

STATE IV.

THE ETERNAL STATE.

PART I.

DEATH.

JOB, chap. xxx. ver. 23.

For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.

I COME now to discourse of man's eternal state, into which he enters by death. Of this entrance, Job takes a solemn serious view, in the words of the text, which contain a general truth, and a particular application of it. The general truth is supposed; namely, that all men must, by death, remove out of this world; they must die. But whither must they go? They must go to the house appointed for all living; to the grave, that darksome, gloomy, solitary house, in the land of forgetfulness. Wherever the body is laid up till the resurrection, thither, as to a dwelling-house, death brings us home. While we are in the body, we are but in a lodging-house, in an inn, on our way homeward. When we come to our grave, we come to our home, our long home, Eccl. xii. 5. All living must be inhabitants of this house, good and bad, old and young. Man's life is a stream, running into death's devouring deeps. They who now live in palaces, must quit them, and go home to this house; and they who have not where to lay their heads, shall thus have a house at length. It is appointed for all, by Him whose counsel shall stand. This appointment cannot be shifted; it is a law which mortals cannot transgress. Job's application of this general truth to himself, is expressed in these words; "I know that thou wilt bring me to death," &c. He knew, that he must meet with death; that his soul and body must needs part; that God, who had set the time, would certainly see it kept. Sometimes Job was inviting death to come to him, and carry him home to its house; yea, he was in the hazard

of running to it before the time: Job vii. 15, "My soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life." But here he considers God would bring him to it; yea, bring him back to it, as the word imports. Whereby he seems to intimate, that we have no life in this world, but as runaways from death, which stretches out its cold arms, to receive us from the womb: but though we do then narrowly escape its clutches, we cannot escape long; we shall be brought back again to it. Job knew this, he had laid it down as a certainty, and was looking for it.

DOCTRINE, All must die.—Although this doctrine be confirmed by the experience of all former generations, ever since Abel entered into the house appointed for all living, and though the living know that they shall die, yet it is needful to discourse of the certainty of death, that it may be impressed on the mind, and duly considered.

Wherefore consider, 1. There is an unalterable statute of death," under which men are concluded. "It is appointed unto men once to die," Heb. ix. 27. It is laid up for them, as parents lay up for their children: they may look for it, and cannot miss it; seeing God has designed and reserved it for them. There is no peradventure in it; "we must needs die," 2 Sam. xiv. 14. Though some men will not hear of death, yet every man must needs see death, Psalm lxxxix. 48. Death is a champion all must grapple with: we must enter the lists with it, and it will have the mastery, Eccl. viii. 8, "There is no man that hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death." They indeed who are found alive at Christ's coming, shall all be changed, 1 Cor. xv. 51. But that change will be equivalent to death, will answer the purposes of it. All other persons must go the common road, the way of all flesh. 2. Let us consult daily observation. Every man "seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and brutish person," Psalm xlix. 10. There is room enough on this earth for us, notwithstanding the multitudes that were upon it before us. They are gone, to make room for us; as we must depart, to make room for others. It is long since death began to transport men into another world, and vast multitudes are gone thither already: yet the work is going on still; death is carrying off new inhabitants daily, to the house appointed for all living. Who could ever hear the grave say, It is enough! Long has it been getting, but still it asketh. This world is like a great fair or market, where some are coming in, others going out; while the assembly that is in it is confusion, and the most part know not wherefore they are come together; or, like a town situated on the road to a great city, through which some travellers have passed, some are passing, while others are only com-

ing in, Eccl. i. 4, "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever." Death is an inexorable, irresistible messenger, who cannot be diverted from executing his orders by the force of the mighty, the bribes of the rich, or the entreaties of the poor. It does not reverence the hoary head, nor pity the harmless babe. The bold and daring cannot outbrave it; nor can the faint-hearted obtain a discharge in this war. 3. The human body consists of perishing materials, Gen. iii. 19, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." The strongest are but brittle earthen vessels, easily broken in shivers. The soul is but meanly housed, while in this mortal body, which is not a house of stone, but a house of clay, the mud walls cannot but moulder away; especially seeing the foundation is not on a rock, but in the dust; they are crushed before the moth, though this insect be so tender that the gentle touch of a finger will despatch it, Job iv. 19. These principles are like gunpowder; a very small spark lighting on them will set them on fire, and blow up the house: the stone of a raisin, or a hair in milk, having choked men, and laid the house of clay in the dust. If we consider the frame and structure of our bodies, how fearfully and wonderfully we are made; and on how regular and exact a motion of the fluids, and balance of humours, our life depends; and that death has as many doors to enter in by, as the body has pores; and if we compare the soul and body together, we may justly reckon, that there is somewhat more astonishing in our life, than in our death; and that it is more strange to see dust walking up and down on the dust, than lying down in it. Though the lamp of our life be not violently blown out, yet the flame must go out at length for want of oil. What are those distempers and diseases which we are liable to, but death's harbingers, that come to prepare his way? They meet us, as soon as we set our foot on earth, to tell us at our entry, that we do but come into the world to go out again. Nevertheless, some are snatched away in a moment, without being warned by sickness or disease. 4. We have sinful souls, and therefore have dying bodies: death follows sin, as the shadow follows the body. The wicked must die, by virtue of the threatening of the covenant of works, Gen. ii. 17, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And the godly must die too, that as death entered by sin, sin may go out by death. Christ has taken away the sting of death, as to them; though he has not as yet removed death itself. Wherefore, though it fasten on them, as the viper did on Paul's hand, it shall do them no harm: but because the leprosy of sin is in the walls of the house, it must be broken down, and all the materials thereof carried forth. 5. Man's

life in this world, according to the Scripture account of it, is but a few degrees removed from death. The Scripture represents it as a vain and empty thing, short in its continuance, and swift in its passing away.

First, Man's life is a vain and empty thing: while it is, it vanishes away; and, lo! it is not. Job vii. 16, "My days are vanity." If we suspect afflicted Job of partiality in this matter, hear the wise and prosperous Solomon's character of the days of his life, Eccl. vii. 15, "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity," that is, my vain days. Moses, who was a very active man, compares our days to a sleep, Psalm xc. 5, "They are as a sleep," which is not noticed till it is ended. The resemblance is just: few men have right apprehensions of life, until death awakes them; then we begin to know that we were living. "We spend our years as a tale that is told," ver. 9. When an idle tale is telling it may affect a little; but when it is ended, it is remembered no more: and so is a man forgotten, when the fable of his life is ended. It is as a dream, or vision of the night, in which there is nothing solid; when one awakes, all vanishes; Job xx. 8, "He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found; yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night." It is but a vain shew or image; Psalm xxxix. 6, "Surely every man walketh in a vain shew." Man, in this world, is but as it were a walking statue: his life is but an image of life, there is so much of death in it.

If we look on our life, in the several periods of it, we shall find it a heap of vanities. "Childhood and youth are vanity," Eccl. xi. 10. We come into the world the most helpless of all animals: young birds and beasts can do something for themselves, but infant man is altogether unable to help himself. Our childhood is spent in pitiful trifling pleasures, which become the scorn of our after thoughts. Youth is a flower that soon withereth, a blossom that quickly falls off; it is a space of time in which we are rash, foolish, and inconsiderate, pleasing ourselves with a variety of vanities, and swimming as it were through a flood of them. But ere we are aware it is past; and we are, in middle age, encompassed with a thick cloud of cares, through which we must grope; and finding ourselves beset with pricking thorns of difficulties, through them we must force our way, to accomplish the projects and contrivances of our riper thoughts. The more we solace ourselves in any earthly enjoyment we attain to, the more bitterness do we find in parting with it. Then comes old age, attended with its own train of infirmities, labour, and sorrow, Psalm xc. 10, and sets us down next door to the grave. In a word, "All

flesh is like grass," Isa. xl. 6. Every stage or period in life, is vanity. "Man at his best state," his middle age, when the heat of youth is spent, and the sorrows of old age have not yet overtaken him, "is altogether vanity," Psalm xxxix. 5.—Death carries off some in the bud of childhood, others in the blossom of youth, and others when they are come to their fruit; few are left standing, till, like ripe corn, they forsake the ground: all die one time or other.

Secondly, Man's life is a short thing; it is not only a vanity, but a short-lived vanity. Consider, 1 How the life of man is reckoned in the Scriptures. It was indeed sometimes reckoned by hundreds of years: but no man ever arrived at a thousand, which yet bears no proportion to eternity. Now hundreds are brought down to scores; threescore and ten, or fourscore, is its utmost length, Psalm. xc. 10. But few men arrive at that length of life. Death does but rarely wait, till men be bowing down, by reason of age, to meet the grave. Yet, as if years were too big a word for such a small thing as the life of man on earth, we find it counted by months, Job xiv. 5, "The number of his months are with thee." Our course, like that of the moon, is run in a little time: we are always waxing or waning, till we disappear.—But frequently it is reckoned by days; and these but few, Job xiv. 1, "Man, that is born of a woman, is of few days." Nay, it is but one day, in Scripture account; and that a hireling's day, who will precisely observe when his day ends, and give over his work, ver. 6, "Till he shall accomplish as an hireling his day."—Yea, the Scripture brings it down to the shortest space of time, and calls it a moment, 2 Cor. iv. 17, "Our light affliction," though it last all our life long, "is but for a moment." Elsewhere it is brought down yet to a lower pitch, farther than which one cannot carry it, Psalm xxxix. 5, "Mine age is as nothing before thee." Agreeably to this, Solomon tells, Eccl. iii. 2, "There is a time to be born, and a time to die;" but makes no mention of a time to live, as if our life were but a skip from the womb to the grave.

2. Consider the various similitudes by which the Scripture represents the shortness of man's life. Hear Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 12, "Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent; I have cut off like a weaver my life." The shepherd's tent is soon removed; for the flocks must not feed long in one place; such is a man's life on this earth, quickly gone. It is a web which he is incessantly working; he is not idle so much as for one moment: in a short time it is wrought, and then it is cut off. Every breathing is a thread in this web; when the last breath is drawn, the web is woven out; he expires, and then it is cut off, he

breathes no more. Man is like grass, and like a flower, Isa. xl. 6. "All flesh," even the strongest and most healthy flesh, "is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." The grass is flourishing in the morning; but, being cut down by the mowers, in the evening it is withered: so man sometimes is walking up and down at ease in the morning, and in the evening is lying a corpse, being struck down by a sudden blow, with one or other of death's weapons. The flower, at best, is but a weak and tender thing, of short continuance wherever it grows: but observe, man is not compared to the flower of the garden; but to the flower of the field, which the foot of every beast may tread down at any time. Thus is our life liable to a thousand accidents every day, any of which may cut us off. But though we should escape all these, yet at length this grass withereth, this flower fadeth of itself. It is carried off "as the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away," Job vii. 9. It looks big as the morning cloud, which promises great things, and raises the expectation of the husbandman; but the sun riseth, and the cloud is scattered; death comes, and man vanisheth. —The apostle James proposes the question, "What is your life?" chapter iv. 14. Hear his answer, "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." It is frail, uncertain, and lasteth not. It is as smoke, which goes out of the chimney, as if it would darken the face of the heavens; but quickly it is scattered, and appears no more: thus goeth man's life, and "where is he?" It is wind, Job vii. 7, "O remember that my life is wind." It is but a passing blast, a short puff, "a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again," Psalm lxxxviii. 38. Our breath is in our nostrils, as if it were always upon the wing to depart; ever passing and repassing, like a traveller, until it go away, not to return till the heavens be no more.

Thirdly, Man's life is a swift thing; not only a passing, but a flying vanity. Have you not observed how swiftly a shadow runs along the ground, in a cloudy and a windy day, suddenly darkening the places beautified before with the beams of the sun, but as suddenly disappearing? Such is the life of man on the earth, for "he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not," Job xiv. 2. A weaver's shuttle is very swift in its motion; in a moment it is thrown from one side of the web to the other; yet "our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle," chap. vii. 6. How quickly is man tossed through time, into eternity! See how Job describes the swiftness of the time of life, chap. ix. 25, 26. "Now my days are swifter than a post; they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the pray." He com-

pares his days with a post, a foot-post ; a runner, who runs speedily to carry tidings, and will make no stay. But though the post were like Ahimaaz, who overrun Cush, our days would be swifter than he ; for they flee away, like a man fleeing for his life before the pursuing enemy ; he runs with his utmost vigour, yet our days run as fast as he. But this is not all ; even he who is fleeing for his life, cannot run always : he must needs sometimes stand still, lie down, or turn in somewhere, as Sisera did into Jael's tent, to refresh himself : but our time never halts. Therefore it is compared to ships, that can sail night and day without intermission, till they reach their port ; and to swift ships, ships of desire, in which men quickly arrive at their desired haven ; or ships of pleasure, that sail more swiftly than ships of burden. Yet the wind failing, the ship's course is checked : but our time always runs with a rapid course. Therefore it is compared to the eagle flying ; not with his ordinary flight, for that is not sufficient to represent the swiftness of our days ; but when he flies upon his prey, which is with an extraordinary swiftness. And thus, even thus, our days flee away.

Having thus discoursed of death, let us improve it in discerning the vanity of the world ; in bearing up, with Christian contentment and patience under all troubles and difficulties in it ; in mortifying our lusts ; in cleaving unto the Lord with full purpose of heart, at all hazards, and in preparing for death's approach.

1. Let us hence, as in a looking-glass, behold the vanity of the world, and of all those things in it, which men so much value and esteem ; and therefore set their hearts upon. The rich and the poor are equally intent upon this world ; they bow the knee to it ; yet it is but a clay god : they court the bulky vanity, and run eagerly to catch this shadow. The rich man is hugged to death in its embraces ; and the poor man wearies himself in the fruitless pursuit. What wonder if the world's smiles overcome us, when we pursue it so eagerly, even while it frowns upon us ! But look into the grave, O man ! consider and be wise ; listen to the doctrine of death ; and learn, that, " hold as fast as thou canst, thou shalt be forced to let go thy hold of the world at length." Though thou load thyself with the fruits of this earth ; yet all shall fall off when thou comest to creep into thy hole, the house, under ground, appointed for all living. When death comes, thou must bid an eternal farewell to thy enjoyments in this world : thou must leave thy goods to another ; Luke xii. 20, " And whose shall those things be which thou hast provided ?" Thy portion of these things shall be very little ere long." If thou lie down on the grass, and stretch thyself at full length, and observe the print of thy body, when thou risest, thou

mayest see how much of this earth will fall to thy share at last. It may be thou shalt get a coffin, and a winding-sheet: but thou art not sure of that; many who have had abundance of wealth, yet have not had so much when they took up their new house in the land of silence. But however that be, more you cannot expect. It was a mortifying lesson, which Saladin, when dying, gave to his soldiers. He called for his standard-bearer, and ordered him to take his winding-sheet upon his pike, and go out to the camp with it, and tell them that of all his conquests, victories, and triumphs, he had nothing now left him, but that piece of linen to wrap his body in for burial. "This world is a false friend," who leaves a man in time of greatest need, and flees from him when he has most to do. When thou art lying on a deathbed, all thy friends and relations cannot rescue thee; all thy substance cannot ransom thee, nor procure thee a reprieve for one day; nay, not for one hour. Yea, the more thou possessest of this world's goods, thy sorrow at death is likely to be the greater; for though one may live more commodiously in a palace than in a cottage, yet he may die more easily in the cottage, where he has very little to make him fond of life.

2. It may serve as a storehouse for Christian contentment and patience under worldly losses and crosses. A close application of the doctrine of death is an excellent remedy against fretting, and gives some ease to a troubled heart. When Job had sustained very great losses, he sat down contented, with this meditation, Job i. 21, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." When Providence brings a mortality or murrian among your cattle, how ready are you to fret and complain! but the serious consideration of your own death, to which you have a notable help from such providential occurrences, may be of use to silence your complaints, and quiet your spirits. Look to "the house appointed for all living," and learn, l. "That you must abide a more severe thrust than the loss of worldly goods." Do not cry out for a thrust in the leg or arm: for ere long there will be a long home thrust at the heart.—You may lose your dearest relations: the wife may lose her husband, and the husband his wife; the parents may lose their dear children, and the children their parents; but if any of these trials happen to you, remember you must lose your own life at last; and "Wherefore doth a living man complain?" Lam. iii. 39. It is always profitable to consider, under affliction, that our case might have been worse than it is. Whatever is consumed, or taken from us, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we" ourselves "are not consumed," ver. 22.

2. "It is but for a short space of time that we are in this world." It is but a little that our necessities require in so short a space of time: when death comes, we shall stand in need of none of these things. Why should men rack their heads with cares how to provide for to-morrow; while they know not if they shall then need any thing? Though a man's provision for his journey be nearly spent, he is not disquieted, if he think he is near home. Are you working by candle light, and is there little of your candle left? It may be there is as little sand in your glass; and if so, you have little use for it.

3. "You have matters of great weight that challenge your care." Death is at the door, beware you lose not your souls. If blood break out at one part of the body, they often open a vein in another part of it, to turn the stream of the blood, and to stop it. Thus the Spirit of God sometimes cures men of sorrow for earthly things, by opening the heart-vein to bleed for sin. Did we pursue heavenly things more vigorously when our affairs in this life prosper not, we should thereby gain a double advantage: our worldly sorrow would be diverted, and our best treasure increased.

4. "Crosses of this nature will not last long." The world's smiles and frowns will quickly be buried together in everlasting forgetfulness. Its smiles go away like foam on the water; and its frowns are as a passing stitch in a man's side. Time flies away with swift wings, and carries our earthly comforts, and crosses too, along with it: neither of them will accompany us into "the house appointed for all living." "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master," Job iii. 17—19. Cast a look into eternity, and you will see affliction here is but for a moment. The truth is, our time is so very short, that it will not allow either our joys or griefs to come to perfection. Wherefore, let them "that weep be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not," &c., 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

5. "Death will put all men on a level." The king and the beggar must dwell in one house, when they come to their journey's end; though their entertainment by the way be very different. "The small and the great are there," Job iii. 19. We are all in this world as on a stage; it is no great matter, whether a man act the part of a prince or a peasant, for when they have acted their parts, they must both get behind the curtain, and appear no more.

6. If thou be not in Christ, whatever thy afflictions now be, "troubles a thousand times worse, are abiding thee in another world." Death will turn thy crosses into pure unmixed curses: and then, how gladly wouldst thou return to

thy former afflicted state, and purchase it at any rate, were there any possibility of such a return. If thou be in Christ, thou mayest well bear thy cross. Death will put an end to all thy troubles. If a man on a journey be not well accommodated, where he lodges only for a night, he will not trouble himself much about the matter; because he is not to stay there, it is not his home. You are on the road to eternity; let it not disquiet you that you meet with some hardships in the inn of this world, Fret not, because it is not so well with you as with some others. One man travels with a cane in his hand; his fellow-traveller, perhaps, has but a common staff or stick: either of them will serve the turn. It is no great matter which of them be yours; both will be laid aside when you come to your journey's end.

3. It may serve for a bridle, to curb all manner of lusts, particularly those conversant about the body. A serious visit made to cold death, and that solitary mansion, the grave, might be of good use to repress them.

(1.) It may be of use to cause men to cease from their inordinate care for the body; which is to many the bane of their souls. Often do these questions, "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" leave no room for another of more importance, namely, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" The soul is put on the rack, to answer these mean questions in favour of the body; while its own eternal interests are neglected. But ah! why are men so busy to repair the ruinous cottage; leaving the inhabitant to bleed to death of his wounds, unheeded, unregarded? Why so much care for the body, to the neglect of the concerns of the immortal soul? O be not so anxious for what can only serve your bodies; since, ere long, the clods of cold earth will serve for back and belly too.

(2.) It may abate your pride on account of bodily endowments, which vain man is apt to glory in. Value not yourselves on the blossom of youth; for while you are in your blooming years, you are but ripening for a grave; death gives the fatal stroke, without asking any body's age. Glory not in your strength, it will quickly be gone: the time will soon be, when you shall not be able to turn yourselves on a bed; and you must be carried by your grieving friends to you rlong home. And what signifies your healthful constitution? Death doth not always enter in soonest where it begins soonest to knock at the door; but makes as great dispatch with some in a few hours, as with others in many years. Value not yourselves on your beauty, which "shall consume in the grave," Psalm xlix. 14. Remember the change which death makes on the fairest face, Job

xiv. 20, "Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away." Death makes the greatest beauty so loathsome, that it must be buried out of sight. Could a looking-glass be used in "the house appointed for all living," it would be a terror to those who now look oftener into their glasses than into their Bibles. And what though the body be gorgeously arrayed? The finest clothes are but badges of our sin and shame; and in a little time will be exchanged for a winding-sheet, when the body will become a feast to the worms.

(3.) It may be a check upon sensuality and fleshly lusts, 1 Pet. ii. 11, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." It is hard to cause wet wood to take fire; and when the fire doth take hold of it, it is soon extinguished. Sensuality makes men most unfit for divine communications, and is an effectual means to quench the Spirit. Intemperance in eating and drinking carries on the ruin of soul and body at once; and hastens death, while it makes the man most unmeet for it. Therefore, "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you unawares," Luke xxi. 34. But O how often is the soul struck through with a dart, in gratifying the senses! At these doors destruction enters in. Therefore Job "made a covenant with his eyes," chap. xxxi. 1. "The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the Lord, shall fall therein," Prov. xxii. 14. "Let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall," 1 Cor. x. 12. Beware of lasciviousness; study modesty in your apparel, words, and actions. The ravens of the valley of death, will at length pick out the wanton eye: the obscene filthy tongue will at length be quiet, in the land of silence; and grim death, embracing the body in its cold arms, will effectually allay the heat of all fleshly lusts.

(4.) In a word it may check our earthly-mindedness; and at once knock down "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Ah! if we must die why are we thus? Why so fond of temporal things; so anxious to get them, so eager in the embraces of them, so mightily touched with the loss of them? Let me, upon a view of "the house appointed for all living," address the worldling in the words of Solomon. Prov. xxiii. 5, "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?" For riches certainly make themselves wings, "they flee away as an eagle towards heaven." Riches, and all worldly things are but a fair nothing; they are that which is not. They are not what they seem to be: they are but gilded vanities, that deceive the eye. Comparitively, they are not; there is infinitely more of nothingness and not being, than of being, or reality, in the best of them. What is the world and all that is in it, but

a fashion, or fair shew, such as men make on the stage, a passing show? 1 Cor. vii. 31. Royal pomp is but gaudy show, or appearance, in God's account, Acts xxv. 23. The best name they get, is good things: but observe it, they are only the wicked man's good things, Luke xvi. 25, "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things," says Abraham, in the parable, to the rich man in hell. Well may the men of the world call these things their goods; for there is no other good in them, about them, nor attending them.—Now, wilt thou set thine eyes upon empty shadows and fancies? Wilt thou cause thine eyes to fly on them, as the word is? Shall men's hearts fly out at their eyes upon them, as a ravenous bird on its prey? if they do, let them know, that at length these shall flee as fast away from them, as their eyes flew upon them: like a flock of fair-feathered birds, that settle on a fool's ground; which, when he runs to catch them as his own, do immediately take wing, fly away, and sitting down on his neighbour's ground, elude his expectation, Luke xii. 10, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall these things be?" Though you do not make wings to them, as many do; they make themselves wings, and fly away; not as a tame house-bird, which may be caught again; but as an eagle, which quickly flies out of sight, and cannot be recalled. Forbear thou then to behold these things. O mortal! there is no good reason to be given why thou shouldst set thine eyes upon them. This world is a great inn, in the road to eternity, to which thou art travelling. Thou art attended by those things, as servants belonging to the inn where thou lodgest: they wait upon thee while thou art there; and when thou goest away, they will convey thee to the door. But they are not thine, they will go away with thee; but return to wait on other strangers, as they did on thee.

4. It may serve as a spring of Christian resolution, to cleave to Christ, adhere to his truths, and continue in his ways; whatever we may suffer for so doing. It would much allay the fear of man, that bringeth a snare. "Who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?" Isa. li. 12. Look on persecutors as pieces of brittle clay, that shall be dashed in pieces, for then shall you despise them as foes, that are mortal; whose terror to others in the land of the living, shall quickly die with themselves. The serious consideration of the shortness of our time, and the certainty of death, will teach us, that all the advantage which we can make by our apostacy, in time of trial, is not worth the while; it is not worth going out of our way to get it: and what we refuse to forego for Christ's sake, may be quickly taken from us by

death. But we can never lose it so honourably, as for the cause of Christ, and his gospel: for what glory is it, that you give up what you have in the world, when God takes it away from you by death, whether you will or not? This consideration may teach us to undervalue life itself, and choose to forego it, rather than to sin. The worst that men can do, is to take away that life, which we cannot long keep, though all the world should conspire to help us to retain the spirit. If we refuse to offer it up to God when he calls for it in defence of his honour, he can take it from us another way; as it fared with him, who could not burn for Christ, but was afterwards burnt by an accidental fire in his house.

5. It may serve for a spur to incite us to prepare for death. Consider, 1. Your eternal state will be according to the state in which you die: death will open the doors of heaven or hell to you. As the tree falls, so it shall lie through eternity. If the infant be dead born, the whole world cannot raise it to life again: and if one die out of Christ, in an unregenerate state, there is no more hope of him for ever. 2. Seriously consider what it is to go into another world; a world of spirits, wherewith we are very little acquainted. How frightful is converse with spirits to poor mortals in this life! and how dreadful is the case, when men are hurried away into another world, not knowing but devils may be their companions for ever! Let us then give all diligence to make and advance our acquaintance with the Lord of that world. 3. It is but a short time you have to prepare for death: therefore now or never, seeing the time assigned for preparation will soon be over. Eccl. ix. 10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." How can we be idle, having so great a work to do, and so little time to do it in? But if the time be short, the work of preparation for death, though hard work, will not last long. The shadows of the evening makes the labourer work cheerfully; knowing the time to be at hand, when he will be called in from his labour. 4. Much of our short time is over already; and the youngest of us all cannot assure himself, that there is as much of his time to come, as is past. Our life in the world is but a short preface to long eternity; and much of the tale is told. Oh! shall we not double our diligence, when so much of our time is spent, and so little of our great work is done? 5. The present time is flying away: and we cannot bring back time past, it hath taken an eternal farewell of us: there is no kindling the fire again that is burnt to ashes. The time to come is not ours: and we have no assurance of a share in it when it comes. We have

nothing we can call ours, but the present moment; and that is flying away. How soon our time may be at an end, we know not. Die we must: but who can tell us when? If death kept one set time for all, we were in no hazard of a surprise: but daily observation shews us, that there is no such thing. Now the flying shadow of our life allows no time for loitering. The rivers run speedily into the sea, from whence they came; but not so speedily as man to dust, from whence he came. The stream of time is the swiftest current, and quickly runs out to eternity. 6. If once death carry us off, there is no coming back to mend our matters, Job xiv. 14, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Dying is a thing we cannot get a trial of; it is what we can only do once, Heb. ix. 27, "It is appointed unto men *once* to die." And that which can be but once done, and yet is of so much importance that our all depends on our doing it right, we have need to use the utmost diligence that we may do it well. Therefore prepare for death.

If you who are unregenerate ask me, what you shall do to prepare for death, that you may die safely; I answer, I have told you already what must be done. Your nature and state must be changed: you must be united to Jesus Christ by faith. Till this be done, you are not capable of other directions, which belongs to a person's dying comfortably: whereof we may discourse afterwards in the due place.

PART II.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED IN THEIR DEATH.

The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.—PROV. XIV. 32.

THIS text looks like the cloud between the Israelites and Egyptians; having a dark side towards the latter, and a bright side towards the former. It represents death like Pharaoh's jailor, bringing the chief butler and the chief baker out of prison; the one to be restored to his office, and the other to be led to execution. It shews the difference between the godly and ungodly in their death; who, as they act a very different part in life, so, in death, have a very different exit.