

whose hearts were breaking within them for their sins. I saw brinish tears trickling down from some eyes, proceeding from a spring of godly sorrow within, newly given them by the Spirit. How did they look and seem to long after thy salvation! How greedily did they hearken, even like the condemned malefactor, when he hath first tidings of a pardon! I hope, they are gone home to entreat that of thee which thou hast by me been entreating of them to accept of. O Lord, grant them their desires! Be reconciled to that drunkard and unclean wretch! Forgive the iniquities of that swearer, sabbath-breaker, and profane sinner!"

What do you say, sinners? Will you send me back to my Master saddened or rejoiced? Accept of my message, and it will be the joy of my heart; yea, it will be the joy of angels in heaven; and however it will cost you some grief and tears in your repentance of sin at the first, yet if you so seek after this blessedness of forgiveness as to obtain it, the issue will be joy to yourselves; you will have the beginnings of joy here, and in the other world your joys will be full, ineffable, and eternal. Methinks some of you seem almost persuaded. O that you were quite persuaded, without further delay, to put in practice the directions given for the obtaining the blessedness of forgiveness!

SERMON XXX.

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HOW WE MAY OVERCOME INORDINATE LOVE OF LIFE AND FEAR
OF DEATH.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.—Acts xx. 24.

THE context tells us, that the apostle was now at Miletus; (verse 17;) and from hence he sends to Ephesus, and calls for the elders of the church. Now these elders were not Timothy and Trophimus; for they were in his company already, and had been with him in his journey hither; (verse 4;) but rather those twelve men on whom he laid his hands, and bestowed the Holy Ghost, in order to their ministry at Ephesus, (Acts xix. 1—7,) and the rest whom Timothy had ordained whilst he was there.

From verse 18 of this chapter, we have the apostle's farewell sermon; wherein he clears himself, by close and smart addresses to their consciences and experiences, as to all charges and surmises of ministerial miscarriages among them, (verses 18, 27,) and works them all within the conscience of their ministerial charge and trust from God, to imitate

his ministerial faithfulness, by urging such significant and cogent arguments as were apt and proper to startle and engage them to and in their work. And these arguments are drawn from the present and instantly succeeding circumstances and concernments of the church of God. They were in danger of wolves breaking in upon them, and seducers arising from amongst them; they were the church of God, the price of his blood, committed to the care and guidance of these ministers to whom the apostle spake; and therefore the interest and worth of souls, and their relation to them, and all those sad and dangerous exercises, underminings, and obstructions, which they were sure to meet with in their pastoral work, did call aloud upon them for all possible circumspection, activity, and resolution, in and for their work; of all which, the apostle was an exemplary and awakening instance and example.

My text is the generous heroism of an awakened and prepared heart, occasioned by the tidings that were brought him by the Spirit, who told him there, that bonds and afflictions did abide him in every city. (Verse 23.) Here you may see those sinews cut of hopes and fears, which might obstruct his faith, diligence, and perseverance; he is mortified to all that love of life and fear of death which possibly might control his better prospect, hopes, and work. In the words we have the apostle concerned in reference to a double state:—

1. *As to this mortal life.*—It is implied in the text, and expressed in the context, that it is a theatre of smart contentions and miseries, and that he was concerned in the agonistical exercises thereof.

2. *As to the other life.*—He had the prospect of transcendent joys, exhibited to his views and hopes as the determined and proposed reward of his well-managed exercises; the influences and impressions whereof did strangely invigorate and fix his resolutions to maintain such a masculine frame of spirit as should entertain and answer all the challenges of danger, difficulties, and temptations, and to preserve that necessary liberty from, and useful indifference to, the hopes and love of life, and fears of death and danger, which might secure the spirit and prowess of a resolved and successful valour. Ουδενος λογον ποιουμαι, "I make no reckoning of any thing;" and he grows regardless of his life, and hath mortified the vigour of all the arguments and inducements that can be fetched therefrom. For the utmost reach of rage and villany is to effect no more, and can extend no farther, than the loss of life; (Matt. x. 28;) and all those comforts which are liable to the casualties and sequestrations of transient time, and cannot run parallel with our capacious souls beyond the limits of a dying breath, cannot be valued beyond the value of their end; and therefore he that conquers and subdues the estimation of his life, hath so far overcome all the disturbing and ensnaring influences of hopes and fears relating to it, and derived from it.

Well, we have here an instance and example, in this great and gracious apostle, of a resolved and proficient Christian; yea, and a visible practical demonstration of what blood and spirits are in the veins of Christianity, and are bred there, and what an energy and force there is in one right believing look and glance at things to come. (2 Cor. iv. 16—18; Heb. xii. 2.)

And if it be objected, that, "as the apostle's course was ministerial, so

were his joys which fixed his eye; and therefore in neither can he be proposed to others as their inimitable pattern or exact encouragement, seeing all are not ministers, neither can all expect his exercises, furniture, encouragements, and attainments; and so that we pluck not the fruit from the right tree:”

I answer, This doth not prevent his being our pattern, argument, and encouragement, if but these few things be seriously considered:—

1. *The apostle had a double course to run.*—He had the trust and business of a Christian, as well as of a minister, to discharge. He had a God to please, a soul to save, a hell to escape, a heaven to reach, a heart to cleanse, and sins to mortify, unruly passions and impetuous affections to be curbed and managed by their proper discipline, as well as others. He was a man subject to like passions with ourselves; he dwelt in flesh, and was opposed by the devil, as well as others; he had corruptions to be mortified and pardoned, and loved his life and what might make it comfortable, saving where inordinacies were to be corrected and subdued, because of inconsistency with better work and joys. Yea, he had such forcible inclinations to desire and beg some intermissions of, and respite from, his tedious exercises, as forced him to repair to prayer and arguments to get support, so that he might not *oneri succumbere*, [“fall beneath his burden;”] and thus I understand that “thorn in the flesh,” 2 Cor. xii. 7—10. And so the sense seems facile, and it amounts to this: the apostle had been labouring in the fire for God and for the interest of Christianity, and managed all his exercises in the face of danger; and, growing aged, he was tempted to desire of God, that he might spend the residue of his declining age in liberty and quietness: but when the flesh, so weather-beaten by the storms, grew so desirous of some respite from the severity of travel, chains, and labours, the messenger Satan comes again, threatening and acquainting him with designed and determined repetitions of former buffetings, and the renewals of reproaches, necessities, persecutions, &c., for Christ’s sake; which, when he understood and apprehended that Christ and his gospel were so concerned in them, he thought, and took them as, the matter of his glory, in that they might be serviceable to the interest of Christ, and great occasions of some special illustrations of the remarkable power and grace of Christ: but this, *pace aliorum*, [“with deference to others”]. The truth is, sirs, he had such exercises and temptations as that, had not the expectations and persuasions of these joys above, which succeeded the course well finished, interposed to fortify and compose his spirit, this world had never been conquered nor so easily forsaken and disclaimed by him, nor death so tamely entertained, nor hopes and fears so managed and subordinated, as they were. (1 Cor. xv. 19, 31, 32, 58.) Now thus far he stands on equal grounds with other Christians, and hath the same exercises, arguments, encouragements, interest, and obligations, that every Christian hath; and if it was possible for him to finish his course under the powerful influences of this prospect and design, it is as possible for us; for no impossibility, whilst such, can be our duty.

2. *His ministerial work and trust was, as to its full discharge, a necessary and essential part of his saving Christianity.*—No minister of Jesus Christ by office can be a sound and faithful Christian, that is unfaithful

in his ministry: it is in so doing that he must save himself as well as those that hear him. (1 Tim. iv. 15, 16.)

3. *Our accommodations being made answerable to trust and work, our faithful management thereof is of equal necessity in much or little.*—For we must be answerable to relations, trust, and places, and other circumstances, as God hath placed us in and under them; for we must be judged and are to act accordingly to what we have received. No man is commanded and encouraged faithfully to discharge his ministry, but upon some supposition that the ministry is his lawful calling; and where that is, unfaithfulness will damn him that is guilty of it; for it is his place of service, even as faithful service of all servants in general is their duty; yet places of service, and the matter and measure of their service, may be different, according to the master's pleasure and affairs.

4. *The close connexion of his whole course and comforts clears the case.*—For,

(1.) It is not imaginable that any man can be a faithful minister, whose heart is alienated from the true powerful principles, sentiments, and impressions of Christianity. For how can any man be separated cordially to this most costly, painful calling, and regularly bear the heat and burden of his place and day, who hath not well concocted the substance, evidence, and importance of this great mystery of salvation, (which is the indispensable and adequate exercise of his function,) into deep persuasions, warm affections, and most unconquerable resolutions? Who can unweariedly pursue the souls of others with close and pressing importunities to prize and prosecute that element and state of joys and holiness, which is not credited, relished, and valued by himself? And further,

(2.) Were it supposed also that the regular faithfulness of a minister was separable from the spirit and faithfulness of a Christian either in themselves, or in the subject, yet how can we imagine such operative, influential apprehensions and true relishes of the joy reported and proposed, as shall prevail against all oppositions and discouragements and competitions from the frowns and flatteries, bribes and strokes of earth and hell, to animate a minister's breast, so as to make him thorough in all the enterprises and employments of his function; whilst his own work and interest, as a Christian, is neglected, and those influences of this joy, entailed upon a course well finished, though they be powerful to make him faithful in the one, shall yet be found too languid to issue in the same diligence and success as to the other? And,

(3.) We must conclude, that this eagle-eyed apostle saw and reckoned on it, that a Christian minister and an apostle must be a thorough Christian and something, yea, much, more; or else he could not possibly conclude, his course would bring him to his joys. (1 Cor. ix. 24—27.) Therefore the sense and errand of the text amounts to this:—

DOCTRINE.

That the comforts of a well-completed course will make all discerning serious Christians to be above the regard of life, or fear of all afflictions, bonds, or death, to compass them. (Rom. viii. 18; Phil. i. 20—23.)—The very instance, argument, and errand of my text,

and doctrine grounded thereupon, imply and include several things ; as that,

1. *There is a state of future joys and retributions.*—For we have no reason to imagine that our apostle was so blind as to be deceived himself, nor so wicked as to deceive others. No man that knows and credits the existence of a Deity, but he must take him to be the strongest, wisest, and the best of beings, and so that he must needs be omnipotent, omniscient, and all-sufficient ; and if so, then it is beyond all controversy that Omnipotence can at such a rate address itself to creatures as to make them happy or miserable, as it best becomes itself. He that ordained and framed this state cannot be thought to have acted to the utmost of his strength ; for what can stint Omnipotence ? And doth it suit the wisdom of God, to make a creature capable of an everlasting state and of the hopes and prospect of it, and to implant in it an expectation of it, and rule him by those hopes and fears which do and must derive their influences from an eternal state ; and after all to make it evident, that man was only made to be imposed on, or ruled and managed by mistakes and mere fallacious arguments and errors ? Or hath God afforded us the least intimation of his mind, in nature, providence, or scriptures, that *this* is the way of conciliating that love and honour from his subjects, or of implanting and maintaining those necessary fears in man, which government requires for the attainments of its ends,—to make them live in expectation of what is no ways fit to reach its ends, because it is either false or mean ? And therefore I need not go about to prove what here is granted and improved, and what so many incomparably better pens have proved before me.

2. *This state hath sufficient force as to argument and motive to press us to do and suffer all that we can meet with or be called to in our whole Christian course.*—All those severe perplexities which our religion calls us to, as to obedience in sufferings and duty, are not beyond the compensations of these approaching, expected joys ; and if they obstruct the influences, and eclipse the light and glory, of what is proposed and promised as our great argument and encouragement, it is utterly and only our own fault that makes what is sufficient to be ineffectual.

3. *The comforts of a course well finished cannot be had without the regular management and finishing of our course.*—And this can never be without resolution and preparation of the heart, by which it must be borne and kept above immoderate love to life and fear of sufferings and death. Faith is the spirit of religion ; the spirit of faith is hope ; and the spirit of hope is love : and these are all the most successful preparations of the heart. Had faith its liberty, power, and prospect in the heart of all professors, it would make them too sagacious and concerned to be imposed-on by plausible delusions and bold pretences, in all these sublunary trifles, to that substantial, solid satisfaction and excellency, which are expected by ductile mortals to be experienced therein, or hoped for therefrom. Did we but look beyond the grave and wilderness, and search and see that land of promise which is beyond them, we might be entertained and allured with such clusters from it, as would afford us more grateful relishes and spirits than all the feculent extractions of these transient comforts could amount to. All our delights and pleasures in,

and great solitudes about, these lower things would be effectually mortified and conquered. (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.) What breasts of consolation are "evidence and substance." (Heb. xi. 1.) Sense and presence do strangely invigorate and strengthen the dangerous influences of this world's comforts and concernments in their addresses to the heart of man; (2 Tim. iv. 10;) and because the gain and comforts of true religion are invisible and distant, therefore their certainty and transcendent excellency must be concocted into deep and sound persuasions, and be digested into answerable affections, resolutions, and pursuit; and all those arguments and motives which must prevail upon us to run and finish the course and race which is set before us, must be derived from, and are to be reduced to, this deep persuasion of these certain and transcendent comforts. Nor is it possible that religion should live or thrive but in the power of, and true proportion to, our apprehensions and persuasions of those fundamental truths and principles of God's existence and rewarding excellency. (Heb. xi. 6.)

Man must be ruled as God hath made him; and as fear and love are the commanding passions and affections of every subject capable of moral government, so something there must be reported and determined, fit for the exercise and discipline thereof; and if transcendency in what must influence both be not credible and demonstrable, their influences must of necessity prove too languid to attain their end. Equality spoils choice, as far as it extends; and if the comforts of another state do not exceed what we can meet with here, sure powerful godliness would lose its life and breasts together; nor could it be existent in its practice without its arguments and motives. And, with submission to better judgments, I think, that impossibility of pleasing God without faith, spoken of Heb. xi. 6, results, not only from God's arbitrary ordination, but from the very frame and habitude and fitness of means and ends themselves; and the sense is this,—as I have elsewhere lately and largely showed on the fore-mentioned place, though not in print, nor fit to be so,—that unless I be persuaded that God's majesty deserves, and that he can and will reward us for, the cost and exercises of godliness to infinite advantage, no man could be prevailed on to be religious. The very difficulties, burdens, and temptations of religion, under the present circumstances of revolted man, would press too sore upon the frailty and concernments of flesh and blood, to suffer him to obtain of himself to submit to the discipline and severities of true and powerful godliness. Nor can I see, if this be once denied, where the apostle's argument prevails and pinches, 1 Cor. xv. 19, 29, 32, 58. Adam in innocency was influenced by arguments, and I do not see that the economy of grace destroys the frame of nature, but rather comes in by way of medicinal ordination to repair it, that so religious government may revive again, by such energetical arguments and influences as are proper to the case. (Psalm cxxx. 4.) Nor did the Son of God and Saviour of the world appear for the supplanting of the Father as to his throne and interest, but rather acted all along in a professed state and way of delegation and ordinate substitution to this end,—that government might flourish, and poor, apostate man might be encouraged to seek and serve and please his God again; and were this well considered, I think that all our censorious, malignant flames would die,

which have no other fuel but such confidences as are grounded on and fomented by our rash mistakes; and we might peaceably *credere de verbis*, but not *de jure veritatis*. And I confess I cannot see how the joys of godliness can have the *vim motivam* ["the moving force"] of pressing arguments to quicken us to what activity, faithfulness, and resolution, and perseverance, are enjoined us and expected from us, if persevering godliness, which is the finishing of our course with joy, be not the great condition of our crown and triumph; and therefore it is ignorance and inconsiderateness that strengthens our infidelity and consequent reluctances to run the hazards of religion, and entertain the work and cost of this our Christian course, to reach its compensations. One piercing glance and sober look within the veil would strangely help us unto a right estimate of things, and make our quick reflections upon our foolish former choice and trifling carriages to minister to our present grief and shame. It is but a dotage to imagine that any thing short of holiness and heaven, or inconsistent with our present work, can be the true enrichment or content of souls. What man can keep his heart below his work, that knows and credits the blessed resolutions wherewith the all-sufficient God is fixed to recompense all self-denying, regular, and resolved racers? (See 1 John iii. 3.) Who can advance that life into a competition with the present work and will of God, which must be swallowed up of a surpassing immortality, when he hath regularly finished his course? So that now the way is clear to lead us to answer these

QUERIES.

QUERY 1. *What is this finishing our course with joy, which is to influence us into this regardlessness of life and death and every thing, in order thereunto?*

ANSWER 1. "Joy" is the privilege and satisfaction of the soul at rest in the possession and embraces of its both adequate and desired end and object; which is the sum of what is intended by the expression in the text.

(1.) I call it a *privilege*, as it importeth some considerable excellency in the object or gift,—and thus it is God in Christ, when he becomes the portion of once apostate man, though now recovered by relative and real grace, when he appears in the perfection of his image, favour, and presence, and that reciprocal intimacy which is consequent thereupon,—and as it is a favour peculiar to some, by way of discrimination and difference from others; * for it is the joy of God dispensed only to the godly. And I call it, (2.) *Satisfaction*, as importing suitability to the subject on whom it is bestowed on all accounts, and as such apprehended and resented by it. And, (3.) I appropriate it to *the soul*, as being first and most concerned in it, and most capable of it; for, till the resurrection, the soul alone enjoys it. Before the dissolution of the body, the soul is only capable of the prospect and improvement of it, and therefore most concerned and engaged about it; and after the resurrection of the

* *Privilegium est principis beneficium contra jus commune indultum; non enim est privilegium nisi aliquid indulgeat speciale*, say the Civilians. "A privilege" is a favour indulgently conferred by a prince contrary to the common course of law; for there can be no privilege, except there be some special indulgence conceded."—EDIT.

person and his introduction into glory, the soul is made the most immediate recipient of it; and the comforts and perfection of the body are resultant from the soul's satisfaction and delights, and truly subordinate thereunto, as both are subordinate unto God, not to his joys, but will and honour. And, (4.) I fixed it on the soul *at rest*, as the result of all its aims and motions; for it is both the recompence and cessation of all its painful exercises and pursuits. (5.) I make the matter of this joy to be the soul's *adequate end and object*, which none but God can be; since it is apparent that neither heaven nor earth have any beside God to make and be a portion for the soul. (Psalm lxxiii. 25.) And then, (6.) I lay the formality of this joy in the *possession and embraces* of this end and object, both as adequate and desired; for as it is *adequate*, it speaks no want nor deficiency in the object; and as it is *desired*, so it speaks the preparation of the subject; and as it is embraced and possessed, so it speaks no cost and labours lost, nor expectations frustrated. And now indeed the soul is most ravished, when all its motions are directed to their end and terminated there with unconceivable satisfaction; when God is all in all, and the poor painful Christian is, through tedious oppositions, difficulties, and travels, safely conducted to its most proper portion, choice, and joy.

2. By "course," is meant *the time of life in reference to our stated work and difficulties*.—The metaphor is fetched from that Olympic exercise which is called *ὄπλιτου δρομος*, in which the racers ran in armour, because of sharp assaults and oppositions all the way. *In armis cursorum fuere, galea, quam capite, ocreæ, quas tibiis, aspis sive clypeus, quem manibus ferrent, qui eo certamine contenderent.** Hence we have something in our Christian panoply answerable hereunto; as, "the helmet of salvation;" (Eph. vi. 17;) "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," answering to the *ocrea*; (verse 15;) and "the shield of faith." (Verse 16.) And therefore, after the apostle had showed the Ephesians their race and course of duties which they had to run in, (Eph. vi. 1—9,) he acquainteth them also what oppositions they might expect, and what enemies they had to grapple with, and what a panoply or armour they must put on and use, that so their course might be successful. (Eph. vi. 10—18.)

3. By finishing the course "with joy" is meant, *to have it managed and completed so as that the comforts, prize, and glory of it might be theirs who run to discharge trust and duty with all activity, prudence, constancy, and delight*:—To face and conquer difficulties with such masculine courage and success as best becomes the spirit, hopes, and furniture of a Christian; to make our matchless estimation of approaching glory remarkable in all our strokes and steps. No man is crowned that strives not lawfully: (2 Tim. ii. 5:) our motions must be persevering, swift, and even, and herein answerable to the great ends of God Christ, in calling us to our trust and care; and all our warrantable ends in our voluntary undertaking to be combatants and racers, to hold integrity so fast, to prize the crown so much, to watch over hearts so strictly, and

* PETRI FABRI *Agonistica*, lib. ii. cap. 23, p. 186. "Among the arms of the racers who strove in combat, were the following: *the helmet*, which guarded the head; *the greaves*, which defended the legs; and *the shield, or buckler*, which they bore in their hands."—EDIT.

discipline the whole man so exactly, as that the gospel may not be ashamed to own us, nor Christ ashamed of us. Our trust or talents must not be embezzled, nor managed with slightness nor falsehood, nor any way abused by us, lest those comforts should be lost that are before us as the determined recompence of faithful racers; for God resolves to render to every man as his work shall be. (Rom. ii. 6, 10; 2 Cor. v. 10; Jer. xvii. 10.) We know the apostle's care and counsel: (1 Cor. ix. 24—27; Phil. ii. 12:) he knew, all running would not serve the turn; and he was apprehensive of all those dangers, snares, and oppositions which called for universal watchfulness, resolution, care, and courage; and knew, the crown of life could never fit the sluggard's or coward's temples. Nor will God prejudice the interest of religion, nor restrain and mortify all those awakening arguments which are to be derived from this principle and topic, namely, that only faithful racers must be crowned with life and joys.

QUERY II. *How far must love to life be conquered and subdued, and every thing be disregarded, for the right finishing of our course with joy?*

ANSWER 1. *These things must be distinguished, in order to the understanding of the nature and measure of this duty and attainment:—*

(1.) It is one thing, what may be loved and valued simply and abstractedly, as only considered in itself; and it is another thing, what may be loved and valued, as compared with something else. And,

(2.) It is one thing, what degree of value of love and care may suit the excellency and importance of the object; and another thing, what may exceed it.

(3.) It is one thing, how I may love a thing, when consistent with and conducing to our best concernment; and it is another thing, how I may love what is withdrawn from and set against it. And,

(4.) It is one thing, to have affections to be snares and hinderances; and another thing, to have them helps and furtherances to something better. And,

(5.) A moderate and subordinate love is one thing, and a supreme and co-ordinate love is another. And,

(6.) It is one thing, to love with true submission to God's commanding and disposing will; and another thing, to love to the prejudice of God's prerogative and providence, so as to murmur and quarrel with the great Jehovah for what he doeth.

2. *And upon these distinctions may we ground these following propositions and conclusions.*

(1.) *Life and the comforts of it are eligible and desirable, as they are considered in themselves.*—And in this sense God hath not forbidden the loving of them. They come from God, as emanations and expressions of his goodness: they are “good and perfect gifts,” and lovely in their kind and places. For, had not life been lovely, it could have been no punishment to die;—for all punishment is *malum physicum propter malum morale*; [“a physical evil on account of a moral ill;”] and when it is laid in a privation, the want cannot be evil, if the thing we are deprived of be not good and lovely;—nor could the promise of long life have been a quickening argument to holiness and duty, (as it is, 1 Peter iii. 10, 11; Exod. xx. 12,) had we not loved it; nor would God have

promised to us as a mercy, what is not good and lovely. Adam in innocence had the love of life implanted in him; and he did ill, in that he feared the loss of life too little to make him regularly careful to preserve it: and it had been no argument of awful cogency that he should die upon transgression, had not the love of life been deeply rooted and implanted in him; for who can rationally fear the loss of what he cares not for? It is plain that Adam's love to life was the result of God's creation, and therefore good; for it was in him in his innocence: and the argument was framed to prevent transgression, as something possible, but not yet existent; and God was never angry with him, till he through sin had forfeited his life; and this proved his love to life to be every way consistent with a state of innocence. And for all the comforts of life, they are desirable in themselves and lovely; as, relation, (Eph. v. 25,) liberty, (1 Cor. vii. 21,) and birth-privileges, (Acts xxii. 28,) credit, (Prov. xxii. 1,) outward supplies, (Prov. xxx. 8,) yea, plenty of them. (Eccles. vii. 11; x. 10.) And it is impossible and inhuman for any man simply to desire and attempt his own personal misery and destruction; yea, it is his sin to do it. (See Acts xxvi. 29.) Neither doth grace itself mortify or correct our love to life and all its comforts, as simply considered in themselves; for if it did, it could neither be the trial nor the commendation of a gracious, sober Christian to part with life and comforts, since it would only be demanding from him what he cared not for. (Gen. xxii. 1, 2, 12.)

(2.) *Life and the comforts of it have their subserviency to better things.*—And thus it is more our duty not to disregard them. Life makes us capable of serving God, and of the enjoyment of him. Our spiritual and eternal life supposes natural life. And further, it is our state of usefulness and trial: we cannot actually serve God any further, or our generation longer, than we have our lives and beings here. The usefulness and comforts of relations are reciprocal: how can I see or serve God with what I have not? They are my helps, and trust, and trials. Relations may be mutually won and ripened for eternal glory by each other's conversation. (1 Peter iii. 1.) Credit is valuable, because of usefulness to others, and our own necessary confidences and encouragements. (1 Tim. iii. 7.) Places of honour and important trust must not be disregarded: Joseph, Mordecai, and Daniel were greatly serviceable through their great interest and estimation in their respective princes' courts. What useful instruments have holy kings and princes been for God upon their thrones! Plenty and fulness are desirable: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts xx. 35.) Innocence and independence steel the countenance. It is comfortable to be the poor man's staff, and the rich man's pattern. The like I may say of liberty, gifts, parts, &c. And when God throws these things upon us, to make us useful, it would be our misery, shame, and sin, to cast them from us with contempt; and as both life and comforts stand in relation to usefulness and glory, grace rather heightens than abates esteem and value of them, and rather quickens and engages thankfulness and affections for and to them, than sets the heart against them thus considered.

(3.) *It is the apostasy of our state and hearts from God, that sets*

our lives and comforts in their capacity of being snares to us.—Had it not been for sin, God and our lives and comforts had not been reduced to such an inconsistency as now they are ; nor had our natural lives and comforts been our snares, had not their end and ours been changed ; they had never been so insignificant as to our safety and delight, had we not torn them from that their figure,—God himself, to whom their true subordinate relation gave them their whole worth and value. Our snares and surfeits come from our own irregular appetites : (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10 ; Luke xxi. 34 :) life and its consolations are God's and good ; (James i. 17 ;) the lust is ours. (1 John ii. 16.)

(4.) *Life and all things must be disregarded, as they are separate from God, and set against him.*—As they are separated from God, so they must be neglected ; and as they are set against God, so they must be opposed. Our lives must never be a course of lusts ; (Rom. xiii. 13 ;) nor must their comforts and continuance be entertained or indulged as God's opponents or cor-rivals ; nor be preserved, possessed, or prosecuted, to the prejudice of better things, even holy works and joy. While they and better things may keep together, the elder must serve the younger : our present life and comforts must minister to the great concerns of another better state ; and when religion or our lives must go, we must disclaim the latter, to secure the former. Nothing must bound or circumvent religion ; nor must it be subjected to the trifling ends and dotages of a transient life. Our lives and comforts are dispensed to us for usefulness, not satisfaction. We must secure obedience and submission to God's preceptive and disposing will, and a true, constant, practical relation and subserviency unto God's glory, and our own eternal welfare, and the full credit of religion, and its advancement in ourselves and others ; and whereinsoever the love of life threatens or makes toward an equality with God and life-to-come concerns, or makes us change our Lord, to serve our lusts, or grow reluctant to that great seal and testimony which we owe to the full interest and claims of Christianity, or makes us more remiss, sluggish, and fearful in our Christian course of holy, painful, and resolved exercises, than our hopes and circumstances can admit of,—therein must life be wholly disregarded.

QUERY III. *Whence is it evident that this design and prospect will have such powerful influences upon concerned, serious Christians, as to make this regardlessness of life and every thing to be a possible attainment ?*

1. *From personal instances.*—All that are gone to heaven have reached this frame. O what a cloud of witnesses is afforded us, Heb. xi. 2—39 ; x. 32 ! The apostle here himself stands like a monument, with this superscription, “ It is possible to be a conqueror of life and death.” (2 Tim. iv. 6—8 ; Acts xxi. 13 ; Phil. i. 20—23.) Nor doth he want his seconds ; as, Barnabas, (Acts xv. 26,) Epaphroditus, (Phil. ii. 30,) Daniel, also, and the three children, long before ; (Dan. iii. 16—18 ; vi. 13—22 ;) and those in Rev. xii. 11, and many others.

2. *From scriptural injunctions and comminations.* (Luke xiv. 26 ; 1 Peter iv. 12—16.)—It is no ways probable that such weighty accents of command, concernedness, and importunity, and caution, should be

laid upon impossibilities; or that God should urge and threaten man, and press upon him both with promises and menaces, and be at such expense of cost and patience, grace and bounty, and digest his name and treasures into such cogent arguments, and make both heaven and earth, yea, hell and conscience, minister to this design of ripening and advancing him to such a pitch of exaltation above all prejudicial love of life and fear of death; if this were foreign to his own capacity, and therefore unattainable: for this would be the way even to distract the harmony of God's whole name with such unaccountable and impossible discords as that account which God hath given us thereof would not admit of; nor is it consonant to that analogy which his image on the new creature expressly beareth unto himself.

3. *From the advantages which the design and prospect of the text afford us.*—We have something nobler to attempt, than to preserve and cherish that life and interest which is separate from God and set against him; and something better to expect and promise to ourselves, than such contracted, transient comforts as death can strip us of; namely, the finishing of an honourable course that is set before us, and reaching of those matchless consolations which are tendered to us, and affixed to the end and termination of that costly, painful race which we have to run. And such things have an exact sufficiency in their kind, as arguments and motives to our hopes, and diligence, and resolution, to make us “more than conquerors” both of and in life and death. (Rev. ii. 10; Rom. viii. 18; 2 Tim. i. 8, 12; ii. 12; Acts xxiv. 14—16; Rom. viii. 32—39.)

4. *From the assistance which God is ready to afford us.* (1 Cor. x. 13; 2 Cor. i. 3—5; xii. 7—10; John xiv. 18; Matt. xxviii. 20; Jer. i. 8.)—Our winter-work hath suitable furniture and provisions: (James i. 2—6 :) we shall have counsels, comforts, quickenings, and suitable relishes, views, and strength, to all our work and exercises.

QUERY IV. And the case in hand. *What must we therefore do to, and how must we, overcome the inordinate love of life and fear of death?*

For no man can love or dare to die, that loves this life inordinately, and values it too dear to let it go, or that prevalingly doubt or fears, or undervalues a better life hereafter. Now, in this instance in my text, bonds and afflictions seemed to minister to death; and death is very terrible to nature, as its dissolution, and terrible to interested souls in the concernments of this life, as ending all the pleasures, profits, honours, that sense and fancy can be courted with. It is terrible to those that are not satisfied of another state, because it ends what they were sure of the existence of, and had the greatest desires of and pleasures in; and because it ushers them thither where their doubt will be resolved, and that, for aught they know, (and they have great jealousies and suspicions of it in sober thoughts and cool blood,) to their eternal sorrow, cost, and shame. It is terrible to those that never valued the joys and hopes and work of godliness, and cannot then expect the recompences of that godliness which they declined and hated: and it is terrible to those that are uncertain as to their spiritual state, dark in their evidences, low in their hopes, and disturbed with melancholic or other fears about their interest in God and Christ, and everlasting welfare

of their immortal souls. So that where all or any of these things prevail, men dread to leave this life, and to be transmitted to another state by death, be it natural or violent; and the same reasons, helps, and motives that may be useful for the one, may be also useful for the other. And therefore, before the case can be resolved, something must be premised to prepare the way; and that is this; namely, *The argument of the text is a successful proper antidote against a double evil, and it is the ground and measure of a necessary duty.*

1. The evils are the inordinate love of life, and the fear of bonds, afflictions, death.

2. The argument imports, (1.) *A prospect of something better than what we are called to mortify, feel, or quit.*—And that is joy resulting from a course well finished: and a state, if I may call it so, of mere non-existence cannot deserve or claim the name of joy. (1 Cor. xv. 17, 29—32.) And nothing but this prospect could necessitate his sufferings, or his disregard of life; nor could this do it, had he not sure foundations for his confidence. (Heb. xi. 6; Titus i. 2; 2 Tim. i. 10; 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.) And therefore the prospect mortifies the inordinate fear of death. Now, (2.) The argument imports *a project*, too; and that is this; namely, *so to manage and complete the course as to secure the joy.*—Which cannot be, if life or any thing have an equal or transcendent interest in us or influence upon us; and therefore the necessary duty is the conquest of the love of life and fear of death. The measure of our necessary conquest is fetched from its relation and subserviency to the prize: so far as love of life and fear of death are opposed to and inconsistent with our better hopes and work, so far they must be overcome. And the ground of the duty is in the text; because otherwise our course cannot be finished with joy; it can be neither regular nor successful without the conquest and attainment of my text. And therefore my answer to the case before us shall lie in these few following

DIRECTIONS.

DIRECTION I. *Be thoroughly persuaded of, and heartily affected with, a life to come.* (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.)—This is the “poise” and *pondus* of religion; (Heb. xi. 6;) this is the heart and strength of godliness. (Acts xxiv. 14, 15, 25.) It is this that strips that king of terrors, death, of all his frightful looks and strength; this spoils his fatal conquest, gripe, and sting. (2 Tim. iv. 6—8; 2 Cor. v. 1—10; 1 Cor. xv. 51—58.) It was this that did invigorate the confidence and courage of that noble army of martyrs: (Heb. xi. throughout:) this clothes the brow with confidence to face the storms and entertain the challenges, of earth and hell. (Rom. viii. 35—39.) This startles hearty resolutions into awakened exercises, and forceth such expressions of inward strength and fixedness as shall amaze the world, and shame the daring, stupid infidel into strange convictions of the transcendent joys and gain of godliness, and its approaching triumphs. This makes the heart indifferent to live or die, so that, by either, the great concernment may be prosperous and successful. And need I furnish you with arguments to persuade you to believe another state? Do not the word of God, the soul of man, the course and consequence of moral government, pass into arguments to

prove this thing? Would God create capacity in the soul of man to render him proper for another state, and do this as the result of his remarkable love and wisdom, and make him capable of being influenced by motives drawn from hence; and after all turn his capacity into his wreck, and abuse and rule him by mistakes and errors, and shame those hopes and confidences in the soul, and strip it of those proper ends and exercises, which God himself ordained, enjoined, and started? Moreover, will not the state and element of everlasting retributions be more significant than a probationary state and theatre? And if so, no way more proper to conquer the inordinacy in our case, than right persuasions and resentments * of another state of life. It is no wonder that an infidel should be inordinate in his love of life; for he that looks for nothing when he is dead, cannot attempt divorcement from his idols, interest, and consolations here; for now he must conclude, that "a living dog is better than a dead man;" and if the smart conviction will not suffer him to remain an infidel, (for atheists and infidels cannot be such, without His permission, if not judicial stupefaction and desertion, by whom they were created,) yet if he relish not the joys and exercises of another state hereafter, he cannot but be wanton and imposed upon by his ensnaring dreams and shadows, and parcel out his heart, till he have lost himself, amongst the incoherent, transient vanities of sense and fancy. The world and present life are this man's all; and it is no wonder if, when he hath nothing else on which he can place his heart, he fix it here: but O! when better things appear in chase and view, when things commensurate with his capacity and duration strike his concerned eye with close and smart appulses, and so affect his heart, shadows must fly away, and the sons of the morning must suit their exercises and attempts to the discoveries of their day, and alienate their hearts from what will be abusive of their souls and hopes, as their discoveries will make them then conclude.

DIRECT. II. Look upon life and comforts as they are, not as they seem to be under their present circumstances; and make your choice and value suitable thereunto.—Your life is but a shadow which must disappear; a cloud that must be scattered, more easily passed through than embraced; and all the glory of this world is easily winked into blackness and distaste, and all the lower comforts of our lives are but the crumbs we gather from the broken world. The world itself is but an element of sin and sorrow; and through that curse upon it which was derived by our first apostasy, it is become a stormy and disturbed region. There is nothing suitable to our better part therein, when separate from God and set against him: our souls, the noblest part of man, are entertained with nothing but burdens, stints, and snares. A chain of gold may pinch as hard as one of iron. There is nothing here that can endure those warm affections and close embraces which our true happiness deserves; and should we thus embrace them, our idols' arms and hearts would certainly be broken altogether. Our lawful comforts and delights are hereby embittered and polluted, and melt away to nothing, and bid farewell with dreadful gripes and bitter relishes, and fly away upon the wings we give them; for indeed the great affections of our inflamed hearts cannot but

* Concerning the meaning of this old word, consult the note in page 483, vol. I.—EDIT.

turn them all to smoke. It is their subservient usefulness and relation to God, our present work, and future glory, that make and speak them excellent: and if you change their *σχεσις*, ["condition,"] you rob the cluster of its best juice and blessing; and if your lives and comforts turn God's competitors and enemies, you spin them into snares and ruins. And were but this the rule and measure of all our fears and love, there would be joy in keeping and resigning them; God would be with them in their stay, and in their stead and places when they are gone. (Psalm lxxiii. 24—26.) O, how disgracefully is this world reflected on in holy writ! (2 Cor. iv. 18; Matt. vi. 19—21; Rom. viii. 18.) And when you do compare it with that above, and cast them both into an equal balance in your considerate and serious thoughts and pauses, then think which is noblest in its nature, most indisturbed in its possessions, most uniform in its constitution, most enduring in its excellence, most adequate in its proportions, and most desirable in its full dimensions. (1 Peter i. 4.) And what advantages herein are others' testimonies in the case! Would you but measure the good and evil of both worlds by the experiences and apprehensions of dying and awakened persons, how vast a difference would you see betwixt the life and comforts of them both, yea, and their sorrows too! Where have you any thing in this world that can preponderate or equal the comforts of God's blessed face and favour? especially when all clouds and frowns are gone. What is this world more apt to do, than to deface God's image in us, or prevent it, darken his glory, obstruct his comfortable emanations and addresses to us, and to foment our jealousies and suspicions about his present interest in us, and his eternal kindness to us? O, what a difference is there betwixt the mantle of our mortal life, which falls upon that dark and sluggish world where purblind man delights to be, and those more glorious and enduring robes of righteousness, salvation, praise, and immortality, which our Redeemer hath provided for us, where by our death he calls and takes us! What, therefore, but our inconsiderateness can make us love our prisons, chains, and rags, or the pretences of ensnaring cheats, impostures, and delusions?

DIRECT. III. Look upon life and all its comforts as a probationary state for something else, and use them so. (Prov. ix. 10—12; Eccles. ix. 10; 2 Cor. v. 10; Rom. ii. 6—10; Heb. ix. 27.)—Trifle not here, for it is your time of trial; we are all designed to live elsewhere, and future retributions must be answerable to our present carriage. This is our trading season; and would you be always in the shop or market? Would you be always travelling homeward, and never reach your Father's house? (2 Cor. v. 6—9.) We must not dream of being always on the stage; we have our parts to act, our work to do, and must be called off ere long, that others may succeed us; and after a few successive acts, the theatre must be taken down; and can we fancy shadows, representations, and resemblances to be everlasting? What, hath God sent us hither to dote upon those lives and comforts which are built upon the weak, uncertain sands, and spend themselves in triflings upon the hasty streams of short, uncertain time? Or is it not rather, that we should be acting and ripening for eternal joys and exercises? This is our time of discipline, exercise, and education for the prince's court,—to fit us for our everlasting ministrations before the great Jehovah. Now we are learning

principles, and labouring to understand and try what it is to love and honour God ; what to be ruled and taught, that so we might be saved, by Christ ; to thrive upon and under preparatory quickenings, counsels, and consolations of the Spirit ; what it is to receive, reflect, refract God's holiness and image in his instituted ways and methods : and can we terminate our affections, pleasures, and desires upon these preliminary elements and prelusions to those more lofty exercises and enjoyments that wait for us when we have regularly finished our probationary course ?

Surely our dark discoveries, slender attainments, cold affections, frequent and great disturbances, and faint attempts to get near God, our mean proficiency, and the true prospect of what we want, as to both our accomplishments and enjoyments, should make us easily resolve our value, care, and love, into this one single aim and enterprise ; namely, to see that comforts, lives, and time, be most effectually managed and improved for the securing of these joys before us. For there is nothing that we are and have below, but it is a talent for the market, not the napkin ; and therefore, neither life nor comforts should lie as dead goods upon our hands, nor be as idols in our hearts. Have we but "one thing needful" to secure, and are we upon our trial for it ? and shall we turn our trust and helps to snares and hinderances, by doting on them, and by fixing and abiding, where we should be in motion ? Are not we called to labour in the vineyard, in order to our reckoning and reward at night ? and is it not "to-day" that we must work ? (Heb. iii. 12—15 ; John xvii. 4, 5.) Will not our crop and harvest be answerable to our seed ? (Gal. vi. 7, 9.) What wonder is it that the guilty drone so much desires to live and fears to die, or that he rages, frets, and trembles to hear his hour and the Judge are come ? When men have trifled all the day, it is a most frightful sight to see the lengthened shadow and declining sun.

Stupefaction is no conquest of the fear of death, or love of life ; but when the awakened soul expects and sees the king of terrors in the head of his whole army and on his hasty march, what *then* can steel that countenance whose heart and life have been expended and embezzled in trifling dotages and mistakes, yea, and gross neglects of what the man was sent into the world to do ? He that was sent into the world to please his God, and save his soul, and to grapple with and trample on the twisted strength and subtilities of earth and hell, and to adorn and propagate religion by an exact and exemplary conversation, and so, under Christ, to make all clear within and sure above,—when he hath neglected all, cannot be comfortably furnished to sacrifice or part with life for the concerns of eternity, with cheerfulness, and out of choice ; or to conquer the exercises, fears, and challenges of a dying hour. And besides, did we but carry* as upon our trial, weaning our hearts from things below, and wedding them to things above, and managing all our duties with all diligence and resolution ; the very oppositions and difficulties of the way and of our work in this world would make us weary of our entertainment here, and full of vehement longings and desires to be gone. We should have little heart to wish for long continuance, where we can have neither welcome nor satisfaction. Our very works and sufferings

* "Did we but *conduct* or *behave ourselves* ;" an ancient form, equivalent in meaning and use to the French verb, *se porter*. It is occasionally found, as in this passage, and in a subsequent page, (664,) without its reciprocal pronoun.—EDIT.

would abate our love to life ; and our encumbrances about many things and from them, when they are apprehended as prejudicial to the "one thing needful," would be rejected by us, because distasteful to us.

DIRECT. IV. *Keep-up your ordinate fear of death, as the corrective of your inordinate love to life, and see that this be well improved.* (Psalm xlix. 6—14.)—Why! should our hearts be where we must not stay? Had Eve but thought more upon death, the forbidden fruit had never been betwixt her teeth. We fancy immortality in a maze of vanity, and our imagined continuance here inflames our hearts; and did we more consider how short a time we have to stay, and how much work to do, how sure we are to die, and why death came into the world, and how suddenly, yea, and surprisingly the king of terrors, who receives not bribes, may make dispatches of his sharp and hasty arrows into our sides and hearts, the enamouring influences of this mortal life would more effectually be mortified and obstructed. Why should I dote on that to-day, from which I may be gone to-morrow? The fear of death hath its ordained place and use, and calls upon us to prepare. He that is sensible of his own vanity here below, and capable of immortality above, ought to be ready for his change and call. (Job xiv. 14.) If we be negligent in the discipline of our affections within the prospect of our dying day, our misery becomes our choice, and we betray our souls to startling sorrows and surprisals, and give our hearts away for trifles in the very face of danger. Security makes us prodigals and wantons, and exposes us to the powerful charms of fearful fascinations. Extinguished lamps and empty vessels are only in the hands of slumbering virgins, by whom the midnight-cry is clear forgotten. Treasures and "goods [are] laid-up for many years;" and then the heart is gone and sold to empty confidences and vain delights; until that cry, "Thou fool, this night thy soul must go," correct the cheat, and shame the dreaming wanton. Methinks, the awful thoughts and looks of death should quench those flames of love which have no other fuel but a vapour or thin exhalation, which hath no light and glory but in its own destruction; and they should rather make us careful to secure that treasure in the heavens which remains to be possessed, when our "mortality shall be swallowed-up of life." Our daily instances of mortality should start such fresh remembrances in us of our own approaching dissolution, and that amazing alteration of our comforts and employments which will ensue thereon, as should irresistibly prevail upon us to guard and fortify our hearts against the inroads and invasions of such addresses as the corrupting flatteries and pretences of life and comforts here below are apt to make upon our hearts; for this inordinacy of love to life gives death a fatal sting to strike us with.

DIRECT. V. *As to the inordinate fear of death, labour to get a perfect understanding of its grounds and cure.*—For our mistake herein may make the application of the medicine both dangerous and successful: and therefore let us first inquire into *what it is that makes us loath or afraid to die*; and then, *what antidotes are expedient for this cure of such inordinate fears*; and then *direct your application*.

1. *That which makes death terrible to us, is either relating to,* (1.) *What we leave behind us.*—As life, comforts, or advantages here for getting and exercising grace in order to eternal glory. Or, (2.) *The*

state we are going to.—As to which, we either, (i.) *Doubt of its existence as to eternal comforts*; or, (ii.) *Want a title to them*; and so fear the loss of them, and pains of hell for ever; or, (iii.) *A value for them*. Or, (3.) *The passage from one state to another*; and that either, (i.) *As to its pains*; or, (ii.) *Its conflicts*; or, (iii.) *Its separation of soul and body*. And, (4.) *A remaining in that state of separation of soul and body*, through a defect of divine power or faithfulness to and mercy for us.

2. *The proper antidotes and expedients for the cure of these excessive fears*, which I shall briefly give you, are in these following

PROPOSITIONS.

PROPOSITION I. *There is a state of life and immortality designed and prepared for holy persons.*—It is “prepared,” (Matt. xxv. 34,) discovered, (2 Tim. i. 10,) “purchased” by Christ, and proposed by God, (Eph. i. 11, 14,) “promised,” (Titus i. 2,) and “reserved in heaven for” such. (1 Peter i. 4.) We have all the imaginable proofs and demonstrations of it, that things invisible and at a distance from us can be capable of. God hath made us capable thereof, and hath implanted in us a desire of and longing for it; though some, through sin, have rotted these desires at the roots. And further: on these desires, capacity, and inclinations, God hath grounded laws for moral government, and rules the world by hopes and fears, whose vital influences are derived from this future state. And further still: God hath sent his Son to tell us of these preparations, who in the human nature published such reports, which God attested by frequent, apparent, uncontrollable miracles, and sealed them with his blood, and “rose again as the first-fruits of them that sleep;” and after taught this doctrine, and went to heaven to take possession, and make necessary preparations for our conduct thither and title and possession there; and sent the Spirit down for the repeated seals and publication of this doctrine of a life to come, who did inspire apostles to write and preach it, and urge it upon the consciences of men, and to prepare the heart of man for this inheritance, to urge it as an argument of weight upon them, and start joys and sorrows in them, as they carry * in relation hereunto. And he hath declared, that he will judge the world by Christ in order to their legal settlement in this state.

PROP. II. *Our present state of life and comforts is no way comparable to what is designed hereafter.*—It is a state and city, in respect whereof “God is not ashamed to be called our God;” (Heb. xi. 16; with Luke xx. 34—38.) O, what a change of persons shall we meet with there! (Phil. iii. 21; 1 John iii. 2; 1 Cor. xv. 49—54.) Our bodies shall not be what they now are,—even the wrecks and loads and chains of souls. What are they now but foul unactive lumps of clay? They are pierced with cold, and worn with labours, appalled with griefs and dangers, and griped with pains, and macerated with keen and envious passions, and after all mouldered to dust by death and rottenness; but *there* neither deformity, pains, nor death, shall be their fear nor exercise. Our souls shall quit their prisons, clouds, and chains; our apprehensions shall be clear, (1 Cor. xiii. 12,) and consciences full of peace and joy. O, what a harmony and concord shall there be betwixt God’s will and ours! what

* See the note in page 662.—EDIT.

purity, order, warmth, and vigour shall there be in our affections! and what subserviency and due prostrations in our passions! Yea, what comfort and constancy shall there be in full and grateful exercises in the whole man! No jars and discords shall spoil the melody of our spheres; our holiness shall need no crutch, but reach the "fulness of a perfect stature;" no broken-winded nor imperfect praises there; the pulse of perfect souls shall know no intermissions nor unequal motions, but keep one constant rate of work and joy. And what a change of state, as well as persons, shall we meet with there! (Phil. i. 23.) A vale of tears quit for rivers of eternal pleasures; an element of joys succeeds our bitter cups. Our rights can never be invaded there; nothing can stain the comforts of that world; no blots nor wounds are there contracted nor endured; no troubles in that Israel. *There* are no pauses of astonishment through surprisals of afflictions; death smites no corners there; Providence makes no storms. *There* lies that ark wherein no vile or wicked Ham shall dwell: the glory of that place,—it knows no eclipse nor cloud. No dim discoveries or flat notes shall be the exercise or entertainment of that state: how sprightly are the airs and descants of their Hallelujahs! No worm on conscience or carcass there; there charity knows no breach; no mal-administrations in that kingdom, nor bad constructions of God's providence, or of the actions of his servants, there. *There* are no cuts from friends, nor gripes from enemies; no frailties to report, nor enemies to report them; no falls in Israel to grate upon these holy hearts, nor fears to be their painful exercises. There are no wrinkles on the brows of God, nor frowns upon the face of Majesty, nor one dejected look amongst those blessed myriads of saints and angels; their ark hath neither shake nor cover, nor any startling strokes to terrify its attendants. Souls, once arrived at this harbour, are entertained with perfection in a morning-blush and everlasting youthfulness.

O, who can draw these "breasts of consolation" dry? These upper springs,—they run clear and freely; and all "the fountains of the great deep" shall there be "broken up," to overflow the banks of Paradise with everlasting joys and satisfaction. With what a torrent shall these clear and pleasant rivers run! Should I attempt a full description of this joyful state, I might far sooner set rhetoric upon the rack, and contract the character of being one that quaintly did attempt to play the fool and was eloquently mad, than think to escape that censure: "Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?" (Job xxxviii. 2.) O! it must be vision and fruition, and not the flourishes of expression, that must reach the excellent perfections of that state. (1 Cor. ii. 9; Psalm xvi. 11.) And now shall we fear to leave this world and die? What, shall we be undone by being happy? Is it the misery of man, to be with God, like Him, and dear and near unto Him? What is this state and theatre of woes and sorrows, that we are so loath to quit it? Methinks I see the angels overmatched with strange astonishment at our reluctancies to be gone, and our averseness to desert our dotages and prisons. It might in reason be expected from us, that no exercise of our patience should be so sore and pinching as this,—that we must stay from heaven so long; and shall we, after all, raise such a

false report about the Land of Promise, by our averseness to be gone thereto, as to insinuate into the thoughts of others that either the trifles of this mortal life, or the pains and terrors of our passage to the land of rest, are much beyond the recompences and reparations that we shall meet with there? View, then, the difference; and be free to go.

PROP. III. *Death is an enemy which Christ hath conquered; and God hath "given us the victory through Christ."* (1 Cor. xv. 54—57; Heb. ii. 14, 15.)—O, what an emancipation hath Christ here wrought! That Christ hath conquered it, it is clear in Acts ii. 24. That prophecy is now accomplished, Hosea xiii. 14; (Rom. i. 4;) and blessed are the consequences of this victory to us. (John vi. 39, 40.) Why should we fear this king of terrors, who gives his stroke, but has no sting? The stab is deep, but the captivity short; for we shall have our lives again, which are "hid with Christ in God" till Christ appear; (Col. iii. 3, 4;) and soul-death is escaped; for when we are "absent from the body," we shall be "present with the Lord." (2 Cor. v. 8.) Sin bound us over to eternal death by law; and here was the strength and sting of death; but this sentence is reversed through "the law of the Spirit of life;" (Rom. viii. 1, 2, 4;) and death itself can neither come from, nor end in, any want of love in God to us. And how triumphantly doth the apostle speak, when animated with this meditation! (Rom. viii. 32—39.) What an allay is it, amidst our pangs and fears of death, to think upon those confidences, encouragements, and consolations, before and in and after the shakes and conflicts, yea, and execution of a dying hour, which God allows, intends, and is resolved to give us then! It is now consistent with the dearest love to die, and introductive of the best delights and state; and therefore we have little cause to fear it, seeing we shall be gainers by it: it is but a moment's blow, and that shall be healed again. (1 Peter i. 3.)

PROP. IV. *He that is true to his baptismal covenant hath now the title, and shall have the honour and advantages, of this victory.*—If God be served and sought and loved as our great end and happiness; (Psalm lxxiii. 25, 26;) if we be freely for Christ, (John vi. 37,) faithful to him, (Rev. ii. 10; iii. 10; Heb. v. 9,) and fruitful in him; (John xv. 1—10; 2 Peter i. 5—10;) "if we live in the Spirit," and "walk" by it, (Gal. v. 25; Rom. viii. 9, 17,) and "sow to" it; (Gal. vi. 8;) and if we heartily and prevailingly answer the claims and ends of the gospel of the grace of God; (Titus ii. 11—15;) what need we perplex ourselves with fears, as if we served a rigid or unfaithful Master? O, let not our involuntary weakness and surprisals discourage us; for God is merciful, his goodness is exceeding great, and our High-Priest is sensible of our weaknesses and true to all our interests. (Heb. vii. 25; ix. 24; ii. 14—18; iv. 14—16.)

And now having thus prepared the way by these preliminary propositions, what now remains for us to do, but to take these following directions, which will come something closer to the case in hand?

DIRECTIONS.

DIRECTION I. *See that you lay foundations right and deep.*—How can it be imagined, much less expected, that unprepared and estranged souls

from God and Christ should face the challenges and terrors, or escape the dangers, of a dying day? What can support the confidence of that man who is dispirited by the deserved rebuke and buffetings of an exasperated, because a guilty, conscience? For conscience is the mouth of God, and speaks his mind, (and what speaks otherwise in point of charge or censure is rather ignorance than conscience,) and, by his order and commission, and in his name and majesty, whips the careless soul. It is impossible to still the cries of guilt and wrath: it is far more easy for us to charm and stupify the man than truly cure him. He that is negligent of the main affair is like to bear the smartings of his own voluntary wounds; and the more voluntary our negligence appears to be to our awakened consciences, when startled by gripes and fears of death, the less cause will there be for help and pity.

All fears arising from an unconverted state have God to back and sharpen them; because they are truly grounded on God's professed resolution and legal comminations, to bring those fears on them by whom they are deserved. So that our only way to cure and quell these fears, is to remove their cause, by giving up ourselves to God the Father, to know him, love him, and live to him, and to delight ourselves in God's image, presence, and favour, in his Son Jesus Christ, more than in all the treasures and delights of lower things; to know the Lord that bought us, and to serve him in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" with confidence to commit ourselves to his tendered conduct, government, and protection, and entertain him with all suitableness of apprehension, affection, and conversation to all his excellencies, offices, and appearances; to answer all his kindnesses, cost, and care, with all such faithful, fruitful, cheerful conversations as God and Christ determined and designed in man's redemption: (Eph. i. 4:) yea, to be ruled, assisted, and refreshed by what the Spirit of grace and holiness and wisdom hath done for us, and is sent from the Father and the Son to perfect and complete in us; to live the life of faith and holiness, and endeavour to spend our days in the delightful hopes and foretastes of, and ripenings for, and "hasting to," (or "hastening," as the word, *σπευδοντες*, imports, 2 Peter iii. 12,) your everlasting state of joys and glory; to make the unseen world the exercise, poise, and spring of your most vehement desires, most vigorous pursuit, and most inviolable satisfaction; and, in a word, to walk in all due conscience of your trust and charge, to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to others and yourselves; in all things to think, and speak, and do as in the sight of God, relation to him, and special interest and delight in him; and not through ignorance, enmity, and sloth, to let the devil, flesh, or world mortify your delight in God, your motions toward, affections to, and resolutions for, God. And hearken not to those discouraging thoughts and jealousies of God and Christ, which your grand enemy, the prince of lies and darkness, is ready to abuse you with. Where hath God told you that the willing, thoughtful, painful soul, though much distempered and imperfect, shall be rejected by him? For when the Son protests so solemnly against rejecting such as come, he speaks his Father's heart. (John vi. 37—40.) And I profess, when I most seriously consider the terms and tenor of the covenant of grace, I am much confirmed in this,—that all grounded

jealousies, suspicions, and discouragements as to our hopes of everlasting happiness, can only fix upon our voluntary rejecting of God and Christ, and holiness and heaven; and though many things may humble us, and ought to do it, yet nothing can implead our title to the purchased possession, nor our comfortable hopes at death, when once our wills are fixed on Christ, and well resolved for him, and prevail upon our lives for walking worthy of our great vocation.

We have no impossible conditions imposed on us; especially if we consider gospel-assistances, indulgence, and encouragements: for when we know our way, as God hath showed it us in Christ, and have our hearts inclined and fixed for God, we are but to exert what strength and power we have to serve and please our God, and, proportionably to our abilities and advantages, to wait upon God for more, according to his instituted ways and methods. Improvements are but required to be proportionable to our talents; and he that brought ten talents to his lord, had more than one or two at first to make improvement of. I do indeed believe the law of nature yet in force,* though now incorporated into the law of Christ; and that the decalogue is yet in force to bind and rule us; and never look to see its abrogation proved, till they that hold this abrogation can demonstrate that the Father lost his right and throne of government by the appearance of his Son, and that Christ acted not as his Father's delegate and for his glory, and that grace was not designed and directed to the reparation of declined religion in the world, but that God was so prodigal of his pardon and indulgence as to grow regardless of his government. But yet that law is one thing, and this covenant another thing; for the covenant of grace respected those distempers and perplexities and disadvantages,—and supposed them, and was suited to them in its tenders and provisions,—for which it did design relief. And now our terms of life are not so strict as those on which God dealt with healthful, sound, and innocent Adam; for now sincere and prevalent faith, and love, and holiness shall reach those consolations after death which once, namely, antecedently to Christ's undertaking and completing satisfaction, they could not do. And therefore, if your insincerity and fundamental unpreparedness for your change be that which starts and feeds your fears, labour to be sincere and faithful in covenant-making and covenant-keeping; and you may be sure of this, that death will lose its sting and victory, and thereupon its fearful looks, when sin hath lost its throne, and when God and Christ have got your hearts, and life-to-come concerns influence and rule your purposes, projects, and pursuits. It is with relation to our manifold temptations, wants, and weaknesses, and all despondencies and discouragements consequent thereupon, that Christ hath undertaken to be our great High-Priest, Physician, Advocate, and Saviour. His satisfaction related to our forfeiture of all the good we had in promise and possession; and his intercession is with respect to our great distance and unworthiness. His deep compassionate suppose our misery; and his assistance and supplies imply our wants and

* By "the law of nature" I mean God's revealed will as Ruler, objectively signified in the nature of things within us and without us, concerning our duty, and rewards or punishments; and this law is written upon, and discovered by, our own capacity and constitution, our relations to God and others, and our furniture and advantages from what we are encompassed and intrusted with in the whole frame of nature.

disadvantages. We are to be taught, because we are ignorant; and healed, because we are sick; and disciplined, because so prone and subject to disorders; and succoured and supported, because we are tempted: and when the heart is once resigned to Christ and God by him, Christ looks upon himself as much concerned to perfect in and for us every thing that can concern us in life, and death, and after death.

DIRECT. II. *Labour to understand your fears distinctly, and know their reasons, ends, and measures.*—We are buffeted in the dark, while we are ignorant of, and so mistake, the reasons of our fears, and know them not in their original and end. The devil loves and labours to disturb us by such boisterous storms and winds as none shall know either whence they come or whither they go: he loves to walk and speak and act in the clouds, to our astonishment and confusion; that we may be disturbed, even when he knows we cannot be destroyed, because he sees our hearts are gone for God. It is here as in polemical divinity: “A case, when it is clearly stated and discovered, is half answered by the stating of it;” for then our arguments are driven and directed to a point: but when words and things are ambiguously used and rendered, there will be great contention and but little satisfaction. We are too often frightened with clouds and shadows at a distance; but when by near approaches and clear inspection we understand the matter, our fears become our shame: and therefore, to come nearer to the case and our own consciences, what makes us thus reluctant and afraid to die?

1. *Is it the loss of what you must be divorced from by death?*—If so, then think a little on what you are likely to lose. What is this state which you must leave, that it hath stolen your hearts away? What is the wise man’s motto on it, but “Vexatious vanity?” (Eccles. i. 14.) Is it not a state of blindness, enmity, and active wickedness? a state of distance and distractions? Is it not a state wherein nothing is more sure and frequent than sin and sorrows? The mind and heart of man are sooner stupified and corrupted, than comfortably exercised and satisfied: the pleasures and delights of this distracted, transient state are most near of kin unto the sluggish, drossy part of man, his senses and his fancy; and when the impetuous cravings of sense and fancy have got their gluts and surfeits, the soul, that nobler and more capacious part, is furiously invaded, sadly imposed on, and prevented and obstructed in its sublimer exercises and enjoyments; it is degraded by a base captivity, stripped of its choicest ornaments and enrichments, and made to slight and quit its best concerns, that so the brutish part of man may rule and ruin all. The excellency of all things here lies in their ordinate usefulness and subserviency to better things; from which when you abstract them, you have no right, propriety, nor proportion in them for you; but by your own averseness to be gone from them, you show your little or no love to God.

2. *Is it your startling apprehension of what you must encounter and sustain in death, that makes you fear to die?*—It is true, the terrors, jealousies, and pains, that commonly do attend a dying hour, together with that dissolution to which our natures are averse, make death appear an enemy in the way ready to meet us, like Balaam’s angel, with an amazing sword, and therefore formidable. But yet the serious, painful,

and resolved Christian hath many things wherewith to scatter or correct the evil influences of all discouraging apprehensions of this amazing exercise and change. For,

(1.) *Those sins that have truly and regularly lost their throne and interest in the heart, shall never be the ruin of the man.*—Through Christ, the domineering and damning power of sin are left together. He that hath subjugated and mortified his vile affections, interests, and corruptions, and hath broken off his sins by righteousness, and hath changed his principles, end, and actions, hath that immortal seed of life and peace and joy, which will assuredly ripen into his everlasting life, security, and triumphs. (1 Cor. xv. 56—58.) Your former provocations lose their damning strength, when you have deserted them by penitent conversion. (Acts iii. 19.) And when He that hath the keys of death and hell hath told you this, (as he hath, Luke xxiv. 47,) what have you then to exercise your jealousies and sad suspicions, but sinful and groundless infidelity, which gives the lie to all those testimonies and assurances of the ability and fidelity of God and Christ, who have engaged themselves by promise to save you from those dangers which you fear, and of whose gracious nature the gospel, and all those wondrous mercies that attend it, have informed you?

(2.) *This being granted, what then hath the devil to shake your confidences with, but lies and falsehood?*—It is your own fault to credit Satan, when he invalidates the truth of God, and would weaken and enervate all the assurances which God hath given you of his resolved design to save you. If he can prove that sin may be repented of, and yet unpardoned; that sin may be pardoned, and yet the soul undone; that God and Christ are either forgetful, impotent, or false; then be dejected: but it is your comfort, that he hath no other arguments but what are bottomed on these great absurdities. And,

(3.) *As to the terrors of that hour, which may arise from Satan's furious onsets and assaults; God will not let you walk alone.*—He hath his rod and staff in readiness for your assistance and support. Christ, our compassionate High-Priest, knows what it is to die; he knows the subtilty and fury of the tempter by smart experience; and his sympathy hath taught him pity; and our compassionate Head will not forget his exercised members under their pains and terrors and great temptations at that hour. Christ is not exalted above the exercise of pity, but went to heaven for the reception and possession of that capacity, throne, and dignity at God's right hand, which he is resolved to improve for our security and relief when we are most afflicted and in danger. And,

(4.) *As to the pains and stroke of death; they are but short and sudden, and made our necessary passage to everlasting glory.*—And may not much be borne, when all shall be secured? What are the strugglings, gasps, and stretches of departing saints, unto those gripes of conscience and fears of vengeance which are the inward, frequent exercises of sinners, when they live, and when they die too? Nay, it is a great allay unto the bitterness and fears of death, that God hath such rich and mighty cordials and consolations proper for that hour. O, what refreshments do oftentimes issue and arise from those discoveries of God's image in us, presence with and favour for us, which are made by us,

when we are forced to retire within, when all things round about us fail, and lose their interest in and favour with us, because our flesh decays and wastes through pains and rottenness, to which the bewitching dotages of time could make their easiest and most successful applications! And it oftentimes happens that our fears exceed our pains, and that the king of terrors doth not gripe so hard, nor stab so painfully, as we are apt to think and look for; but when the stroke is given indeed, and the pains are gone, how easily and quickly do the first openings of our eternal morning even swallow-up all the remembrances of our dying sorrows! O! when the joys and visions of our God invade and exercise our departed souls, then comes the great preclusion and welcome pledge of our eternal conquest of this last enemy; and after a short sleep of bodies in the dust, whilst souls retire and go to God, the trump will sound, the Lord will come, the world shall perish or be refined by the flames, and the dead rise again, and die no more.

3. *Is it because you fear a change of state to your great disadvantage when you are dead, that you are loath and dread to die?*—If so, then it is because, either (1.) *You credit not or question the certainty and excellency of the world to come.* Or, (2.) *Because you do not understand and value it.* Or, (3.) *You do suspect your interest in and fitness for it.*

(1.) If it be the first, *concoct those arguments and intimations which God hath given you, by diligent inquiries, sober pauses, faithful meditation.*—Reflect upon the first and second propositions, and those more cogent, useful treatises which are written on this subject, and wherewith the world abounds; and let not the bribes and flatteries of a vain world divert you, nor the malignant influences of a wanton fancy corrupt and mortify the faculties which God hath given you for this end; for here the light is ready for the prepared eye.

(2.) If you do not understand its excellence, and so have no value for it, *compare both states together.*—That so your choice and value may result from wisdom, and be the product of true and sober judgment. Is it so good to dwell, delight, and perish in the flames of smart contentions betwixt God and you, or to have your breath and spirits expended in dreadful groans and echoes to the apostle's deep complaints and cries in Rom. vii. 18—24? Is there no melody like heart-reproaches for practical despising and displeasing God? (Psalm li. 3, 4.) Is there such harmony and advantage in the sluggish exercises and motions of diseased souls? Is there such pleasure in dark and difficult discoveries, which are but one remove from the thick darkness of damning ignorance and blindness, as that your aversation to be sent away unto that element of clearer views and visions in the other world may well be fixed there? Can you delightfully be exposed to temptations, to injurious and unworthy thoughts of God; and dwell where God is little discerned, prized, and served? What! is a hospital such a desirable habitation, that you are loath to quit it? Are the distractions, pains, and vanities of a forsaken world such charms and loadstones to your hearts, as to set you on building tabernacles and fixing there? Who ever loved to be exposed to miseries, or to build his palace on the sands or hasty streams? And what is this state of life but the true theatre and centre of all these

woes and miseries? But if you look above, and pierce the heavens, there you will meet with clear discoveries and vehement flames of love, and all desirable, unconceivable vigour, liberty, and satisfaction in an immortal state. But of this, see more in the Second Proposition. (Page 664.)

(3.) *Is it because you do suspect your interest in and fitness for the life to come?*—If so, then know the terms of life, and try your state thereby. Do you not know what God is, believe what he saith, accept what he tenders, and do what he commands? Know you not who Christ is, what he hath done, what he expects, what he promises, and will do! Are you an enemy to the graces, truths, and motions of the Spirit, and to his directing, quickening, and comforting influences? Are ye not dead to sin, and alive to God through Christ? Is not another life the exercise and object of your chief desire, pursuit, and satisfaction? Have you no prevalent inclinations, affections, and resolutions to renounce the world, flesh, devil, and to discharge all your duties to God, yourselves, and others, with wisdom, holiness, activity, and courage? and to do all this as in the sight of God, and with delight, as in the hopes and prospect of a better world? and to expect what God hath promised, in the ways which he commands? “If these things be in you and abound,” your hearts are right, condition safe, and title good. If you be wanting here, this is your way of reparation and security: do these things, and death is yours; and when these things are done, all your discouraging doubts and fears are answered and dispelled, by being clearly understood. For,

(i.) It is one thing to be fit to die, and another thing to know it.

(ii.) It is one thing to have your title good; another thing to be sinless, and so fully ripe for heaven immediately.

(iii.) It is one thing to have a serious, fixed heart and will for God; and another thing to have passionate affections, which depend more upon the temper of the body, than the power and ripeness of the grace of God upon the heart.

(iv.) It is one thing, what we cannot be, though we would be with strength and readiness of will; and another thing, what we have little or no will to be.

(v.) It is one thing to love and hate proportionably to what God and sin are and deserve; and it is another thing to love and hate as God requires, in proportion to our strength, and with reference to our work and joy. And,

(vi.) It is one thing to have corruption dwell in us, and another thing to have it rule.

(vii.) It is one thing to be tempted of the devil, and another thing to yield thereto. And,

(viii.) It is one thing to have ground of hope and joy, and another to have the sense thereof.

(ix.) Joy is also considerable, as our duty, and God's gift.

And these nine distinctions, well observed, rightly applied, and carefully improved, will go exceeding far towards answering all those doubts which animate unwarrantable fears of death in those whose hearts are right, whilst their hopes are low, their jealousies great, their spirits faint, and so their lives uncomfortable, through their own ignorant and sad mistakes.

INFERENCES.

INFERENCE I. Christian religion at the worst, is better than a course of wickedness at the best.

INF. II. Men's carriages will be answerable to the truth and power of their faith and hope, in reference to the comforts of the unseen world.

INF. III. All the dejectedness of thorough gracious Christians arises from their inconsiderateness.

INF. IV. To understand the regular measures of fear and love, is of considerable concernment in our Christian course.

INF. V. To look and act for joys to come, and to make them quickening arguments to our obedience and preparations, is an essential part of our religion. (2 John 8.)

INF. VI. Immoderate love of life and fear of death are sinful, and of dangerous consequence.

INF. VII. It is of great use to understand the truth and worth of the comforts of a well-finished course.

INF. VIII. Infidelity, in whole or in part, as far as it reaches, cannot but mortify those noble dispositions and necessary preparations which Christianity calls us to; for it is impossible to be religious any further than God's existence and rewarding excellences and resolutions are credited. (Heb. xi. 6.)

INF. IX. The want or distance of pertinent and smart temptations is the only reason of perseverance in the formality of godliness amongst professors whose hearts and aims are not upon and for the joys of heaven.

INF. X. To have our faith and hope well fixed and exercised, is the best method and expedient for cheerfulness, constancy, and courage in the whole frame of Christian sufferings and duty. This makes exalted, active souls in godliness and for it.

INF. XI. Then, what considerable friends are God and Christ to Christianity and serious Christians, who have furnished us with hopes and arguments drawn from the certainty and transcendent excellence of joys to come!

INF. XII. No man hath cause to quarrel with what he is called to do and suffer for the Christian cause, nor reason to decline religion because of difficulties in the way.

These inferences should and might be enlarged upon, but that the determined bounds of a single sermon must not be exceeded. Close with the truth delivered here; and, with the author, lament, and pray for the heightening of, his too mean accomplishments and furniture.