his birth. Great is the odds on the part of the day of death in this case, however advantageous the birth may be.

1. The day of his birth sets him down in a state of imperfection, natural and moral; the day of his death advances him to a state of perfection of both kinds, Heb. xii. 23. There is a natural imperfection in us in respect of our very frame, more than in the young of brutes according to their kind; a great imperfection in the necessity of meat, drink, clothing, education, and teaching; the which continues with us all our life long. A moral imperfection much more wretched, in respect of the guilt and corruption of nature we bring into the world with us; the which last also continues with us all our life, though the reigning power of it be broken.

But in the day of his death both these are done away. He arrives at a natural perfection; the soul will be perfected in all its faculties, no more darkness and confusion in its apprehension, no more error or mistake in judging, and therefore no false reasonings. There will be no need of human teaching there; every saint will be a profound philosopher, and an infallible divine, the image of God in them in knowledge of the works and will of God being brought to perfection. The dunghill-work of eating and drinking, the childish work of busking and decking, they will have no more use for. The saint arrives at a moral perfection that day, grace is perfected, the love of God planted now in the heart, and preserved as a spark of sacred fire in the midst of an ocean of corruption, will dry up that ocean; and they shall be as pure as if they had never sinned, being set beyond the possibility of sin.

2. The day of his birth brought him into a state of probation and

trial; but the day of his death brings him into a state of retribution and recompense, 2 Cor. v. 10. The day of his birth set him down on the ice, where he was to have a hit or a miss for eternity; he was brought into this world, to undergo his trials for the other world, in which most men come foul off. There he had Christ and his salvation offered him, to be embraced by faith, which was to be evidenced by steering a course of holiness maugre all opposition. But then he was baited with temptations from the devil, the world, and the flesh; he was brought on a stage of afflictions, crosses, and various hardships, to see if he could bear them for Christ. This made his life a fight, a continued scene of trial.

But in the day of his death he is taken off his trials, with the Judge's approbation, and the full reward is appointed him, and given him. The Lord Christ, who looked on all the time of his trials, observing how he carried, seeing how he got many a fall, yet rose again, then passes a merciful verdict upon him, Matt. xxv. 21, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And then he is to fight no more, but triumph for ever; he has wrought his work, and he gets his reward of grace. The trials were perhaps long, but the retribution will be longer; the former was but temporal, the latter will be eternal.

3. The day of his birth brought him into a state of changes, but the day of his death brings him into an unalterable state, Rev. iii. 12, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." The state of man from his birth is like that of the moon, ever waxing or waning, never appearing with its former face; he is still lying open to ungrateful alterations, so that though he be never so well to-day, he cannot boast of to-morrow, but he is in hazard of exposing himself as rash, Prov. xxxvii. 1. But in the day of death the last change comes, and brings him into an unalterable state of happiness; he is fixed for ever in endless joy and peace. For though there be clouds to overcast in the lower, there are none in the upper regions.

Lastly, The day of the saint's death brings him to, and settles him in better exercise and employment than the day of his birth did. He will spend his eternity in the other world, better than he did his time in this world, how well soever he spent it, Rev. iv. 8, "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." There is a great variety of men's exercises and employments here, and few or none are so exercised, but they would be content to be better: well,

the day of death will make it far better with the saints. The odds will be great.

1. He was born to earthly exercise and employment, but he dies to heavenly. When he is born, he falls a sucking his mother's breast, that is all he can do; when he dies, he falls a sucking in abundantly the divine consolations. As he grows up, he is put to learn; when he dies, he is irradiated in a moment with a light that dispels all his darkness. When he is come to years of action, he is employed in some labour of the hand, or of the mind, when he dies he is beyond all labour, but is active in the glorifying and enjoying of God, which was the great end of his creation.

2. He is born to wearisome, sorrowful, and heavy exercises; he dies to joyful, comfortable, and eternally refreshing exercise. As he was much employed in sighing here, he will be employed in singing there. Many a time he laboured in vain here, but there will be no labour in vain there; he will always reach his end, being arrived at the state of perfection.

Lastly, He was born to such exercise, as he was not able to continue with, but needed rest; and so a great part of his time was spent in doing nothing, but taking the necessary rest; but he dies to such exercise, as he shall endure with continually, needing no rest by sleep or the like, Rev. iv. 8. There is no night there, for it is not needed there.

I shall now shut up this subject, with some application of what has been said.

USE I. Of information. This shows us,

1. That whatever good things the saints have in hand, they have more in hope. If they were born to never so great things, as Solomon was to a crown, yet they die to greater things. Whatever they enjoy in this world, as men, or as Christians, they will enjoy more in the other world; their best things come last.

2. Whatever afflictions, trials, and crosses in life they have been born to, there is a time coming wherein all their losses will be made up, and their heaviest weights will be downweighed with comforts, Isa. lxvi. 13. Sometimes when the waves of trouble are overflowing, they are apt to look back on the day of their birth with a grudge, that brought them into such a troublesome sea, Job iii. 3; Jer. xx. 14, 18. But that is their infirmity, their impatience. Let them wait a little, and they will see there is a better day coming.

3. Sense is no good judge of what is best or worst. Of all things death is the most terrible to sense; therefore in the day of death there is nothing but groaning, sighing, and mourning; whereas in the day of one's birth, there is feasting and rejoicing. Yet to a

good man the day of his death is better than the day of his birth. Such is the doctrine of faith, quite opposite to that of sense. They must be ill guided then that walk by sense.

4. There must be another life besides this, and a far more happy one; otherwise the day of death that takes us away from all the comforts of this life, which the day of our birth brings us into, could not be better than the day of our birth. The day of a good man's birth ushers in a holy and happy life, though imperfect; which must certainly be better than no life at all.

Lastly, There is a way to take off the terror of death, and to make the dying-day our best day, better than the day of our birth. That matter depends on the improving of life. Our life time is our seed time for the other world, and death is the harvest; according as we live now, so will the crop be that we will have to reap then, Gal. vi. 8.

USE II. Of exhortation. 1. To saints. 2. To sinners, and all.

FIRST, Saints, whose chief business in life has been, and is, to improve life to the raising of the good name, let this serve to bring you into good terms with death. Death will not be to you, what it will be to others, the storm is changed into a calm; and it will be your best day, better than the day of your birth. And that you may know to whom this belongs, it is designed for those of a three-fold character, agreeable to what was said before. This comfortable message is,

1. For you who have made it your business to obtain the favour and friendship of God, by taking hold of God's covenant of free grace, uniting with Christ the head of it, through faith; and whose main concern in life is to be found in him, Phil. iii. 8—11. Have you been awakened to see your lost state by nature, illuminated in the knowledge of Christ as the only remedy, and brought to embrace him in the free covenant as the sufficient and only way to the Father? Why truly being thus implanted in Christ, the day of your death will be better than the day of your birth.

2. Ye whose main care it is in the course of your life to please God, Col. i. 10, as a wife is to please her husband, and a servant his master, and one his friend and benefactor, 1 Pet. ii. 9. Are you so disposed, that you dare not please men, at the expense of his displeasure? Gal. i. 10. Have you renounced your own will, as to your duty, and as to your lot? Have you laid aside the pleasing of yourselves, and your own lusts, that that is no more the scope of your life, but to please God, Rom. xv. 1, 3. Is the scope of your life, to please him in doing and in bearing? And wherein ye see you have displeased him, are ye displeased with yourselves, confess, mourn

over it, apply to the blood of Christ, and long for the day when ye shall displease him no more? If so, the day of your death will be better than the day of your birth; you will be pleased for ever.

3. Ye whose business in the world is to serve your generation in real usefulness to others, as ye have access in your several stations and relations, Acts xiii. 36. Are you so disposed, as that, out of regard to the God above, you dare not be mischievous and hurtful to others, even when it is in the power of your hand? Job xxxi. 21—23. Do ye look upon uselessness for God or men in the world, with a horror; and upon yourselves but as stewards of your time, gifts, substance, opportunities of usefulness, for which we must give an account to God, and therefore lay out yourselves to improve your talents, and do good thereby? Has the warm influence of divine grace opened your shell of selfishness, wherein ye sometime lay snug, careful for nothing but your own sweet self; and brought you out with a public spirit to be useful in God's word as ye have access? with a benevolent disposition to do good to mankind? If so, the day of your death will be better than the day of your birth. And therefore I exhort you to the following duties.

First, Be mortified to life, and abate of your fondness for it. There is nothing in the world we naturally stick to more closely than life, Job ii. 4. But certainly there is a necessity of being mortified to it, to have our desires after it deadened in a regular way, Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother,—yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Without question, there may be a too great eagerness for life, which is sinful in all, and most unbecoming saints.

Ques. How far should we be mortified to life?

Ans. 1. So far as not to quarrel the unalterable statute of death, Heb. ix. 27. Sin brought in death; by it mankind forfeited life. Many ills it brought into the world, but a short life in this world was really the least ill that it brought in. We see this statute was just, that it has been exactly observed from generation to generation. Our hearts should comply with it, saying, Even so be it, and should have no grudge against it: Why should the rocks be removed for us?

2. So far as not to desire, though it were at our option, to stay always in this world, Job vii. 16. That is certainly an unmortified desire of life, to wish this life were eternal to us; and a habit of it argues a graceless state. It was a profane tale of a cardinal of Paris, that he would be content to forfeit his part of the happiness of heaven, if he might live here for ever. Grace in the heart certainly mortifies men to this life; they that are born from above

will certainly desire to be above; they that are united to Christ, will certainly desire to be with him; and therefore the Christian course is a coming up out of the wilderness, where, though they must sojourn for a while, they will not desire to fix their abode, Cant. viii. 3.

So far as to be content to part with it at God's call, Luke xiv. 26. God is Lord of our life, he has set each of us in our post in life, to stand till he give order to relieve us. As we quarrelled not his setting us on the stage of life by our birth; so we should be content to come off again when he calls us by death. The time, way, and manner of our leaving it, we should leave contentedly to his disposal.

Lastly, So far as never to desire to live just for living's sake, but for the solid advantage of life. This life is such a mass of vanity, that it is not desirable for itself, but some circumstances that attend it. So we may desire to live to honour God in the world, and to be useful, Isa. xxxviii. 19. And if we should be laid by from usefulness in the way of doing, we may be content to live for usefulness in the way of suffering. But life is not to be desired stript of all manner of usefulness; for that is to make ourselves, not God, our chief end. Now to mortify you to life, consider,

(1.) The uncertainty of it; it is but a shadow, you know not how soon it may be gone; a vapour, that may vanish ere you are aware. I may say then, as Prov. xxiii. 5. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" What folly is it to let the heart too fondly out on that which in a moment one may loose, and every moment hangs at uncertainty? It is surely wisdom to sit loose to that which we are never sure of.

(2.) The unsatisfactoriness of it. Every period of life, however promising it may be at the entry on it, will leave you disappointed in your progress in it, and coming off from it, Eccl. i. 8. There is nothing in it or about it, that belongs not to the other life, wherein the heart of man can find a rest. Still the bed is shorter, stretch it as ye will, than that ye can lie on it.

(3.) The sinfulness of it. There is none liveth, and sinneth not. That indeed makes life desirable to sinners, that since they cannot part with their sins, they cannot think to part with life neither; for that then all occasion of satisfying their lusts is cut off for ever. But certainly it must mortify saints to life, that they cannot have it, but there is sinning with it, 2 Cor. v. 4. Rom. vii. 24.

(4.) The troubles of it, the many afflictions and trials that attend it. These indeed should not make us impatient to be away, like Jonah, chap. iv. 8. For they are our trials we are put upon for the

other world, which we are resolutely to bear with patience and resignation, and so discover the reality of the grace of God in us. But they may well be allowed to mortify us to this life; for that is one of the ends they are sent for, to be as gall and wormwood laid on the breast to wean us. And the wisdom of providence is to be adored in that, ordinarily towards the end of life, troubles come on thicker than they were wont, as in the case of our Saviour.

(5.) There is a better life than it abiding you in the other world, Heb. xi. 16. The faith of the palace in heaven would mortify one to the cottage of clay here; for why should they be fondly addicted to their present state, whom a better state is awaiting? It is our conversing so little with heaven that makes us so fond of the earth. Were we viewing the promised land more, with faith's prospect, we would be more disengaged from this wilderness-world.

Lastly, The state of imperfection inseparably attends this life; that there is no getting beyond the former, till ye get beyond the latter. You may struggle as you will towards perfection, and if you be real saints, you will do it, Phil. iii. 14. from an inward principle not managed by the prospect of the event; but you will never reach it, till this life be at an end. Rise up as oft as ye will, wash and watch; ye will fall again and defile yourselves, till the day of death put an end to that weary work.

Secondly, Be not frightened at death, nor afraid with any amazement, Is. xxxv. 4. To make a jest of dying argues contempt of God, and secret desperation; to be careless and unconcerned about it, a carnal security that will have a frightful awakening. To be in deep concern about it becomes all; but to be frightened and put into disorder by the view of it, is unbecoming saints. To allay that terror,

I. Consider, that in the day you embraced Christ in the covenant, you certainly did it in view of your dying, to lay down measures for eternity. Why then should ye be frightened at that which ye have been thinking of and preparing for before? Leave that to them who have been carelessly dreaming away their life time.

2. Death, though a grim messenger, is Christ's messenger of good to you, to carry you away in peace, Luke ii. 29. It is like the waggons that Joseph sent to bring Jacob into Egypt to him. And faith's ear opened, would hear the voice to the dying Christian, saying, as Gen. xlvi. 3, 4. "I am God, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt.—I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again." It is such a call as Peter had from Christ to come to him upon the water. And however boisterous the wind and black the water may be, there is no fear of sinking to the ground: only believe.

3. In your struggles against sin, and wrestling with temptations, have ye not sometimes looked wistly for death's relief? Rom. vii. 24; Cant. viii. 5. Have ye not comforted yourself in the prospect of cold death's drowning out those passions and lusts, that have so often taken fire again after a flood of godly sorrow going over them? Why then should you be put in a fright and disorder at the view of its approach?

4. It were inconsistent with God's honour, and the glory and dignity of Christ, to put off his friends and followers, with that kind of life he gives them here, Heb. xi. 16. One may be confirmed in this, considering 1 Cor. xv. 19, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Therefore of necessity all their losses must be made up in the other life. Why then should saints be angry at their blessings, and be frightened at the Lord's coming to accomplish all his promises?

5. The upper world is the world of peace and love, Abraham's bosom. There are gone thither before us our godly acquaintances, whom we once looked on as the excellent of the earth, the loss of whose society was heavy; we will get it there again. The holy angels will be loving and lovely companions. He who on earth died for us while enemies, how loving and lovely will he appear there, where we shall be perfect? God is love itself, and there his infinite love will be displayed in an inconceivable manner.

Lastly, Christ passed the ford before you, has altered the nature of the waters, Rom. viii. 34, and caused them to abate; and now he bids you follow, for that there is no fear, Cant. ii. 10, 11. Keep the eye of faith on Christ, who forded the waters of death before you, and that will be a mean to abate the terror.

Thirdly, Familiarize death to yourself, Job xvii. 13, 14. Do not keep at a distance from it in your thoughts. I would not have the terror of death rob you of the comfort of life; but it is the greatest folly for a man to wind up himself so in the comforts and amusements of life, as to debar the serious thoughts of death; and can serve no end, but to bring sudden and remediless ruin; for whether men will think of death, and prepare for it, or not; it will be in on them at length. And what we must meet with, it is best to acquaint ourselves with before. Therefore,

1. Be frequent in your taking a view of the other world, with the help of the prospect of the word, to be looked through by the eye of faith. Be often as it were getting up to the top of Pisgah, thence to view the promised land. You cannot get thither for a trial, to come back again, Job xiv. 14. but there is a map of it drawn in the Bible, by considering of which you may be brought acquainted with it.

2. Be often viewing the passage thereto. The Jordan of death runs betwixt it and this our wilderness, and by it is the passage we must all take. We will not get an essay made of it, that we may mend at one time what we marred at another; there is the more need then to look well and often to it before we enter in, which we know not how soon we may be obliged to.

Lastly, Let your hearts be habitually disposed to these views, to notice the many memorials of them that Providence has furnished. There are still some dropping off into that world, some young, some aged. What is every winter, but an emblem of death; and every spring, but an emblem of the other world and the resurrection? Yea every night is the grave of the former day, as the following day empties the grave again.

Fourthly, Raise comfortable expectations from death. View the day of death in the light wherein our text sets it, and behold it is a good day, the best day.

1. Expect it as the day that will better your condition, however heavy that is now, Ps. xvi. 9. Though ye have many heavy days in your life, partly from your own corruption, partly from the corruption of others; partly from the holy hand of God for trial, partly from the devil seeking your destruction; look to the day of death, as what will set all to rights, and bring in to you what heart can wish. The day of death to a child of God is his marriage day, Mat. xxv. the day wherein the traveller comes home from abroad to his father's house, the day wherein he is past his minority, and enters to his inheritance.

2. Expect it as the day that will establish your condition, Rev. iii. 12. Your condition is wavering and uncertain now, Psal. xxx. 6, 7. Sometimes your soul's case is prosperous, but ere you are aware it is all wrong again; sometimes washed fair and clean in the fountain, anon ye are lying in the mire again; sometimes ye have your feet on the neck of your corruptious, anon they trample you under foot; sometimes ye can raise one of the songs of Zion, anon the harps are quite out of tune, hanged on the willows. Sometimes your outward condition is smiling; but that lasts not, it turns gloomy, and troubles break in perhaps from all quarters together, the springs of your comfort run bitterness, and your worldly comforts are dried up one after another. But look forward to the day of death, as what will end all ungrateful changes.

Fifthly, Work your heart to, and entertain a regular desire of death. The day of death is certainly to a child of God an object of desire; the apostle professeth it, Phil. i. 23. "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ;" and that in the name of all the saints,

2 Cor. v. 2. "For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." And it is a piece of good preparation for death.

Ques. What is the regular desire of death?

Ans. I. For the matter of it, it lies in these three things.

(1.) A desire of it as the passage to uninterrupted communion with God in Christ, Phil. i. 25. Sometimes it ariseth from the saints' want of communion with God, which being uneasy does rightly make death desirable, as that which would make up that want, and secure against it any more for ever; sometimes from the sense of the sweetness of that communion, Cant. viii. 6. But the enjoyment of God being a part of man's chief end, death is desirable as a means to it.

(2.) A desire of it as the passage to perfection in holiness, Phil. iii. 14. Thus the man desireth it that he may be free of sin, and put beyond the possibility of sinning more, Rom. vii. 24, that he may be in capacity to serve the Lord without marring or wearying of the work. This is the main part of man's chief end, and therefore death must be desirable as a means thereto.

(3.) A desire of it as an entrance into rest. The rest of death is promised to the saints for their comfort in all their heavy and restless circumstances, Isa. lvii. 2. And therefore it must be desirable under that consideration. It is very natural for the tossed in a storm, to be desirous to be ashore, for the weary labourer to desire to have ease, and for the Christian to desire his eternal and perfect rest, Job vii. 2.

2. For the quality regulating it, it must be accompanied with entire resignation to the will of God, Matt. vi. 10. We must in our desire of it even on these accounts be resigned to the will of God.

(1.) As to the time, we must never be peremptory as to that, but wait the time prefixed of God, Job xiv. 14. He will keep us no longer in life, than he has use for us either in the way of doing or suffering; and we must be content to wait his time for our admittance into uninterrupted communion to perfection of holiness, and into rest; and to be peremptory for rest at our time, and resolved to suffer no more, while yet God dischargeth us not as devilish, and exposeth to eternal suffering, as the sentry deserting his post is deservedly put to death.

(2.) As to the way and manner. There are many ways of going out of the world, we must leave it to the Lord, which will be the way for us; whether the way of lingering sickness or sudden death, natural, or violent by the hand of man. I think, if God should refer it to us, we should refer it back to him.

SECONDLY, Sinners, and all whosoever would have the day of death better to you than the day of your birth, improve life for that end. To sum up your duty in a word, as you have already heard, (1.) Let it be your great care and concern to get the favour and friendship of God through Christ, by taking hold of God's covenant of free grace, uniting with Christ the head of it, through faith in his name. (2.) Lead your life a life to the honour of God, studying to please him in all things. Renounce your own will, and your own corrupt affections, and wholly give up yourselves to him, to be ruled by him, and governed by his laws. (3.) Live usefully for men. Lay out yourselves to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of all ye have access to in your station. By these means, and no other way, ye will obtain the good name, by which your dying-day will be better to you than your birth-day.

CHRIST'S SPECIAL ORDER FOR GATHERING HIS SAINTS TO HIM
AT THE LAST DAY; WITH THEIR DISTINGUISHING CHARACTER,
AS ENTERING INTO HIS COVENANT NOW, CONSIDERED.

The substance of several Sermons preached at Ettrick, in May, 1730.

PSALM L. 5.

Gather my saints together unto me: those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

LOOKING forward to the other world, we will see a great gathering to come, a gathering of saints, and a gathering of sinners; what part we shall have in these, depends on the entertainment we now give to the gathering unto Christ, in the covenant; they that will not now be gathered to Christ in the bond of the covenant, will then be driven from him, and gathered with sinners into the pit; they that gather now to him in that bond, will be gathered to him in glory then. *Gather my saints together unto me: those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.*

This psalm certainly relates to the coming of Christ for judgment, ver. 3. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him." But whether to his first coming, to abolish the ceremonial law, set up the simple gospel-worship, and to judge, condemn, and take vengeance on the formal superstitious Jews, de-