

## SERMON XXXIII.\*

*God's awful Judgment in the breaking and withering of the Strong Rods of Community.*



EZEKIEL xix. 12.

HER STRONG RODS WERE BROKEN AND WITHERED.

**I**N order to a right understanding and improving these words, these four things must be observed and understood concerning them.

1. Who she is that is here represented as having had strong rods, viz. the Jewish community, who here, as often elsewhere, is called the people's mother. She is here compared to a vine planted in a very fruitful soil, verse 10. The Jewish church and state is often elsewhere compared to a vine; as Psalm lxxx. 8, &c. Isai. v. 2. Jer. ii. 21. Ezek. xv. and chapter xvii. 6.

\* Preached at Northampton on the Lord's day, June 26, 1743, on the death of the Hon. John Stoddard, Esq. often a member of his Majesty's council, for many years chief justice of the court of Common pleas for the county of Hampshire, judge of the probate of wills, and chief colonel of the regiment, &c. who died at Boston, June 19, 1748, in the 67th year of his age.

2. What is meant by her strong rods, viz. her wise, able, and well qualified magistrates or rulers. That the rulers or magistrates are intended is manifest by verse 11. "And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bear rule." And by rods that were strong, must be meant such rulers as were well qualified for magistracy, such as had great abilities and other qualifications fitting them for the business of rule. They were wont to choose a rod or staff of the strongest and hardest sort of wood that could be found, for the mace or sceptre of a prince; such an one only being counted fit for such an use; and this generally was overlaid with gold.

It is very remarkable that such a strong rod should grow out of a weak vine; but so it had been in Israel, through God's extraordinary blessing, in times past. Though the nation is spoken of here, and frequently elsewhere, as weak and helpless in itself, and entirely dependent as a vine, that is the weakest of all trees, that cannot support itself by its own strength, and never stands but as it leans on, or hangs by something else that is stronger than itself; yet God had caused many of her sons to be strong rods, fit for sceptres; he had raised up in Israel many able and excellent princes and magistrates in days past, that had done worthily in their day.

3. It should be understood and observed what is meant by these strong rods being broken and withered, viz. these able and excellent rulers being removed by death: Man's dying is often compared in scripture to the withering of the growth of the earth.

4. It should be observed after what manner the breaking and withering of these strong rods is here spoken of, viz. as a great and awful calamity, that God had brought upon that people: It is spoken of as one of the chief effects of God's fury and dreadful displeasure against them: "But she was plucked up in fury, she was cast down to the ground, and the east wind dried up her fruit; her strong rods were broken and withered, the fire hath consumed them." The great benefits she enjoyed while her strong rods remained, are represented in the preceding verse: "And she had strong rods

for the sceptres of them that bear rule, and her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches." And the terrible calamities that attended the breaking and withering of her strong rods, are represented in the two verses next following the text: "And now she is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty ground. And fire is gone out of a rod of her branches, which hath devoured her fruit. And in the conclusion in the next words, is very emphatically declared the worthiness of such a dispensation to be greatly lamented; "So that she hath no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule: This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation."

That which I therefore observe from the words of the text, to be the subject of discourse at this time, is this,

When God by death removes from a people those in place of public authority and rule that have been as strong rods, it is an awful judgment of God on that people, and worthy of great lamentation.

In discoursing on this proposition, I would,

I. Shew what kind of rulers may fitly be called strong rods.

II. Shew why the removal of such rulers from a people, by death, is to be looked upon as an awful judgment of God on that people, and is greatly to be lamented.

I. I would observe what qualifications of those who are in public authority and rule may properly give them the denomination of strong rods.

1. One qualification of rulers whence they may properly be denominated strong rods, is great ability for the management of public affairs. When they that stand in place of public authority are men of great natural abilities, when they are men of uncommon strength of reason and largeness of understanding; especially when they have remarkably a genius for government, a peculiar turn of mind fitting them to gain an

extraordinary understanding in things of that nature, giving ability, in an especial manner, for insight into the mysteries of government, and discerning those things wherein the public welfare or calamity consists, and the proper means to avoid the one and promote the other ; an extraordinary talent at distinguishing what is right and just, from that which is wrong and unequal and to see through the false colors with which injustice is often disguised, and unravel the false subtle arguments and cunning sophistry that is often made use of to defend iniquity ; and when they have not only great natural abilities in these respects, but when their abilities and talents have been improved by study, learning, observation and experience ; and when by these means they have obtained great actual knowledge ; when they have acquired great skill in public affairs, and things requisite to be known, in order to their wise, prudent, and effectual management ; when they have obtained a great understanding of men and things, a great knowledge of human nature, and of the way of accommodating themselves to it, so as most effectually to influence it to wise purposes ; when they have obtained a very extensive knowledge of men with whom they are concerned in the management of public affairs, either those that have a joint concern in government, or those that are to be governed ; and when they have also obtained a very full and particular understanding of the state and circumstances of the country or people that they have the care of, and know well their laws and constitution, and what their circumstances require ; and likewise have a great knowledge of the people of neighbor nations, states, or provinces, with whom they have occasion to be concerned in the management of public affairs committed to them ; these things all contribute to the rendering those that are in authority fit to be denominated strong rods.

2. When they have not only great understanding, but largeness of heart, and a greatness and nobleness of disposition, this is another qualification that belongs to the character of a strong rod.

Those that are by divine Providence set in place of public authority and rule, are called "gods, and sons of the Most High," Psalm lxxxii. 6. And therefore it is peculiarly unbecoming them to be of a mean spirit, a disposition that will admit of their doing those things that are sordid and vile ; as when they are persons of a narrow, private spirit, that may be found in little tricks and intrigues to promote their private interest, will shamefully defile their hands, to gain a few pounds, are not ashamed to nip and bite others, grind the faces of the poor, and screw upon their neighbors ; and will take advantage of their authority or commission to line their own pockets with what is fraudulently taken or withheld from others. When a man in authority is of such a mean spirit, it weakens his authority, and makes him justly contemptible in the eyes of men, and is utterly inconsistent with his being a strong rod.

But on the contrary, it greatly establishes his authority, and causes others to stand in awe of him, when they see him to be a man of greatness of mind, one that abhors those things that are mean and sordid, and not capable of a compliance with them ; one that is of a public spirit, and not of a private narrow disposition ; a man of honor, and not a man of mean artifice and clandestine management, for filthy lucre, and one that abhors trifling and impertinence, or to waste away his time, that should be spent in the service of God, his king, or his country, in vain amusements and diversions, and in the pursuit of the gratifications of sensual appetites ; as God charges the rulers in Israel, that pretended to be their great and mighty men, with being mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink. There does not seem to be any reference to their being men of strong heads, and able to bear a great deal of strong drink, as some have supposed : There is a severe sarcasm in the words ; for the prophet is speaking of the great men, princes, and judges in Israel (as appears by the verse next following) which should be mighty men, strong rods, men of eminent qualifications, excelling in nobleness of spirit, of glorious strength and fortitude of mind ;

but instead of that, they were mighty or eminent for nothing but gluttony and drunkenness.

3. When those that are in authority are endowed with much of a spirit of government, this is another thing that entitles them to the denomination of strong rods. When they not only are men of great understanding and wisdom in affairs that appertain to government, but have also a peculiar talent at using their knowledge, and exerting themselves in this great and important business, according to their great understanding in it ; when they are men of eminent fortitude, and are not afraid of the faces of men, are not afraid to do the part that properly belongs to them as rulers, though they meet with great opposition, and the spirits of men are greatly irritated by it ; When they have a spirit of resolution and activity, so as to keep the wheels of government in proper motion, and to cause judgment and justice to run down as a mighty stream ; when they have not only a great knowledge of government, and the things that belong to it in the theory, but it is, as it were, natural to them to apply the various powers and faculties with which God has endowed them, and the knowledge they have obtained by study and observation, to that business, so as to perform it most advantageously and effectually.

4. Stability and firmness of integrity, fidelity, and piety, in the exercise of authority, is another thing that greatly contributes to, and is very essential in the character of a strong rod.

When he that is in authority is not only a man of strong reason and great discerning to know what is just, but is a man of strict integrity and righteousness, is firm and immoveable in the execution of justice and judgment ; and when he is not only a man of great ability to bear down vice and immorality, but has a disposition agreeable to such ability ; is one that has a strong aversion to wickedness, and is disposed to use the power God has put into his hands to suppress it ; and is one that not only opposes vice by his authority, but by his example ; when he is one of inflexible fidelity, will be faithful to God whose minister he is, to his people for good, is immoveable in his regard to his supreme authority, his commands and

his glory ; and will be faithful to his king and country ; will not be induced by the many temptations that attend the business of men in public authority, basely to betray his trust ; will not consent to do what he thinks not to be for the public good, for his own gain or advancement, or any private interest ; is one that is well principled, and is firm in acting agreeably to his principles, and will not be prevailed with to do otherwise through fear or favor, to follow a multitude, or to maintain his interest in any on whom he depends for the honor or profit of his place, whether it be prince or people ; and is also one of that strength of mind, whereby he rules his own spirit. These things do very eminently contribute to a ruler's title to the denomination of a strong rod.

5. And LASTLY, It also contributes to that strength of a man in authority by which he may be denominated a strong rod, when he is in such circumstances as give him advantage for the exercise of his strength, for the public good ; as his being a person of honorable descent, of a distinguished education, his being a man of estate, one that is advanced in years, one that has long been in authority, so that it is become, as it were, natural for the people to pay him deference, to reverence him, to be influenced and governed by him, and submit to his authority ; his being extensively known, and much honored and regarded abroad ; his being one of a good presence, majesty of countenance, decency of behavior, becoming one in authority ; of forcible speech, &c. These things add to his strength, and increase his ability and advantage to serve his generation in the place of a ruler, and therefore in some respect, serve to render him one that is the more fitly and eminently called a strong rod.

I now proceed,

II. To shew that when such strong rods are broken and withered by death, it is an awful judgment of God on the people that are deprived of them, and worthy of great lamentation.

And that on two accounts,

1. By reason of the many positive benefits and blessings to a people that such rulers are the instruments of.

Almost all the prosperity of a public society and civil community does, under God, depend on their rulers. They are like the main springs or wheels in a machine, that keep every part in its due motion, and are in the body politic, as the vitals in the body natural, and as the pillars and foundation in a building. Civil rulers are called "the foundations of the earth." Psalm lxxxii. 5, and xi. 3.

The prosperity of a people depends more on their rulers than is commonly imagined. As they have the public society under their care and power, so they have advantage to promote the public interest every way; and if they are such rulers as have been spoken of, they are some of the greatest blessings to the public. Their influence has a tendency to promote their wealth, and cause their temporal possessions and blessings to abound: And to promote virtue amongst them, and so to unite them one to another in peace and mutual benevolence, and make them happy in society, each one the instrument of his neighbor's quietness, comfort, and prosperity; and by these means to advance their reputation and honor in the world; and which is much more, to promote their spiritual and eternal happiness. Therefore, the wise man says, Eccles. x. 17. "Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles."

We have a remarkable instance and evidence of the happy and great influence of such a strong rod as has been described, to promote the universal prosperity of a people, in the history of the reign of Solomon, though many of the people were uneasy under his government, and thought him too rigorous in his administration: See 1 Kings, xii. 4. "Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon," 1 Kings iv 25. "And he made silver to be among them as stones for abundance," chap. x. 27. "And Judah and Israel were many, eating and drinking and making merry." The



queen of Sheba admired, and was greatly affected with the happiness of the people, under the government of such a strong rod, 1 Kings, x. 8, 9. Says she, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice."

The flourishing state of the kingdom of Judah, while they had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule, is taken notice of in our context; "her stature was exalted among the thick branches, and she appeared in her height with the multitude of her branches."

Such rulers are eminently the ministers of God to his people for good: They are great gifts of the Most High to a people, and blessed tokens of his favor, and vehicles of his goodness to them, and therein images of his own Son, the grand medium of all God's goodness to fallen mankind; and therefore, all of them are called, sons of the Most High. All civil rulers, if they are as they ought to be, such strong rods as have been described, will be like the Son of the Most High, vehicles of good to mankind, and like him, will be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain. And therefore, when a people are bereaved of them, they sustain an unspeakable loss, and are the subjects of a judgment of God that is greatly to be lamented.

2. On account of the great calamities such rulers are a defence from. Innumerable are the grievous and fatal calamities which public societies are exposed to in this evil world, which they can have no defence from without order and authority. If a people are without government, they are like a city broken down and without walls, encompassed on every side by enemies, and become unavoidably subject to all manner of confusion and misery.

Government is necessary to defend communities from miseries from within themselves ; from the prevalence of intestine discord, mutual injustice, and violence ; the members of the society continually making a prey one of another, without any defence one from another. Rulers are the heads of union in public societies, that hold the parts together ; without which nothing else is to be expected, than that the members of the society will be continually divided against themselves, every one acting the part of an enemy to his neighbor, every one's hand against every man, and every man's hand against him ; going on in remediless and endless broils and jarring, until the society be utterly dissolved and broken in pieces, and life itself, in the neighborhood of our fellow creatures. becomes miserable and intolerable.

We may see the need of government in societies by what is visible in families, those lesser societies, of which all public societies are constituted. How miserable would these little societies be, if all were left to themselves, without any authority or superiority in one above another, or any head of union and influence among them ? We may be convinced by what we see of the lamentable consequences of the want of a proper exercise of authority and maintenance of government in families that yet are not absolutely without all authority. No less need is there of government in public societies, but much more, as they are larger. A very few may possibly, without any government, act by concert, so as to concur in what shall be for the welfare of the whole ; but this is not to be expected among a multitude, constituted of many thousands, of a great variety of tempers and different interests.

As government is absolutely necessary, so there is a necessity of strong rods in order to it : The business being such as requires persons so qualified ; no other being sufficient for, or well capable of the government of public societies : And therefore, those public societies are miserable, that have not such strong rods for sceptres to rule, Eccles. x. 16. "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child."

As government, and strong rods for the exercise of it, are necessary to preserve public societies from dreadful and fatal calamities arising from among themselves; so no less requisite are they to defend the community from foreign enemies. As they are like the pillars of a building, so they are also like the walls and bulwarks of a city: They are under God the main strength of a people in the time of war, and the chief instruments of their preservation, safety, and rest. This is signified in a very lively manner in the words that are used by the Jewish community in her lamentations, to express the expectations she had from her princes. Lam. iv. 20. "The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, under his shadow we shall live among the Heathen." In this respect also such strong rods are sons of the Most High, and images or resemblances of the Son of God, viz. as they are their saviours from their enemies; as the judges that God raised up of old in Israel are called, Nehem. ix. 27. "Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: And in the time of their trouble when they cried unto thee, thou heardst them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies, thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.

Thus both the prosperity and safety of a people under God, depends on such rulers as are *strong rods*. While they enjoy such blessings, they are wont to be like a vine planted in a fruitful soil, with her stature exalted among the thick branches, appearing in her height with the multitude of her branches; but when they have no strong rod to be a sceptre to rule, they are like a vine planted in a wilderness that is exposed to be plucked up, and cast down to the ground, to have her fruit dried up with the east wind, and to have fire coming out of her own branches to devour her fruit.

On these accounts, when a people's strong rods are broken and withered, it is an awful judgment of God on that people, and worthy of great lamentation: As when king Josiah, (who was doubtless one of the strong rods referred to in the

text) was dead, the people made great lamentation for him. 2 Chron. xxxv. 24, 25. "And they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers: And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: And behold, they are written in the Lamentations."

### APPLICATION.

I come now to apply these things to our own case, under the late awful frown of Divine Providence upon us, in removing by death that honorable person in public rule and authority, an inhabitant of this town, and belonging to this congregation and church, who died at Boston the last Lord's day.

He was eminently a strong rod in the forementioned respects. As to his natural abilities, strength of reason, greatness and clearness of discerning, and depth of penetration, he was one of the first rank: It may be doubted whether he has left his superior in these respects in these parts of the world. He was a man of a truly great genius, and his genius was peculiarly fitted for the understanding and managing of public affairs.

And as his natural capacity was great, so was the knowledge that he had acquired, his understanding being greatly improved by close application of mind to those things he was called to be concerned in, and by a very exact observation of them, and long experience in them. He had indeed a great insight into the nature of public societies, the mysteries of government, and the affairs of peace and war: He had a discerning that very few have of the things wherein the public weal consists, and what those things are that do expose public societies, and of the proper means to avoid the latter and

promote the former. He was quick in his discerning, in that in most cases, especially such as belonged to his proper business, he at first sight would see further than most men when they had done their best ; but yet he had a wonderful faculty of improving his own thoughts by meditation, and carrying his views a greater and greater length by long and close application of mind. He had an extraordinary ability to distinguish right and wrong, in the midst of intricacies and circumstances that tended to perplex and darken the case : He was able to weigh things, as it were, in a balance, and to distinguish those things that were solid and weighty from those that had only a fair shew, without substance, which he evidently discovered in his accurate, clear, and plain way of stating and committing causes to a jury, from the bench (as by others hath been observed) he wonderfully distinguished truth from falsehood, and the most labored cases seemed always to lie clear in his mind, his ideas properly ranged....and he had a talent of communicating them to every one's understanding, beyond almost any one, and if any were misguided, it was not because truth and falsehood, right and wrong, were not well distinguished.

He was probably one of the ablest politicians that ever New England bred : He had a very uncommon insight into human nature, and a marvellous ability to penetrate into the particular tempers and dispositions of such as he had to deal with, and to discern the fittest way of treating them, so as most effectually to influence them to any good and wise purpose.

And never perhaps was there a person that had a more extensive and thorough knowledge of the state of this land, and its public affairs, and of persons that were jointly concerned with him in them : He knew this people, and their circumstances, and what their circumstances required : He discerned the diseases of this body, and what were the proper remedies, as an able and masterly physician. He had a great acquaintance with the neighboring colonies, and also the neighbor nations on this continent, with whom we are con-

cerned in our public affairs : He had a far greater knowledge than any other person in the land, of the several nations of Indians in these northern parts of America, their tempers, manners, and the proper way of treating them, and was more extensively known by them than any other person in the country : And no other person in authority in this province had such an acquaintance with the people and country of Canada, the land of our enemies, as he.

He was exceeding far from a disposition and forwardness to intermeddle with other people's business ; but as to what belonged to the offices he sustained, and the important affairs that he had the care of, he had a great understanding of what belonged to them. I have often been surpris'd at the length of his reach, and what I have seen of his ability to foresee and determine the consequences of things, even at a great distance, and quite beyond the sight of other men. He was not wavering and unsteady in his opinion : His manner was never to pass a judgment rashly, but he was wont first thoroughly to deliberate and weigh an affair ; and in this, notwithstanding his great abilities, he was glad to improve by the help of conversation and discourse with others (and often spake of the great advantage he found by it) but when, on mature consideration, he had settled his judgment, he was not easily turned from it by false colors, and plausible pretences and appearances.

And besides his knowledge of things belonging to his particular calling as a ruler, he had also a great degree of understanding in things belonging to his general calling as a Christian : He was no inconsiderable divine : He was a wise casuist, as I know by the great help I have found from time to time by his judgment and advice in cases of conscience, wherein I have consulted him : And indeed I scarce knew the divine that I ever found more able to help and enlighten the mind in such cases than he. And he had no small degree of knowledge in things pertaining to experimental religion ; but was wont to discourse on such subjects, not only

with accurate doctrinal distinctions, but as one intimately and feelingly acquainted with these things.

He was not only great in speculative knowledge, but his knowledge was practical; such as tended to a wise conduct in the affairs, business, and duties of life; so as properly to have the denomination of wisdom, and so as properly and eminently to invest him with the character of a wise man. And he was not only eminently wise and prudent in his own conduct, but was one of the ablest and wisest counsellors of others in any difficult affair.

The greatness and honorableness of his disposition was answerable to the largeness of his understanding: He was naturally of a great mind: In this respect he was truly the son of nobles. He greatly abhorred things which were mean and sordid, and seemed to be incapable of a compliance with them. How far was he from trifling and impertinence in his conversation? How far from a busy, meddling disposition? How far from any sly and clandestine management to fill his pockets with what was fraudulently withheld, or violently squeezed from the laborer, soldier, or inferior officer? How far from taking advantage from his commission or authority, or any superior power he had in his hands; or the ignorance, dependence, or necessities of others, to add to his own gains with what properly belonged to them, and with what they might justly expect as a proper reward for any of their services? How far was he from secretly taking bribes offered to induce him to favor any man in his cause, or by his power or interest to promote his being advanced to any place of public trust, honor, or profit? How greatly did he abhor lying and prevaricating? And how immoveably stedfast was he to exact truth? His hatred of those things that were mean and sordid was so apparent and well known, that it was evident that men dreaded to appear in any thing of that nature in his presence.

He was a man remarkably of a public spirit, a true lover of his country, and greatly abhorred the sacrificing the public welfare to private interest.

He was very eminently endowed with a spirit of government. The God of nature seemed to have formed him for government, as though he had been made on purpose, and cast into a mould, by which he should be every way fitted for the business of a man in public authority. Such a behavior and conduct was natural to him as tended to maintain his authority, and possess others with awe and reverence, and to enforce and render effectual what he said and did in the exercise of his authority. He did not bear the sword in vain: He was truly a terror to evil doers. What I saw in him often put me in mind of that saying of the wise man, Prov. xx. 8. "The king that sitteth on the throne of judgment scattereth away all evil with his eyes." He was one that was not afraid of the faces of men; and every one knew that it was in vain to attempt to deter him from doing what, on mature consideration, he had determined he ought to do. Every thing in him was great, and becoming a man in his public station. Perhaps never was there a man that appeared in New England to whom the denomination of a *great man* did more properly belong.

But though he was one that was great among men, exalted above others in abilities and greatness of mind, and in place of rule, and feared not the faces of men, yet he feared God. He was strictly conscientious in his conduct, both in public and private. I never knew the man that seemed more steadfastly and immoveably to act by principle, and according to rules and maxims, established and settled in his mind by the dictates of his judgment and conscience: He was a man of strict justice and fidelity: Faithfulness was eminently his character: Some of his greatest opponents that have been of the contrary party to him in public affairs, yet have openly acknowledged this of him, That he was a faithful man. He was remarkably faithful in his public trusts: He would not basely betray his trust, from fear or favor: It was in vain to expect it; however men might oppose him or neglect him, and how great soever they were: Nor would he neglect the public interest, wherein committed to him, for the sake of his



own ease, but diligently and laboriously watched and labored for it night and day. And he was faithful in private affairs as well as public : He was a most faithful friend ; faithful to any one that in any case asked his counsel : And his fidelity might be depended on in whatever affair he undertook for any of his neighbors.

He was a noted instance of the virtue of temperance, unalterable in it, in all places, in all companies, and in the midst of all temptations.

Though he was a man of a great spirit, yet he had a remarkable government of his spirit ; and excelled in the government of his tongue. In the midst of all provocations he met with, among the multitudes he had to deal with, and the great multiplicity of perplexing affairs in which he was concerned, and all the opposition and reproaches he was at any time the subject of ; yet what was there that ever proceeded out of his mouth, that his enemies could lay hold of ? No profane language, no vain-rash, unseemly, and unchristian speeches. If at any time he expressed himself with great warmth and vigor, it seemed to be from principle and determination of his judgment, rather than from passion : When he expressed himself strongly, and with vehemence, those that were acquainted with him, and well observed him from time to time, might evidently see it was done in consequence of thought and judgment, weighing the circumstances and consequences of things.

The calmness and steadiness of his behavior in private, particularly in his family, appeared remarkable and exemplary to those who had most opportunity to observe it.

He was thoroughly established in those religious principles and doctrines of the first fathers of New England, usually called the *doctrines of grace*, and had a great detestation of the opposite errors of the present fashionable divinity, as very contrary to the word of God, and the experience of every true Christian. And as he was a friend to truth, so he was a friend to vital piety and the power of godliness, and ever countenanced and favored it on all occasions.

He abhorred profaneness, and was a person of a serious and decent spirit, and ever treated sacred things with reverence. He was exemplary for his decent attendance on the public worship of God. Who ever saw him irreverently and indecently lolling, and laying down his head to sleep, or gazing and staring about the meeting house in time of divine service? And as he was able (as was before observed) to discourse very understandingly of experimental religion, so to some persons with whom he was very intimate, he gave intimations sufficiently plain, while conversing of these things, that they were matters of his own experience. And some serious persons in civil authority, that have ordinarily differed from him in matters of government, yet on some occasional close conversation with him on things of religion, have manifested an high opinion of him as to real experimental piety.

As he was known to be a serious person, and an enemy to a profane or vain conversation, so he was feared on that account by great and small. When he was in the room, only his presence was sufficient to maintain decency; though many were there that were accounted gentlemen and great men, who otherwise were disposed to take a much greater freedom in their talk and behavior, than they dared to do in his presence.

He was not unmindful of death, nor insensible of his own frailty, nor did death come unexpected to him. For some years past, he has spoken much to some persons of dying, and going into the eternal world, signifying that he did not expect to continue long here.

Added to all these things that have been mentioned to render him eminently a STRONG ROD, he was attended with many circumstances which tended to give him advantage for the exerting of his strength for the public good. He was honorably descended, was a man of considerable substance, had been long in authority, was extensively known and honored abroad, was high in the esteem of the many tribes of Indians in the neighborhood of the British colonies, and so had great influence upon them above any other man in New England; God

had endowed him with a comely presence, and majesty of countenance, becoming the great qualities of his mind, and the place in which God had set him.

In the exercise of these qualities and endowments, under these advantages, he has been, as it were, a father to this part of the land, on whom the whole country had, under God, its dependence in all its public affairs, and especially since the beginning of the present war. How much the weight of all the warlike concerns of the country (which above any part of the land lies exposed to the enemy) has lain on his shoulders, and how he has been the spring of all motion, and the doer of every thing that has been done, and how wisely and faithfully he has conducted these affairs, I need not inform this congregation. You well know that he took care of the country as a father of a family of children, not neglecting men's lives, and making light of their blood; but with great diligence, vigilance and prudence, applying himself continually to the proper means of our safety and welfare. And especially has this his native town, where he has dwelt from his infancy, reaped the benefit of his happy influence: His wisdom has been, under God, very much our guide, and his authority our support and strength, and he has been a great honor to Northampton, and ornament to our church.

He continued in full capacity of usefulness while he lived; he was indeed considerably advanced in years, but his powers of mind were not sensibly abated, and his strength of body was not so impaired, but that he was able to go long journeys, in extreme heat and cold, and in a short time.

But now this "strong rod is broken and withered," and surely the judgment of God therein is very awful, and the dispensation that which may well be for a lamentation. Probably we shall be more sensible of the worth and importance of such a strong rod by the want of it. The awful voice of God in this providence, is worthy to be attended to by this whole province, and especially by the people of this county, but in a more peculiar manner by us of this town. We have now this testimony of the divine displeasure, added to all the other

dark clouds God has lately brought over us, and his awful frowns upon us. It is a dispensation, on many accounts, greatly calling for our humiliation and fear before God; an awful manifestation of his supreme, universal, and absolute dominion, calling us to adore the divine sovereignty, and tremble at the presence of this great God: And it is a lively instance of human frailty and mortality: We see how that none are out of the reach of death, that no greatness, no authority, no wisdom and sagacity, no honorableness of person or station, no degree of valuableness and importance, exempts from the stroke of death. This is therefore a loud and solemn warning to all sorts to prepare for their departure hence.

And the memory of this person who is now gone, who was made so great a blessing while he lived, should engage us to shew respect and kindness to his family. This we should do both out of respect to him and to his father, your former eminent pastor, who in his day was, in a remarkable manner, a father to this part of the land in spirituals, and especially to this town, as this his son has been in temporals.....God greatly resented it, when the children of Israel did not shew kindness to the house of Jerubbaal that has been made an instrument of so much good to them, Judges viii. 35. "Neither shewed they kindness to the house of Jerubbaal, according to all the good which he had shewed unto Israel."