

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.

As to the death of a wicked man, here is, 1. The manner of his passing out of the world. He is "driven away;" namely, in his death, as is clear from the opposite clause. He is forcibly thrust out of his place in this world; driven away as chaff before the wind. 2. The state he passeth away into. He dies also in a hopeless state; "but the righteous hath hope in his death;" which plainly imports the hopelessness of the wicked in their death. Whereby is not meant, that no wicked man shall have any hope at all when he is dying, but shall die in despair. No: sometimes it is so indeed; but frequently it is otherwise; foolish virgins may, and often do, hope to the last breath. But the wicked man has no solid hope: as for the delusive hopes he entertains himself with, death will root them up, and he shall be for ever irretrievably miserable.

As to the death of a righteous man, he hath hope in his death. This is ushered in with a "but," importing the removal of these dreadful circumstances, with which the wicked man is attended, who is driven away in his wickedness; but the godly are not so. Not so, in the manner of their passing out of the world. The righteous are not driven away as chaff before the wind; but led away as a bride to the marriage chamber, carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom, Luke xvi. 22. Not so as to their state, when passing out of this life. The righteous man dies, not in a sinful, but in a holy state. He goes not away in his sin, but out of it. In his life he was putting off the old man, changing his prison garments; and now the remaining rags of them are removed, and he is adorned with robes of glory. Not in a hopeless, but a hopeful state. He hath hope in his death; he has the grace of hope, and the well-founded expectation of better things than he ever had in this world: and though the stream of his hope at death may run shallow, yet he has still so much of it as makes him venture his eternal interests upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

DOCTRINE I. The wicked dying, are driven away in their wickedness, and in a hopeless state.

In speaking to this doctrine, I. I shall show how, and in what sense, the wicked are "driven away in their wickedness" at death. II. I shall prove the hopelessness of their state at death. And then apply the whole.

I. How, and in what sense, the wicked are "driven away in their wickedness." In discoursing of this matter, I shall briefly inquire, 1. What is meant by their being "driven away." 2. Whence they shall be driven, and whither. 3. In what respects they may be said to be driven away "in their wickedness." But before I proceed, let me remark, that you are mistaken if you think that no persons

are to be called wicked, but they who are avowedly vicious and profane; as if the devil could dwell in none but those whose name is Legion. In Scripture account, all who are not righteous, in the manner hereafter explained, are reckoned wicked. Therefore the text divides the whole world into two sorts, "the righteous and the wicked:" and you will see the same thing in Malachi iii. 18, "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked." Wherefore if you be not righteous, you are wicked. If you have not an imputed righteousness, and also an implanted righteousness, or holiness; if you be yet in your natural state, unregenerated, not united to Christ by faith; however moral and blameless in the eyes of men your conversation may be, you are the wicked who shall be driven away in their wickedness, if death find you in that state. Now,

1. As to the meaning of this phrase, "driven away," there are three things in it; the wicked shall be taken away suddenly, violently, and irresistibly.

(1.) Unrenewed men shall be taken away suddenly at death. Not that all wicked men die suddenly; nor that they are all wicked that die so; God forbid! But, 1. Death commonly comes upon them unexpectedly, and so surprises them, as the deluge surprised the old world, though they were forewarned of it long before it came; and as travail cometh on a woman with child, with surprising suddenness, although looked for and expected, 1 Thess. v. 3. Death seizes them, as a creditor doth his debtor, to hale him to prison, Psalm lv. 15, and that when they are not aware. Death comes in, as a thief, at the window, and finds them full of busy thoughts about this life which that very day perish. 2. Death always seizes them unprepared for it; the old house falls down about their ears, before they have another provided. When death casts them to the door, they have not where to lay their heads; unless it be on a bed of fire and brimstone. The soul and body are as it were hugging one another in mutual embraces; when death comes like a whirlwind, and separates them. 3. Death hurries them away in a moment to destruction, and makes a most dismal change: the man for the most part never knows where he is, till "in hell he lift up his eyes," Luke xvi. 23. The floods of wrath suddenly overwhelm his soul; and ere he is aware, he is plunged into the bottomless pit.

(2.) The unrenewed man is taken away out of the world violently. Driving is a violent action; he is "chased out of the world," Job xviii. 18. Fain would he stay, if he could; but death drags him away, like a malefactor to the execution. He sought no other portion than the profits and pleasures of this world: he hath no other

he really desires no other: how can he then go away out of it, if he were not driven?

Question. "But may not a wicked man be willing to die?" *Answer.* He may indeed be willing to die; but observe it is only in one of three cases. 1. In a fit of passion, by reason of some trouble that he is impatient to be rid of. Thus, many persons, when their passion has got the better of their reason, and when, on that account they are most unfit to die, will be ready to cry, "O to be gone!" But should their desire be granted, and death come at their call, they would quickly shew they were not in earnest; and that, if they go they must be driven away against their will. 2. When they are brim-full of despair may they be willing to die. Thus Saul murdered himself; and Spira wished to be in hell, that he might know the uttermost of what he believed he was to suffer. In this manner men may seek after death, while it flees from them. But fearful is the violence these undergo, whom the terrors of God do thus drive. 3. When they are dreaming of happiness after death. Foolish virgins, under the power of delusion, as to their state, may be willing to die, having no fear of lying down in sorrow. How many are there, who can give no scriptural ground for their hope, who yet have no bands in their death! Many are driven to darkness sleeping: they go off like lambs, who would roar like lions, did they but know what place they are going to; though the chariot in which they are, drive furiously to the depths of hell, yet they fear not, because they are fast asleep.

(3.) The unregenerate man is taken away irresistably. He must go, though sorely against his will. Death will take no refusal, nor admit of any delay; though the man has not lived half his days, according to his own computation. If he will not bow, it will break him. If he will not come forth, it will pull the house down about his ears; for there he must not stay. Although the physician help, friends groan, the wife and children cry, and he himself use his utmost efforts to retain the spirit, his soul is required of him; yield he must, and go where he shall never more see light.

2. Let us consider, whence they are driven, and whither. When the wicked die, (1.) They are driven out of this world, where they sinned, into the other world, where they must be judged, and receive their particular sentences, Heb. ix. 27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." They shall no more return to their beloved earth. Though their hearts are wedded to their earthly enjoyments, they must leave them, they can carry nothing hence. How sorrowful must their departure be, when they have nothing in view so good as that which they leave behind them!

(2.) They are driven out of the society of the saints on earth, into the society of the damned in hell, Luke xvi. 22, 23, "The rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lift up his eyes." What a multitude of the devil's goats do now take place among Christ's sheep! but at death they shall be "led forth with the workers of iniquity," Psalm cxxv. 5. There is a mixed multitude in this world, but no mixture in the other; each party is there set by themselves. Though hypocrites grow here as tares among the wheat, death will root them up, and they shall be bound in bundles for the fire. (3.) They are driven out of time into eternity. While time lasts with them, there is hope; but when time goes, all hope goes with it. Precious time is now lavishly spent: it lies so heavy on the hands of many, that they think themselves obliged to take several ways to drive away time. But beware of being at a loss what to do in life: improve time for eternity, whilst you have it; for ere long death will drive it from you, and you from it, so as you shall never meet again. (4.) They are driven out of their specious pretences to piety. Death strips them of the splendid robes of a fair profession, with which some of them are adorned; and turns them off the stage, in the rags of a wicked heart and life. The word "hypocrite" properly signifies a stage-player, who appears to be what indeed he is not. This world is the stage on which these children of the devil personate the children of God. Their shew of religion is the player's coat, under which one must look, who will judge of them aright. Death turns them out of their coat, and they appear in their native dress: it unveils them, and takes off their mask. There are none in the other world, who pretend to be better than they really are. Depraved nature acts in the regions of horror nudisguised. (5.) They are driven away from all means of grace; and are set beyond the line, quite out of all prospect of mercy. There is no more an opportunity to buy oil for the lamp; it is gone out at death, and can never be lighted again. There may be offers of mercy and peace made, after they are gone; but they are to others, not to them: there are no such offers in the place to which they are driven; these offers are only made in that place from which they are driven away.

3. In what respects may they be said to be driven away in their wickedness? *Answer.* 1. In respect of their being driven away in their sinful unconverted state. Having lived enemies to God, they die in a state of enmity to him: for none are brought into the eternal state of consummate happiness, but by the way of the state of grace in this life. The child that is dead in the womb, is born dead, and is cast out of the womb into the grave: so he who is dead while

he liveth, or is spiritually dead, is cast forth of the womb of time, in the same state of death, into the pit of utter misery. O miserable death, to die in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity! it had been incomparably better for such as die thus, that they had never been born. 2. In regard that they die sinning, acting wickedly against God, in contradiction to the divine law; for they can do nothing but sin while they live: so death takes them in the very act of sinning; violently draws them from the embraces of their lusts, and drives them away to the tribunal, to receive their sentence. It is a remarkable expression, Job xxxvi. 14, "They die in youth:" the marginal reading is, "their soul dieth in youth;" their lusts being lively, their desires vigorous, and expectations big, as is common in youth. "And their life is among the unclean;" or, "And the company" or herd "of them" dieth "among the Sodomites," namely, is taken away in the heat of their sin and wickedness, as the men of Sodom were, Gen. xix; Luke xvii. 28, 29. 3. As they are driven away, loaded with the guilt of all their sins; this is the winding-sheet that shall lie down with them in the dust, Job xx. 11. Their works follow them into the other world; they go away with the yoke of their transgressions wreathed about their necks. Guilt is a bad companion in life, but how terrible will it be in death! It lies now, perhaps, like cold brimstone on their benumbed consciences: but when death opens the way for sparks of divine vengeance, like fire, to fall upon it, it will make dreadful flames in the conscience, in which the soul will be, as it were, wrapt up for ever. 4. The wicked are driven away in their wickedness, in so far as they die under the absolute power of their wickedness. While there is hope, there is some restraint on the worst of men; those moral endowments, which God gives to a number of men, for the benefit of mankind in this life, are so many restraints upon the impetuous wickedness of human nature. But all hope being cut off, and these gifts withdrawn, the wickedness of the wicked will then arrive at its perfection. As the seeds of grace, sown in the hearts of the elect, come to their full maturity at death; so wicked and hellish dispositions in the reprobate, come then to their highest pitch. Their prayers to God will then be turned to horrible curses, and their praises to hideous blasphemies, Matth. xxii. 13, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This gives a dismal, but correct view of the state of the wicked in another world.

II. I shall discover the hopelessness of the state of unrenewed men at death. It appears to be very hopeless, if we consider these four things.

1. Death cuts off their hopes and prospects of peace and pleasure

in this life, Luke xii. 19, 20, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" They look for great matters in this world, they hope to increase their wealth, to see their families prosper, and to live at ease; but death comes like a stormy wind, and shakes off all their fond hopes, like green fruit from off a tree. "When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him," Job xx. 23. He may begin a web of contrivances for advancing his worldly interest; but before he gets it wrought out, death comes and cuts it off. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish," Psalm cxlvi. 4.

2. When death comes, they have no solid ground to hope for eternal happiness. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gauded, when God taketh away his soul?" Job xxvii. 8. Whatever hopes they fondly entertain, they are not founded on God's word, which is the only sure ground of hope; if they knew their own case, they would see themselves only happy in a dream. And indeed what hope can they have? The law is plain against them, and condemns them. The curses of it, those cords of death, are about them already. The Saviour whom they slighted, is now their Judge; and their Judge is their enemy. How then can they hope? They have bolted the door of mercy against themselves, by their unbelief. They have despised the remedy, and therefore must die without mercy. They have no saving interest in Jesus Christ, the only channel of conveyance, through which mercy flows: and therefore they can never taste it. The sword of justice guards the door of mercy, so as none can enter in, but the members of the mystical body of Christ, over whose head is a covert of atoning blood, the Mediator's blood. These indeed may pass without a harm, for justice has nothing to require of them. But others cannot pass, since they are not in Christ: death comes to them with the sting in it, the sting of unpardoned guilt. It is armed against them with all the force which the sanction of a holy law can give it, 1 Cor. xv. 56, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." When that law was given on Sinai, "the whole mount quaked greatly," Exod. xix. 18. When the Redeemer was making satisfaction for the elect's breaking it, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent," Matt. xxvii. 51. What possible ground of hope, then, is there to the wicked man, when death comes upon him armed with the force of this law? How can he escape that fire, which "burnt unto the midst of heaven?" Deut. iv. 11. How shall he be able to

stand in that smoke, that "ascended as the smoke of a furnace?" Exod. xix. 11. How will he endure the terrible "thunders and lightnings," ver. 17, and dwell in "the darkness, clouds, and thick darkness?" Deut. iv. 11. All these comparisons heaped together do but faintly represent the fearful tempest of wrath and indignation, which shall pursue the wicked to the lowest hell; and for ever abide on those who are driven to darkness at death.

4. Death roots up their delusive hopes of eternal happiness; then it is that their covenant with death and agreement with hell, is broken. They are awakened out of their golden dreams, and at length lift up their eyes; Job viii. 14, "Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web." They trust that all shall be well with them after death: but their trust is as a web woven out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art and industry. They wrap themselves up in their hope, as the spider wraps herself in her web. But it is a weak and slender defence; for however it may withstand the threatenings of the word of God, death, that besom of destruction, will sweep them and it both away, so as there shall not be the least shred of it left; and he, who this moment will not let his hope go, shall next moment be utterly hopeless. Death overturns the house built on the sand; it leaves no man under the power of delusion.

4. Death makes their state absolutely and for ever hopeless. Matters cannot be retrieved and amended after death. For, 1. Time once gone can never be recalled. If cries or tears, price or pains, could bring time back again, the wicked man might have hope in his death. But tears of blood will not prevail; nor will his groans for millions of ages cause it to return. The sun will not stand still for the sluggard to awake and enter on his journey; and when once it is gone down, he needs not expect the night to be turned into day for his sake: he must lodge through the long night of eternity, where his time left him. 2. There is no returning to this life, to amend what is amiss; it is a state of probation and trial, which terminates at death; therefore we cannot return to it again; it is but once we thus live, and once we die. Death carries the wicked man to "his own place," Acts i. 25. This life is our working day. Death closes our day and our work together. We may admit the wicked might have some hope in their death, if, after death has opened their eyes, they could return to life, and have but the trial of one Sabbath, one offer of Christ, one day, or but one hour more, to make up their peace with God: but "man lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more; they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep," Job xiv. 12. 3. In the other

world, men have no access to get their ruined state and condition retrieved, though they be ever so desirous of it. "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest," Eccl. ix. 10. Now a man may flee from the wrath to come; he may get into a refuge. But when once death has done its work, "the door is shut;" there are no more offers of mercy, no more pardons: where the tree is fallen, there it must lie.

Let what has been said be carefully pondered; and that it may be of use, let me exhort you,

First, To take heed that you entertain no hopes of heaven, but what are built on a solid foundation: tremble to think what fair hopes of happiness death sweeps away, like cobwebs; how the hopes of many are cut off, when they seem to themselves to be at the very threshold of heaven; how, in the moment they expected to be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, into the regions of bliss and peace, they are carried by devils into the society of the damned in hell, into the place of torment, and regions of horror. I beseech you to beware, 1. Of a hope built upon ground that was never cleared. The wise builder digged deep, Luke vi. 48. Were your hopes of heaven never shaken; but have you had good hopes all your days? Alas for it! you may see the mystery of your case explained, Luke xi. 21, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are at peace. But if they have been shaken, take heed lest some breaches only have been made in the old building, which you have got repaired again, by ways and means of your own. I assure you, that your hope, however fair a building it is, is not fit to trust to, unless your old hopes have been razed, and you have built on a foundation quite new. 2. Beware of that hope which looks bright in the dark, but loses all its lustre when it is set in the light of God's word, when it is examined and tried by the touchstone of divine revelation, John iii. 20, 21, "For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doth the truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." That hope, which cannot abide scripture trial, but sinks when searched into by sacred truth, is a delusion, and not a true hope: for God's word is always a friend to the graces of God's Spirit, and an enemy to delusion. 3. Beware of that hope, which stands without being supported by scriptural evidences. Alas! many are big with hopes, who cannot give, because they really have not, any scripture grounds for them. Thou hopest that all will be well with thee after death: but what word of God is it, on which thou hast been caused to hope? Psalm cxix. 49. What scriptural evidence hast

thou to prove that thy hope is not the hope of the hypocrite? What hast thou, after impartial self-examination, as in the sight of God, found in thyself, which the word of God determines to be a sure evidence of his right to eternal life, who is possessed of it? Numbers are ruined with such hopes as stand unsupported by scriptural evidence. Men are fond and tenacious of these hopes; but death will throw them down, and leave the self-deceiver hopeless. 4. Beware of that hope of heaven, which doth not prepare and dispose you for heaven, which never makes your soul more holy, 1 John iii. 3, "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." The hope of the most part of men, is rather a hope to be free from pain and torment in another life, than a hope of true happiness, the nature whereof is not understood and discerned: therefore it rests in sloth and indolence, and does not excite to mortification and a heavenly life. So far are they from hoping aright for heaven, that they must own, if they speak their genuine sentiments, removing out of this world into any other place whatever, is rather their fear than their hope. The glory of the heavenly city does not at all draw their hearts upwards to it, nor do they lift up their heads with joy, in the prospect of arriving at it. If they had the true hope of the marriage day, they would, as the bride, the "Lamb's wife," be "making themselves ready for it," Rev. xix. 7. But their hopes are produced by their sloth, and their sloth is nourished by their hopes. Oh, Sirs, as you would not be driven away helpless in your death, beware of these hopes! Raze them now, and build on a new foundation, lest death leave not one stone of them upon another, and you never be able to hope any more.

Secondly, Hasten, O sinners, out of your wickedness, out of your sinful state, and out of your wicked life, if you would not at death be driven away in your wickedness. Remember the fatal end of the wicked as the text represents it. I know there is a great difference in the death of the wicked, as to some circumstances: but all of them, in their death, agree in this, that they are driven away in their wickedness. Some of them die resolutely, as if they scorned to be afraid; some in raging despair, so filled with horror that they cry out as if they were already in hell; others in sullen despondency, oppressed with fears, so that their hearts sink within them, at the remembrance of misspent time, and the view which they have of eternity, having neither head nor heart to do anything for their own relief. And others die stupidly; they live like beasts, and they die like beasts, without any concern on their spirits, about their eternal state. They groan under their bodily distress but have no sense of the danger of their soul. One may, with almost as much

prospect of success, speak to a stone, as speak to them; vain is the attempt to teach them; nothing that can be said moves them. To discourse to them, either of the joys of heaven on the torments of hell, is to plough on a rock, or beat the air. Some die like the foolish virgins, dreaming of heaven; their foreheads are steeled against the fears of hell, with presumptuous hopes of heaven. The business of those who would be useful to them, is not to answer doubts about the case of their souls, but to discover to them their own false hopes. But which way soever the unconverted man dies, he is "driven away in his wickedness." O dreadful case! Oh, let the consideration of so horrid a departure out of this world, move you to flee to Jesus Christ, as the all-sufficient Saviour, an almighty Redeemer. Let it prevail to drive you out of your wickedness, to holiness of heart and life. Though you reckon it pleasant to live in wickedness, yet you cannot but own, it is bitter to die in it. And if you leave it not in time, you must go on in your wickedness to hell, the proper place of it, that it may be set there on its own base. For when you are passing out of this world, all your sins, from the first to the last of them, will swarm about you, hang upon you, accompany you to the other world, and, as so many furies, surround you there for ever.

Thirdly, O be concerned for others, especially for your relations, that they may not continue in their sinful natural state, but be brought into a state of salvation; lest they be driven away in their wickedness at death. What would you not do to prevent any of your friends dying an untimely and violent death? But, alas! do you not see them in hazard of being driven away in their wickedness? Is not death approaching them, even the youngest of them? And are they not strangers to true Christianity, remaining in that state which they came into the world? Oh! make haste to pluck the brand out of the fire, lest it be burned to ashes. The death of relations often leaves a sting in the hearts of those they leave behind them, because they did not do for their souls as they had opportunity; and because the opportunity is for ever taken out of their hands.

DOCTRINE II. The state of the godly in death is a hopeful state. We have seen the dark side of the cloud looking towards ungodly men, passing out of the world; let us now take a view of the bright side of it, shinning on the godly, as they enter on their eternal state. In discoursing on this subject, I shall confirm this doctrine, answer an objection against it, and then make some practical improvement of the whole.

For confirmation, let it be observed, that although the passage

out of this world by death has a frightful aspect to poor mortals, and to miscarry in it must needs be of fatal consequence; yet the following circumstances make the state of the godly in their death, happy and hopeful.

1. They have a trusty good Friend before them in the other world. Jesus Christ, their best Friend, is Lord of the land to which death carries them. When Joseph sent for his father to come down to him to Egypt, telling him, "God had made him lord over all Egypt," Gen. xlv. 9, "And Jacob "saw the waggons Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob revived," ver. 27. He resolves to undertake the journey. I think, when the Lord calls a godly man out of the world, he sends him such glad tidings, and such a kind invitation into the other world, that, he has faith to believe it, his spirit must revive, when he sees the waggon of death which comes to carry him thither. It is true, indeed, he has a weighty trial to undergo,—after death the judgment. But the case of the godly is altogether hopeful; for the Lord of the land is their husband, and their husband is the judge; "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son," John v. 22. Surely the case of the wife is hopeful, when her own husband is her judge, even such a husband as hates putting away. No husband is so loving and so tender of his spouse, as the Lord Christ is of his. One would think it would be a very bad land, which a wife would not willingly go to, where her husband is the ruler and judge. Moreover, their judge is the advocate, 1 John ii. 1, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Therefore they need not fear their being put back, and falling into condemnation. What can be more favourable? Can they think, that he who pleads their cause, will himself pass sentence against them? Yet farther, their advocate is their Redeemer; they are "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. So when he pleads for them, he is pleading his own cause. Though an advocate may be careless of the interest of one who employs him, yet surely he will do his utmost to defend his own right, which he has purchased with his money: and shall not their advocate defend the purchase of his own blood? But more than all that, their Redeemer is their head, and they are his members, Eph. v. 23, 30. Though one were so silly as to let his own purchase go, without standing up to defend his right, yet surely he will not part with a limb of his own body. Is not their case then hopeful in death, who are so closely linked and allied to the Lord of the other world, who has "the keys of hell and of death?"

2. They shall have a safe passage to another world. They must indeed go through "the valley of the shadow of death;" but though

it be in itself a dark and shady vale, it shall be a valley of hope to them : they shall not be driven through it, but be as men in perfect safety, who fear no evil, Psalm xxiii. 4. Why should they thus fear? They have the Lord of the land's safe conduct, his pass sealed with his own blood ; namely, the blessed covenant, which is the saint's death-bed comfort, 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." Who then can harm them? It is safe riding in Christ's chariot, Cant. iii. 9, both through life and death. They have good and honourable attendants, a guard, even a guard of angels. These encamp about them in the time of their life ; and surely will not leave them in the day of their death. These happy ministering spirits are attendants on their Lord's bride, and will doubtless convey her safe home to his house. When friends in mournful mood stand by the saint's bedside, waiting to see him draw his last breath, his soul is waited for by angels, to be carried into Abraham's bosom, Luke xvi. 22. The captain of the saint's salvation is the captain of this holy guard : he was their guide even unto death, and he will be their guide through it too, Psalm xxiii. 4, " Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me." They may, without fear, pass that river, being confident it shall not overflow them ; and they may walk through that fire, being sure they shall not be burnt by it.

Death can do them no harm. It cannot even hurt their bodies : for though it separate the soul from the body, it cannot separate the body from the Lord Jesus Christ. Even death is to them but sleep in Jesus, 1 Thess. iv. 14. They continue members of Christ, though in a grave. Their dust is precious dust ; laid up in the grave as in their Lord's cabinet. They lie in a grave mellowing, as precious fruit laid up to be brought forth to him at the resurrection. The husbandman has corn in his barn, and corn lying in the ground : the latter is more precious to him than the former, because he looks to get it returned with increase. Even so the dead bodies of the saints are valued by their Saviour : they are " sown in corruption," to be " raised in incorruption" ; " sown in dishonour," to be " raised in glory," 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43. It cannot hurt their souls. It is with the souls of the saints at death, as with Paul and his company in their voyage, whereof we have the history, Acts, chap. xxvii. The ship was broken to pieces, but the passengers got all safe to land. When the dying saint's speech is stopped, his eyes set, and his last breath drawn, the soul gets safe away into the heavenly paradise,

leaving the body to return to its earth, but in the joyful hope of a re-union at its glorious resurrection.—But how can death hurt the godly? it is a foiled enemy: if it cast them down, it is only that they may rise more glorious. “Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death,” 2 Tim. i. 10. The soul and life of it is gone: it is but a walking shade that may fright, but cannot hurt saints: it is only the shadow of death to them: it is not the thing itself; their dying is but as dying, or somewhat like dying. The apostle tells us, “It is Christ that died,” Rom. viii. 34. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, though stoned to death, yet only fell asleep, Acts vii. 60. Certainly the nature of death is quite changed, with respect to the saints. It is not to them, what it was to Jesus Christ their head: it is not the venomous ruining thing, wrapt up in the sanction of the first covenant, Gen. ii. 17, “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” It comes to the godly without a sting: they may meet it with that salutation, “O death, where is thy sting? Is this *Mara*? Is this bitter death? It went out full into the world, when the first Adam opened the door to it, but the second Adam hath brought it again empty to his own people. I feel a sting, may the dying saint say: yet it is but a bee sting, stinging only through the skin: but, O death, where is thy sting, thine old sting, the serpent’s sting, that stings to the heart and soul? The sting of death is sin: but that is taken away. If death arrest the saint, and carry him before the Judge, to answer for the debt he contracted, the debt will be found paid by the glorious Surety; and he has the discharge to shew. The thorn of guilt is pulled out of the man’s conscience; and his name is blotted out of the black roll, and written among the living in Jerusalem. It is true, it is a great journey through the valley of the shadow of death: but the saint’s burden is taken away from his back, his iniquity is pardoned, he may walk at ease: “No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast:” the redeemed may walk at leisure there, free from all apprehensions of danger.

3. They shall have a joyful entrance into the other world. Their arrival in the regions of bliss, will be celebrated with rapturous hymns of praise to their glorious Redeemer. A dying day is a good day to a godly man. Yea, it is his best day; it is better to him than his birth-day, or than the most joyous day which he ever had on earth. “A good name,” says the wise man, is “better than precious ointment: and the day of death, than the day of one’s birth,” Eccl. vii. 1. The notion of the immortality of the soul, and of future happiness, which obtained among some pagan nations, had wonderful effects on them. Some of them, when they mourned for the dead, did it in women’s apparel; that, being moved with the inde-

gency of the garb, they might the sooner lay aside their mourning. Others buried them without any lamentation or mourning; but had a sacrifice, and a feast for friends, upon that occasion. Some were wont to mourn at births, and rejoice at burials.—But the practice of some Indian nations is yet more strange, where, upon the husband's decease, his wife, or wives, with a cheerful countenance, enter the flames prepared for the husband's corpse. But however false notions of a future state, assisted by pride, affectation of applause, apprehensions of difficulties in this life, and such like principles proper to depraved human nature, may influence rude uncultivated minds, when strengthened by the arts of hell; O what solid joy and consolation may they have, who are true Christians, being in Christ, who "hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel!" 2 Tim. i. 10. Death is one of those "all things," that "work together for good to them that love God," Rom. viii. 28. When the body dies, the soul is perfected: the body of death goes off, at the death of the body.—What harm did the jailer to Pharaoh's butler, when he opened the prison door to him, and let him out? Is the bird in worse case, when at liberty, than when confined in a cage? Thus, and no worse, are the souls of the saints treated by death. It comes to the godly man, as Haman came to Mordecai, with the royal apparel and the horse, Esther vi. 11, with commission to do them honour, however awkwardly it be performed. I question not but Haman performed the ceremony with a very ill mien, a pale face, a downcast look, and a cloudy countenance, and like one who came to hang him, rather than to honour him. But he whom the king delighted to honour, must be honoured; and Haman, Mordecai's grand enemy, must be the man employed to put this honour upon him. Glory, glory, glory, blessing and praise to our Redeemer, our Saviour, our Mediator, by whose death, grim devouring death is made to do such a good office to those whom it might otherwise have hurried away in their wickedness, to utter and eternal destruction! A dying day is, in itself, a joyful day to the godly; it is their redemption day, when the captives are delivered, when the prisoners are set free. It is the day of the pilgrims coming home from their pilgrimage; the day in which the heirs of glory return from their travels, to their own country, and their Father's house; and enter into actual possession of the glorious inheritance. It is their marriage day: now is the time of espousals; but then the marriage is consummated, and a marriage feast begun, which has no end. If so, is not the state of the godly in death, a hopeful state?

Objection. "But if the state of the godly in their death be so hopeful, how comes it to pass that many of them, when dying, are full of

fears, and have little hope?" *Answer.* It must be owned, that saints do not all die in one and the same manner; there is a diversity among them, as well as among the wicked; yet the worst case of a dying saint is indeed a hopeful one. Some die triumphantly, in a full assurance of faith. 2 Timothy iv. 6—8, "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." They get a taste of the joys of heaven, while here on earth; and begin the songs of Zion, while yet in a strange land. Others die in a solid dependence of faith on their Lord and Saviour: though they cannot sing triumphantly, yet they can, and will say confidently, "The Lord is their God." Though they cannot triumph over death, with old Simeon, having Christ in his arms, and saying, "Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," Luke ii. 29, 30; yet they can say with dying Jacob, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord," Gen. xlix. 18. His left hand is under their head, to support them, though his right hand doth not embrace them: they firmly believe, though they are not filled with joy in believing. They can plead the covenant, and hang by the promise, although their house is not so with God as they could wish. But the dying day of some saints may be like that day mentioned in Zechariah xiv. 7, "Not day, nor night." They may die under great doubts and fears; setting as it were in a cloud, and going to heaven in a mist. They may go mourning without the sun, and never put off their spirit of heaven, till death stripes them of it. They may be carried to heaven through the confines of hell; and may be pursued by the devouring lion, even to the very gates of the new Jerusalem; and may be compared to a ship almost wrecked in sight of the harbour, which yet gets safe into her port, 1 Cor. iii. 15, "If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." There is safety amidst their fears, but danger in the strong confidence of the wicked; and there is a blessed seed of gladness in their greatest sorrows: "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart," Psalm xcvii. 11.

Now, saints are liable to such perplexity in their death, because, though they are Christians indeed, yet they are men of like passions with others; and death is a frightful object in itself, whatever dress it appears in: the stern countenance with which it looks at mortals, can hardly fail of causing them to shrink. Moreover, the saints are of all men the most jealous of themselves. They think of eternity, and of a tribunal, more deeply than others do; with them it is a

more serious thing to die, than the rest of mankind are aware of. They know the deceits of the heart, the subtleties of depraved human nature, better than others do. Therefore they may have much to do to keep up hope on a death-bed; while others pass off quietly, like sheep to the slaughter; and the rather, that Satan, who uses all his art to support the hopes of the hypocrite, will do his utmost to mar the peace, and increase the fears, of the saints. And finally, the bad frame of spirit, and ill condition, in which death sometimes seizes a true Christian, may cause this perplexity. By his being in the state of grace, he is indeed always habitually prepared for death, and his dying safely is ensured: but yet there is more necessary to his actual preparation and dying comfortably, his spirit must be in good condition too.

Wherefore there are three cases, in which death cannot but be very uncomfortable to a child of God. 1. If it seize him at a time when the guilt of some particular sin, unrepented of, is lying on his conscience: and death comes on that very account, to take him out of the land of the living; as was the case of many of the Corinthian professors, 1 Cor. xi. 30, "For this cause," namely, of unworthy communicating, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." If a person is surprised with the approach of death, while lying under the guilt of some unpardoned sin, it cannot but cause a mighty consternation. 2. When death catches him sleeping. The midnight cry must be frightful to sleeping virgins. The man who lies in a ruinous house, and awakes not till the timbers begin to crack, and the stones to drop down about his ears, may indeed get out of it safely, but not without fears of being crushed by its fall. When a Christian has been going on in a course of security and backsliding, and awakens not till death comes to his bedside, it is no wonder that he gets a fearful awakening. 3. When he has lost sight of his saving interest in Christ, and cannot produce evidences of his title to heaven. It is hard to meet death without some evidence of a title to eternal life at hand; hard to go through the dark valley without the candle of the Lord skinning upon the head. It is a terrible adventure to launch out into eternity, when a man can make no better of it than a leap in the dark, not knowing where he shall light, whether in heaven or hell.

Nevertheless the state of the saints, in their death, is always in itself hopeful. The presumptuous hopes of the ungodly, in their death, cannot make their state hopeful; neither can the fears of a saint make his state hopeless: for God judgeth according to the truth of the thing, not according to men's opinions about it. Therefore the saints can be no more altogether without hope, than they

can be altogether without faith. Their faith may be very weak, but it fails not; and their hope very low, yet they will, and do hope to the end. Even while the godly seem to be carried away with the stream of doubts and fears, there remains still as much hope as determines them to lay hold on the tree of life that grows on the banks of the river, Jonah ii. 4, "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight: yet I will look again toward thy temple."

USE. This speaks comfort to the godly against the fear of death. A godly man may be called a happy man before his death, because, whatever befalls him in life, he shall certainly be happy at death. You who are in Christ, who are true Christians, have hope in your end; and such a hope as may comfort you against all those fears which arise from the consideration of a dying hour. This I shall branch out, in answering some cases briefly:

CASE I. "The prospect of death," will some of the saints say, "is uneasy to me, not knowing what shall become of my family when I am gone." *Answer.* The righteous hath hope in his death, as to his family, as well as himself. Although you have little, for the present, to live upon; which has been the condition of many of God's chosen ones, 1 Cor. iv. 11, "We," namely, the apostles, "both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place;" and though you have nothing to leave them, as was the case of that son of the prophets, who feared the Lord, and yet died in debt which he was unable to pay, as his poor widow represents, 2 Kings iv. 2; yet you have a good Friend to leave them to; a covenant God, to whom you may confidently commit them, Jer. xlix. 11, "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." The world can bear witness of signal settlements made upon the children of providence; such as by their pious parents have been cast upon God's providential care. It has been often remarked, that they wanted neither provision nor education. Moses is an eminent instance of this. He, though he was an outcast infant, Exod. ii. 3, yet became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, Acts vii. 22, and became king in Jeshurun, Deut. xxxiii. 5. O! may we not be ashamed, that we do not confidently trust him with the concerns of our families, to whom, as our Saviour and Redeemer, we have committed our eternal interests?

CASE II. "Death will take us away from our dear friends; yea, we shall not see the Lord in the land of the living, in the blessed ordinances." *Answer.* It will take you to your best Friend, the Lord Christ. The friends you leave behind you, if they be indeed persons of worth, you will meet again, when they come to heaven:

and you will never be separated any more. If death take you away from the temple below, it will carry you to the temple above. It will indeed take you from the streams, but it will set you down by the fountain. If it put out your candle, it will carry you where there is no night, where there is an eternal day.

CASE III. "I have so much to do, in time of health, to satisfy myself as to my interest in Christ, about my being a real Christian, a regenerate man, that I judge it is almost impossible I should die comfortably." *Answer.* If it is thus with you, then double your diligence to make your calling and election sure. Endeavour to grow in knowledge, and walk closely with God: be diligent in self-examination; and pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit, whereby you may know the things freely given you of God. If you are enabled, by the power and Spirit of Christ, thus diligently to prosecute your spiritual concerns, though the time of your life be neither day nor night, yet at evening time it may be light. Many weak Christians indulge doubts and fears about their spiritual state, as if they placed at least some part of religion in this imprudent practice; but towards the end of life, they think and act in another manner. The traveller, who reckons that he has time to spare, may stand still debating with himself, whether this or the other be the right way: but when the sun begins to set, he is forced to lay aside his scruples, and resolutely to go forward in the road which he judges to be the right one, lest he lie all night in the open fields. Thus some Christians, who perplex themselves much, throughout the course of their lives, with jealous doubts and fears, content themselves when they come to die, with such evidences of the safety of their state, as they could not be satisfied with before; and by disputing less against themselves, and believing more, court the peace they formerly rejected, and gain it too.

CASE IV. "I am under a sad decay, in respect of my spiritual condition." *Answer.* Bodily consumptions may make death easy: but it is not so in spiritual decays. I will not say, that a godly man cannot be easy in such a case, when he dies, but I believe it is rarely so. Ordinarily, I suppose a cry comes to awaken sleeping virgins, before death comes. Samson is set to grind in the prison, till his locks grow again. David and Solomon fell under great spiritual decays; but before they died, they recovered their spiritual strength and vigour. However, bestir yourselves without delay, to strengthen the things that remain: your fright will be the less, for being awakened from spiritual sleep before death comes to your bedside: and you ought to lose no time, seeing you know not how soon death may seize you.

CASE V. "It is terrible to think of the other world, that world of spirits, which I have so little acquaintance with.—*Answer.* Thy best friend is Lord of that other world. Abraham's bosom is kindly even to those who never saw his face. After death, thy soul becomes capable of converse with the blessed inhabitants of that other world. The spirits of just men made perfect, were once such as thy spirit now is. And as for the angels, however superior their nature in the rank of beings, yet our nature is dignified above theirs, in the man Christ, and they are all of them thy Lord's servants, and so thy fellow-servants.

CASE VI. "The pangs of death are terrible." *Answer.* Yet not so terrible as pangs of conscience, caused by a piercing sense of guilt, and apprehensions of divine wrath, with which I suppose thee to be not altogether unacquainted. But who would not endure bodily sickness, that the soul may become sound, and every whit whole? Each pang of death will set sin a step nearer the door; and with the last breath, the body of sin will breathe out its last. The pains of death will not last long; and the Lord thy God will not leave, but support thee under them.

CASE VII. "But I am like to be cut off in the midst of my days." *Answer.* Do not complain, you will be the sooner at home: you thereby have the advantage of your fellow-labourers, who were at work before you in the vineyard. God, in the course of his providence, hides some of his saints early in the grave, that they may be taken away from the evil to come. An early removal out of this world, prevents sin and misery. They have no ground of complaint, who get the residue of their years in Immanuel's land. Surely thou shalt live as long as thou hast work cut out for thee by the great Master, to be done for him in this world: and when that is at an end, it is high time to be gone.

CASE VIII. "I am afraid of sudden death." *Answer.* Thou mayst indeed die so. Good Eli died suddenly, 1 Sam. iv. 18. Yet death found him watching, ver. 14: "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour the Lord doth come," Matt. xxiv. 42. Be not afraid, it is an inexpressible comfort, that death, come when it will, can never catch thee out of Christ; and therefore can never seize thee, as a jailor, to hurry thee into the prison of hell. Sudden death may hasten and facilitate thy passage to heaven, but can do thee no prejudice.

CASE IX. "I am afraid it will be my lot to die wanting the exercise of reason." *Answer.* I make no question but a child of God, a true Christian, may die in this case. But what harm? There is no hazard in it, as to his eternal state: a disease at death may divest him of his reason, but not of his religion. When a man, going a

long voyage, has put his affairs in order, and put all his goods aboard, he himself may be carried on board the ship sleeping: all is safe with him, although he knows not where he is, till he awake in the ship. Even so the godly man, who dies in this case, may die uncomfortably, but not unsafely.

CASE X. "I am naturally timorous, and the very thoughts of death are terrible to me." *Answer.* The less you think on death, the thoughts of it will be the more frightful: make it familiar to you by frequent meditations upon it, and you may thereby quiet your fears. Look at the white and bright side of the cloud: take faith's view of the city that hath foundations: so shall you see hope in your death. Be duly affected with the body of sin and death, the frequent interruptions of your communion with God, and with the glory which dwells on the other side of death: this will contribute much to remove slavish fear.

It is a pity that saints should be so fond of life as they often are: they ought to be always on good terms with death. When matters are duly considered, it might be well expected that every child of God, every regenerate man, should generously profess concerning this life, what Job did, chap. vii. 16, "I loath it, I would not live always." In order to gain their hearts to this desirable temper, I offer the following additional considerations.

1. Consider the sinfulness that attends life in this world. While you live here, you sin, and see others sinning. You breathe infectious air. You live in a pest-house. Is it at all strange to loathe such a life? 1. Your own plague sores are running on you. Doth not the sin of your nature make you groan daily? Are you not sensible, that though the cure is begun, it is far from being perfected? Has not the leprosy got into the wall of the house, which cannot be removed without pulling it down? Is not your nature so vitiated, that no less than the separation of the soul from the body can root out the disease? Have you not your sores without, as well as your sickness within? Do you not leave marks of your pollution on whatever passes through your hands? Are not all your actions tainted and blemished with defects and imperfections? Who, then, should be so much in love with life, but such whose sickness is their health, and who glory in their shame? 2. The loathsome sores of others are always before your eyes, go where you will. The follies and wickedness of men are every where conspicuous, and make but an unpleasant scene. This sinful world is but an unsightly company, a disagreeable crowd, in which the most loathsome are the most numerous. 3. Are not your own sores often breaking out again after healing? Frequent relapses may well cause us remit of

our fondness for this life. To be ever struggling, and anon falling into the mire again, makes weary work. Do you never wish for cold death, thereby effectually to cool the heat of these lusts, which so often take fire again, even after a flood of godly sorrow has gone over them? Do not you sometimes infect others, and others infect you? There is no society in the world, in which every member of it doth not sometimes lay a stumbling-block before the rest. The best carry about with them the tinder of a corrupt nature, which they cannot be rid of while they live, and which is liable to be kindled at all times, and in all places: yea, they are apt to inflame others, and become the occasions of sinning. Certainly these things are apt to imbitter this life to the saints.

2. Consider the misery and troubles that attend it. Rest is desirable, but it is not to be found on this side of the grave. Worldly troubles attend all men in this life. This world is a sea of trouble, where one wave rolls upon another. They, who fancy themselves beyond the reach of trouble, are mistaken: no state, no change of life, is exempted from it. The crowned head is surrounded by thorny cares. Honour many times paves the way to deep disgrace: riches, for the most part, are kept to the hurt of the owners. The fairest rose wants not prickles; and the heaviest cross is sometimes wrapt up in the greatest earthly comfort. Spiritual troubles attend the saints in this life. They are like travellers journeying in a cloudy night, in which the moon sometimes breaks out from under one cloud, but quickly hides her head again under another: no wonder they long to be at their journey's end. The sudden alterations which the best frame of spirit is liable to, the perplexing doubts, confounding fears, short-lived joys, and long-running sorrows, which have a certain affinity with the present life, must needs create in the saints a desire to be with Christ, which is best of all.

3. Consider the great imperfections attending this life. While the soul is lodged in this cottage of clay, the necessities of the body are many: it is always craving. The mud walls must be repaired and patched up daily, till the clay cottage fall down for good and all. Eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like, are, in themselves, but mean employments for a rational creature; and will be reputed such by the heaven-born soul. They are badges of imperfection, and, as such, unpleasant to the mind aspiring unto that life and immortality which is brought to light through the gospel; and would be very grievous, if this state of things were of long continuance. Does not the gracious soul often find itself yoked with the body, as with a companion in travel, unable to keep pace with it? When the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. When the soul would mount up-

ward, the body is a clog upon it, and a stone tied to the foot of a bird attempting to fly. The truth is, O believer, thy soul in this body is, at best, but like a diamond in a ring, where much of it is obscured; it is far sunk in the vile clay, till relieved by death.

I conclude this subject with a few directions, how to prepare for death, so that we may die comfortably. I speak not here of habitual preparation for death, which a true Christian, in virtue of his gracious state, never wants, from the time he is born again, and united to Christ; but of actual preparation, or readiness in respect of his particular case, frame, and disposition of mind and spirit; the want of which makes even a saint very unfit to die.

First, Let it be your constant care to keep a clean conscience, “a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man,” Acts xxiv. 16. Beware of a standing controversy between God and you, on the account of some iniquity regarded in the heart. When an honest man is about to leave his country, and not to return, he settles accounts with those he has had dealings with, and lays down methods for paying his debts in due time, lest he be reckoned a bankrupt, and attacked by an officer when he is going off. Guilt lying on the conscience, is a fountain of fears, and will readily sting severely, when death stares the criminal in the face. Hence it is, that many, even of God’s children, when dying, wish passionately, and desire eagerly, that they may live to do what they ought to have done before that time. Wherefore, walk closely with God; be diligent, strict, and exact in your course: beware of loose, careless, and irregular conversation; as you would not lay up for yourselves anguish and bitterness of spirit, in a dying hour. And because, through the infirmity cleaving to us, in our present state of imperfection, in many things we offend all, renew your repentance daily, and be ever washing in the Redeemer’s blood. As long as you are in the world, you will need to wash your feet, John xiii. 10, that is, to make application of the blood of Christ anew, for purging your consciences from the guilt of daily miscarriages. Let death find you at the fountain; and, if so, it will find you ready to answer at its call.

Secondly, Be always watchful, waiting for your change, “like unto men that wait for their Lord—that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately,” Luke xii. 36. Beware of “slumbering and sleeping, while the bridegroom tarryeth.” To be awakened out of spiritual slumber, by a surprising call to pass into another world, is a very frightful thing: but he who is daily waiting for the coming of his Lord, will comfortably receive the grim messenger, while he beholds him ushering in Him, of whom he may

confidently say, "This is my God, and I have waited for him." The way to die comfortably, is, to die daily. Be often essaying, as it were, to die. Bring yourselves familiarly acquainted with death, by making many visits to the grave, in serious meditations upon it. This was Job's practice, chap. xvii. 13, 14, "I have made my bed in the darkness." Go thou and do likewise; and when death comes, thou shalt have nothing to do but to lie down. "I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister." Do you say so too; and you will be the fitter to go home to their house. Be frequently reflecting upon your conduct, and considering what course of life you wish to be found in, when death arrests you; and act accordingly. When you do the duties of your station in life, or are employed in acts of worship, think with yourselves, that, it may be, this is the last opportunity; and therefore do it as if you were never to do more of that kind. When you lie down at night, compose your spirits, as if you were not to awake till the heavens be no more. And when you awake in the morning, consider that new day as your last; and live accordingly. Surely that night cometh, of which you will never see the morning; or that morning, of which you will never see the night. But which of your mornings or nights will be such, you know not.

Thirdly, Employ yourselves much in weaning your hearts from the world. The man who is making ready to go abroad, busies himself in taking leave of his friends. Let the mantle of earthly enjoyments hang loose about you; that it may be easily dropped, when death comes to carry you away into another world. Moderate your affections towards your lawful comforts of life: let not your hearts be too much taken with them. The traveller acts unwisely, who suffers himself to be so allured with the conveniences of the inn where he lodges, as to make his necessary departure from it grievous. Feed with fear, and walk through the world as pilgrims and strangers. The same as, when the corn is forsaking the ground, it is ready for the sickle; when the fruit is ripe, it falls off the tree easily; so, when a Christian's heart is truly weaned from the world, he is prepared for death, and it will be the more easy to him. A heart disengaged from the world is a heavenly one: we are ready for heaven when our heart is there before us, Matt. vi. 21.

Fourthly, Be diligent in gathering and laying up evidences of your title to heaven, for your support and comfort at the hour of death. The neglect hereof mars the joy and consolation which some Christians might otherwise have at their death. Wherefore, examine yourselves frequently as to your spiritual state; that evidences which lie hid and unobserved, may be brought to light and

taken notice of. And if you would manage this work successfully, make solemn, serious work of it. Set apart some time for it. And, after earnest prayer to God, through Jesus Christ, for the enlightening influences of his Holy Spirit, whereby you are enabled to understand his own word, and to discern his own work in your souls; examine yourselves before the tribunal of your own consciences, that you may judge yourselves, in this weighty matter.

And, in the first place, let the marks of a regenerate state be fixed from the Lord's word: have recourse to some particular text for that purpose; such as Prov. viii. 17, "I love them that love me." Compare Luke xiv. 26, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Psalm exix. 6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Psalm xviii. 23, "I was also upright before him; and I kept myself from mine iniquity." Compare Rom. vii. 22, 23, "For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." 1 John iii. 3, "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Matt. v. 3, "Blessed are the pure in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Phil. iii. 3, "For we are the circumcision, which worship," or serve "God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." The sum of the evidence arising from these texts, lies here: a real Christian is one who loves God for himself, as well as for his benefits; and that with a supreme love, above all persons, and all things; he has an awful and impartial regard to God's commands; he opposes and wrestles against that sin, which of all others most easily besets him: he approves and loves the holy law, even in that very point wherein it strikes against his own beloved lust; his hope of heaven engages him to the study of universal holiness; in which he aims at perfection, though he cannot reach it in this life; he serves the Lord, not only in acts of worship, but in the whole of his conversation, and as to both, is spiritual in the principle, motives, aims, and ends of his service; yet he sees nothing in himself to trust to, before the Lord; Christ and his fulness are the stay of his soul; his confidence is cut off from all that is not Christ, or in Christ, in point of justification or acceptance with God, and in point of sanctification too. Every one, in whom these characters are found, has a title to heaven, according to the word. It is convenient and profitable to mark such texts, for this special use, as they occur, while you read the Scriptures, or hear sermons. The marks of a regenerate state thus fixed, in the next place impartially

search and try your own hearts thereby, as in the sight of God, with dependence on him for spiritual discernment, that you may know whether they be in you or not. When you find them, form the conclusion deliberately and distinctly; namely, that therefore you are regenerated, and have a title to heaven." Thus you may gather evidences. But be sure to have recourse to God in Christ, by earnest prayer, for the testimony of the Spirit, whose office it is to "bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," Rom. viii. 16. Moreover, carefully observe the course and method of providence towards you; and likewise, how your soul is affected under the same, in the various steps thereof: compare both with Scripture doctrines, promises, threatenings, and examples: so shall you perceive if the Lord deals with you as he uses to do unto those that love his name, and if you are going forth by the footsteps of the flock. This may afford you comfortable evidence. Walk tenderly and circumspectly, and the Lord will manifest himself to you, according to his promise, John xiv. 21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." But it is in vain to think of successful self-examination, if you be loose and irregular in your conversation.

Lastly, Despatch the work of your day and generation with speed and diligence. "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep" Acts xiii. 36. God has allotted us certain pieces of work of this kind, which ought to be despatched before the time of working be over, Eccl. ix. 10, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Gal. vi. 10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." If a passenger, after he is got on shipboard, and the ship is getting under sail, remember that he has omitted to despatch a piece of necessary business when he was ashore, it must needs be uneasy to him: even so, reflection in a dying hour upon neglected seasons, and lost opportunities, cannot fail to disquiet a Christian. Wherefore, whatever is incumbent upon thee to do for God's honour, and the good of others, either as the duty of thy station, or by special opportunity put into thy hand, perform it seasonably, if thou wouldst die comfortably.