

wicked men. saith one. cut the throat of my credit, and do as they like best with it: when the wind of their calumnies, hath blown away my good name from me in the way to heaven, I know Christ will take my name out of the mire, and wash it, and restore it to me again.

Inf. 7. From the whole of Christ's humiliation in his life, learn you to pass through all the troubles of your life with a contented, composed spirit, as Christ your fore-runner did. He was *persecuted*, and bare it meekly: *poor*, and never murmured; *tempted*, and never yielded to the temptation: *reviled*, and reviled not again. When ye therefore pass through any of these trials, look to Jesus, and consider him. See how he that passed through those things before you, managed himself in like circumstances; yea, not only beat the way by his pattern, and example for you, but hath in every one of those conditions left a blessing behind him, for them that follow his steps.

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

SERMON XX.

Of Christ's Humiliation unto Death, in his first preparative Act for it.

JOHN xvii. 11.

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world; and I come to thee: Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me; that they may be one, as we are.

WE now come to the last and lowest step of Christ's humiliation, which was in his submitting to death, even the death of the cross. Out of this death of Christ the life of our soul springs up; and in this blood of the cross, all our mercies swim to us. The blood of Christ runs deep to some eyes; the judicious believer sees multitudes, multitudes of inestimable blessings in it. By this crimson fountain I resolve to sit down; and concerning the death of Christ, I shall take distinctly into consideration the *preparations* made for it: the *nature* and quality of it; the *deportment* and carriage of dying Jesus; the *funeral solemnities* with which he was buried; and lastly, the *blessed designs and glorious ends* of his death.

The preparatives for his death were six. Three on his own part, and three more by his enemies. The preparations made by himself for it, were the solemn recommendation of his friends to his Fa-

ther; the institution of a commemorative sign, to perpetuate and refresh the memory of his death in the hearts of his people, till he come again. And his *pouring out his soul to God, by prayer in the garden*; which was the posture he chose to be found in, when they should apprehend him.

This scripture contains the first preparative of Christ for death, whereby he sets his house in order, prays for his people, and blesses them before he dies. The love of Christ was ever tender and strong to his people; but the greatest manifestations of it was at parting. And this he manifested two ways especially; viz. in leaving singular supports, and grounds of comfort with them in his last heavenly sermon, in chap. xiv. xv. xvi. and in pouring out his soul most affectionately to the Father for them in this heavenly prayer, chap. xvii. In this prayer he gives them a *specimen*, or sample, of that his glorious intercession-work, which he was just then going to perform in heaven for them. Here his heart overflowed, for he was now leaving them, and going to the Father. The last words of a dying man are remarkable, how much more a dying Saviour? I shall not launch out into that blessed ocean of precious matter contained in this chapter, but take immediately into consideration the words that I read, wherein I find a weighty petition, strongly followed and set home with many mighty arguments.

1. We have here *Christ's petition*, or request in behalf of his people, not only those on the place, but all others that then did, or afterwards should believe on him. And the sum of what he here requests for them is, that his Father would keep them through his name. Where you have both the *mercy*, and the *means* of attaining it. The *mercy* is to be *kept*. Keeping implies danger. And there is a double danger obviated in this request; danger in respect of sin, and danger in respect of ruin and destruction. To both these the people of God lie open in this world.

The means of their preservation from both is the *name*, i. e. the power of God. This name of the Lord is that "strong tower to which the righteous fly, and are safe," Prov. xviii. 10. Alas! It is not your own strength or wisdom that keeps you, but ye are kept by the mighty power of God. This protecting power of God, doth not, however, exclude our care and diligence, but implies it; therefore it is added, "Ye are kept by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto salvation," 1 Pet. i. 5. God keeps his people, and yet they are to keep themselves in the love of God, Jude, ver. 21. to keep their hearts with all diligence, Prov. iv. 23. This is the sum of the petition.

2. The arguments with which he urgeth and presses on this request, are drawn partly from *his own condition*, "I am no more in the world;" i. e. I am going to die; within a very few hours I

shall be separated from them, in regard of my corporeal presence. Partly from *their condition*: “but these are in the world;” *i. e.* I must leave them in the midst of danger; and partly from *the joint interest his Father and himself had in them*; “Keep those that “thou hast given me:” with several other most prevalent pleas, which, in their proper places, shall be anon produced, and displayed, to illustrate and confirm this precious truth which this scripture affords us,

Doct. *That the fatherly care, and tender love of our Lord Jesus Christ, was eminently discovered in that pleading prayer he poured out for his people at his parting with them.*

It pertained to the priest and father of the family to bless the rest, especially when he was to be separated from them by death. This was a rite in Israel. When good Jacob was grown old, and the time was come that he should be gathered to his fathers, then “he blessed Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseth, saying, God, before “whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which “fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads,” Gen. xlviii. 15, 16. This was* a prophetic and patriarchal blessing: not that Jacob could bless as God blesses; he could speak the words of blessing, but he knew the effect, the real blessing itself depended upon God. And though he blessed *authoritatively*, yet not *potestatively*; *i. e.* he could as the mouth of God, pronounce blessings, but could not confer them †. Thus he blessed his children, as his father Isaac had also blessed him before he died, Gen. xxviii. 3. and all these blessings were delivered prayer-wise,

Now when Jesus Christ comes to die, he will bless his children also, and therein will discover how much dear and tender love he had for them: “Having loved his own, which were in the world, “he loved them to the end,” John xiii. 1. The last act of Christ in this world, was an act of blessing, Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

To prepare this point for use, I will here open, *First*, The mercies which Christ requested of the Father for them. *Secondly*, The arguments used by him to obtain these mercies. *Thirdly*, Why he thus pleaded for them when he was to die. *Fourthly*, and last-

* Jacob desired to bless his sons, not with a common, but with a prophetic and patriarchal blessing; for he knew that he only could speak the words, but the effect depended on another: therefore he sought the blessing from him, with whom speaking and doing are one and the same thing, *i. e.* God himself. *Ainsworth in loc.*

† Blessing is either potestative, which is to confer temporal blessings by a mere act of the will; or authoritative, which is, by virtue of one's office, to pray for, and to pronounce temporal or eternal blessings to be conferred by God. *Pareus.*

ly, How all this gives full evidence of Christ's tender care and love to his people.

First, We will enquire what those mercies and special favours were, which Christ begged for his people, when he was to die. And, we find, among others, these five special mercies desired for them, in this context.

1. The mercy of preservation, both from sin and danger: so in the text; "Keep, through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me:" which is explained, ver. 15. "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil." We, in ours, and the saints that are gone, in their respective generations, have reaped the fruit of this prayer. How else comes it to pass, that our souls are preserved amidst such a world of temptations, and these assisted and advantaged by our own corruptions? How is it else, that our persons are not ruined and destroyed amidst such multitudes of potent and malicious enemies, that are set on fire of hell? Surely, the preservation of the burning bush, of the three children amidst the flames; of Daniel in the den of lions; are not greater wonders, than these our eyes do daily behold. As the fire would have certainly consumed, and the lions, without doubt, have rended and devoured, had not God, by the interposition of his own hand, stopped and hindered the effect; so would the sin that is in us, and the malice that is in others, quickly ruin our souls and bodies, were it not that the same hand guards and keeps us every moment. To that hand, into which this prayer of Christ delivered your souls and bodies, do you owe all your mercies and salvations, both temporal and spiritual.

2. Another mercy he prays for, is *the blessing of union among themselves*. This he joins immediately with the first mercy of preservation, and prays for it in the same breath, verse 11. "That they may be one, as we are." And well might he join them together in one breath; for this union is not only a choice mercy in itself, but a special means of that preservation he had prayed for before: their union with one another, is a special means to preserve them all.

3. A third desirable mercy that Christ earnestly prayed for, was, that his "joy might be fulfilled in them," verse 13. He would provide for their joy, even when the hour of his greatest sorrow was at hand; yea, he would not only obtain joy for them, but a full joy: "that my joy might be fulfilled in them." It is as if he had said, O my Father, I am to leave these dear ones in a world of troubles and perplexities; I know their hearts will be subject to frequent despondencies; O let me obtain the cordials of divine joy

for them before I go: I would not only have them live, but live joyfully; provide for fainting hours reviving cordials.

4. And as a continued spring to maintain all the forementioned mercies, he prays "they all may be sanctified through the word of truth, verse 17. i. e. more abundantly sanctified than yet they were, by a deeper radication of gracious habits and principles in their heart. This is a singular mercy in itself, to have holiness spreading itself over and through their souls, as the light of the morning. Nothing is in itself more desirable. And it is also a singular help to their perseverance, union and spiritual joy, which he had prayed for before, and are all advanced by their increasing sanctification.

5. And lastly, as the complement and perfection of all desirable mercies, he prays, "that they may be with him, where he is, to "behold his glory," verse 24. This is the best and ultimate privilege they are capable of. The end of his coming down from heaven, and returning thither again, all runs into this, to bring many sons and daughters unto glory. You see Christ asks no trifles, no small things for his people; no mercies, but the best that both worlds afford, will suffice him on their behalf.

Secondly, Let us see how he follows his requests, and with what arguments he pleads with the Father for these things: and, among others, I shall single out six choice ones, which are urged in this text, or the immediate context.

The first argument is drawn from the joint interest, that both himself, and his Father, have in their persons, for whom he prays, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine," verse 10. As if he should say, Father, behold, and consider the persons I pray for, they are not aliens, but Christians: yea, they are thy children as well as mine; the very same on whom thou hast set thy eternal love, and in that love hast given them to me; so that they are both thine and mine: great is our interest in them, and interest draws care and tenderness. Every one cares for his own, provides for, and secures his own. Property, (even amongst creatures) is fundamental to our labour, care, and watchfulness; they would not so much prize life, health, estates, or children, if they were not their own. Lord these are thine own by many ties or titles: O therefore keep, comfort, sanctify, and save them, for they are thine. What a mighty plea is this? Surely, Christians, your intercessor is skilful in his work, your advocate wants no eloquence or ability to plead for you.

The second argument, and that a powerful one, treads as I may say, upon the very heel of the former, in the next words, "And "I am glorified in them;" *q. d.* my glory and honour are infinitely dear to thee; I know thy heart is entirely upon the exalting and

glorifying of thy Son. Now, what glory have I in the world, but what comes from my people? Others neither can, nor will glorify me; nay, I am daily blasphemed and dishonoured by them: these are they from whom my active glory and praise in the world must rise. It is true, both thou and I have glory from other creatures *objectively*; the works that we have made, and imprest our power, wisdom and goodness upon, do so glorify us: and honour we have from our very enemies *accidentally*; their very wrath shall praise us: but for active and voluntary praise, whence comes this but from the people that were formed for that very purpose? Should these then miscarry and perish, where shall my manifestative and active glory be? and from whom shall I expect it? So that here his property and glory are pleaded with the Father, to prevail for those mercies; and they are both great, and valuable things with God. What dearer, what nearer to the heart of God?

Arg. 3. And yet, to make all fast and sure, he adds, in the beginning of this verse 11. a third argument, in these words, "And now I am no more in the world." Where we must consider the sense of it, as a proposition, and the force of it, as an argument. This proposition, "I am no more in the world," is not to be taken simply and universally, as if, in no sense, Christ should be any more in this world: but only *respectively*, as to his corporeal presence; this was, in a little time, to be removed from his people, which had been a sweet spring of comfort to them, in all their troubles. But now it might have been said to the pensive disciples, as the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, a little before Elijah's translation, "Know ye not that your master shall be taken 'from your heads to-day?'" This comfortable enjoyment must be taken from them; this is the sense. And here lies the argument; Father, consider the sadness and trouble I shall leave my poor children under. Whilst I was with them, I was a sweet relief to their souls, whatever troubles they met with; in all doubts, fears, and dangers, they could repair to me; and in their straits and wants I still supplied them: they had my counsels to direct them, my reproofs to reduce them, and my comforts to support them; yea, the very sight of me was an unspeakable joy and refreshment to their souls: but now the hour is come, and I must be gone. All the comfort and benefit they had from my presence among them, is cut off: and, except thou do make up all this to them another way, what will become of these children, when their Father is gone? What will be the case of the poor sheep, and tender lambs, when the shepherd is smitten? Therefore, O my Father, look thou after them, see to them, for they are thine as well as mine; I am glorified in them, and now leaving them, and removing out of this world from them.

Arg. 4. And yet, to move and engage the Father's care and love for them, he subjoins another great consideration, in the very next words, drawn from the danger he leaves them in; "But these are in the world." The world is a sinful, infecting, and unquiet place; *it lies in wickedness*: And a hard thing it will be for such poor, weak, imperfect creatures to escape the pollutions of it; or, if they do, yet the troubles, persecutions, and strong oppositions of it they cannot escape. Seeing therefore I must leave thine own dear children, as well as mine, and those from whom the glory is to rise, in the midst of a sinful, troublesome, dangerous world, where they can neither move backward nor forward, without danger of sin or ruin: O, since the case stands so, look after them, provide for them, and take special care for them all. Consider who they are, and where I leave them. They are thy children, to be left in a strange country; thy soldiers, in the enemies quarters; thy sheep, in the midst of wolves; thy precious treasure, among thieves.

Arg. 5. And yet he hath not done, for he resolves to strive hard for the mercies he had asked, and will not come off with a denial; and therefore adds another argument in the next words, *And I come to thee*. As his leaving them was an argument, so his coming to the Father is a mighty argument also. There is much in these words, *I come to thee*. [*I,*] thy beloved Son, in which thy soul delighteth; *I*, to whom thou never deniedst any thing. It is not a stranger, but a son; not an adopted, but thine only begotten Son. It is *I* that [*come.*] I am now coming to thee apace, my Father. I come to thee swimming through a bloody ocean. I come, treading every step of my way to thee in blood, and unspeakable sufferings; and all this for the sake of those dear ones I now pray for; yea, the design and end of my coming to thee, is for them. I am coming to heaven in the capacity of an advocate, to plead with thee for them. And I come to [*Thee*] my Father, and their Father; my God, and their God. Now then, since *I*, that am so dear, come through such bitter pangs, to thee, so dear, so tender-hearted a Father; and all this on their score and account: Since *I* do but now, as it were, begin, or give them a little taste of that intercession-work, which I shall live for ever to perform for them in heaven; Father, hear, Father, grant what I request. O give a comfortable earnest of those good things which I am coming to thee for, and which I know thou wilt not deny me.

Arg. 6. And, to close up all, he tells the Father how careful he had been to observe, and perform that trust which was committed to him; "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition," ver. 12.

And thus lies the argument: Thou committedst to me a certain number of elect souls, to be redeemed by me; I undertook the trust, and said, if any of these be lost, at my hand let them be required, I will answer for them every one to thee. In pursuance of which trust, I am now here on the earth, in a body of flesh. I have been faithful to a point. I have redeemed them (for he speaks of that as finished and done, which was now ready to be done) I have kept them also, and confirmed them hitherto; and now, Father, I commit them to thy care. Lo, here they are, not one is lost, but the son of perdition, who was never given. With how great care have I been careful for them! O let them not fail now; let not one of them perish.

Thus you see what a nervous, argumentative, pleading prayer Christ poured out to the Father for them at parting.

Thirdly, The next enquiry is, why he thus prayed and pleaded with God for them, when he was to die?

And certainly it was not because the Father was unwilling to grant the mercies he desired for them: No, they came not with difficulty, nor were they wrestled by mere importunity, out of the hand of an unwilling and backward person. For, he tells us, John vi. 27. "The Father himself loveth you," *i. e.* he is propense enough of his own accord to do you good. But the reasons of this exceeding importunity, are,

1. He foresaw a great trial then at hand; yea, and all the after-trials of his people as well as that. He knew how much they would be sifted, and put to, in that hour, and power of darkness, that was coming. He knew their faith would be shaken, and greatly staggered by the approaching difficulties, when they should see their Shepherd smitten, and themselves scattered, the Son of man delivered into the hands of sinners, and the Lord of life hang dead upon the tree, yea, sealed up in the grave. He foresaw what straits his poor people would fall into, betwixt a busy devil, and a bad heart; therefore he prays and pleads with such importunity and ardency for them, that they might not miscarry.

2. He was now entering upon his intercession-work in heaven, and he was desirous in this prayer to give us a specimen, or sample, of that part of his work, before he left us; that by this we might understand what he would do for us, when he should be out of sight. For this being his last prayer on earth, it shews us what affections and dispositions he carried hence with him, and satisfies us, that he who was so earnest with God on our behalf, such a mighty pleader here, will not forget us, or neglect our concerns in the other world. Yet, reader, I would have thee always remember, that the intercession of Christ in heaven is carried much higher than this; it is performed in a way more suitable

to that state of honour to which he is now exalted. Here he used prostrations of body, cries and tears in his prayers: there, his intercession is carried in a more majestic way, and with more state, becoming an exalted Jesus. But yet in this he hath left us a special assistance, to discover much of the frame, temper, and working of his heart, now in heaven towards us.

3. And lastly, he would leave this as a standing monument of his father-like care, and love to his people, to the end of the world. And for this it is conceived Christ delivered this prayer so publicly, not withdrawing from the disciples to be private with God, as he did in the garden; but he delivers it in their presence, "These things which I speak in the world," ver. 13. This *ελαλησα*, with the circumstances of place, [*in the world*], doth plainly speak it to be a public prayer. And not only was it publicly delivered, but it was also, by a singular providence, recorded at large by John, though omitted by the other evangelists; that so it might stand to all generations, for a testimony of Christ's tender care and love to his people.

Fourthly, If you ask how this gives evidence of Christ's tender care and love to his people? which is the last enquiry; I answer, in few words, for the thing is plain and obvious; it appears in these two particulars.

1. His love and care was manifested in the choice of mercies for them. He doth not pray for health, honour, long life, riches, &c. but for their preservation from sin, spiritual joy in God, sanctification and eternal glory. No mercies but the very best in God's treasure will content him. He was resolved to get all the best mercies for his people; the rest he is content should be dispensed promiscuously by Providence: but these he will settle as an heritage upon his children. O see the love of Christ! look over all your spiritual inheritance in Christ, compare it with the richest, fairest, sweetest inheritance on earth; and see what poor things these are to yours. O the care of a dear father! O the love of a tender Saviour!

2. Besides, what an evidence of his tenderness to you, and great care for you, was this, that he should so intently, and so affectionately mind, and plead your concerns with God, at such a time as this was, even when a world of sorrow encompassed him on every side; a cup of wrath mixed, and ready to be delivered into his hand: at that very time when the clouds of wrath grew black, a storm coming, and such as he never felt before; when one would have thought, all his care, thoughts, and diligence, should have been employed on his own account, to mind his own sufferings? No, he doth as it were forget his own sorrows, to mind our peace and comfort. O love unspeakable!

Corollary 1. If this be so, that Christ so eminently discovered his care and love for his people, in this his parting hour; then hence we conclude, *The perseverance of the saints is unquestionable* *. Do you hear how he pleads! how he begs! how he fills his mouth with arguments! how he chuseth his words, and sets them in order, how he winds up his spirit to the very highest pitch of zeal and fervency? and can you doubt of success? Can such a Father deny the importunity, and strong reasonings and pleading of such a Son; O, it can never be! he cannot deny him: Christ hath the art and skill of prevailing with God: He hath (as in this appears) the tongue of the learned. If the heart or hand of God were hard to be opened, yet this would open them; but when the Father himself loves us, and is inclined to do us good, who can doubt of Christ's success? "That which is in motion, is the more easily moved †." The cause Christ manageth in heaven for us is just and righteous. The manner in which he pleads is powerful, and therefore the success of his suit is unquestionable.

The apostle professeth, 2 Cor. i. 3. "We can do nothing against the truth." He means it in regard of the bent of his heart ‡; he could not move against truth and righteousness. And if a holy man cannot, much less will a holy God. If Christ undertake to plead the cause of his people with the Father, and use his oratory with him, there is no doubt of his prevailing. Every word in this prayer is a chosen shaft, drawn to the head by a strong and skilful hand; you need not question but it goes home to the white, and hits the mark aimed at. Doth he pray, "Father, keep, through thine own name, those thou hast given me?" Sure they shall be kept, if all the power in heaven can keep them. O think on this, when dangers surround your souls or bodies, when fears and doubts are multiplied within: when thou art ready to say in thy haste, All men are liars, I shall one day perish by the hand of sin or Satan; think on that encouragement Christ gave to Peter, Luke xxii. 31. "I have prayed for thee."

Corollary 2. Again, hence we learn, *that argumentative prayers are excellent prayers.* The strength of every thing is in its joints; there lies much of the strength of prayer also: how strongly jointed, how nervous and argumentative was this prayer of Christ. Some there are indeed, that think we need not argue and plead in prayer with God, but only present the matter of our prayers to him, and let Christ alone (whose office it is) to plead with the Fa-

* By this, that observation is crossed; *Nemo diu tutus, periculo proximus*: None can be long safe, that dwells near to danger: for hereby they are safe in the midst of danger.

† *Quicquid est in motu, facile movetur.*

‡ We can do that, which we can do justly.

ther; as if Christ did not present our pleas and arguments, as well as simple desires to God; as if the choicest part of our prayers must be kept back; because Christ presents our prayers to God. No, no, Christ's pleading is one thing, ours another: " * His and " ours are not opposed, but subordinate;" his pleading doth not destroy, but makes ours successful. God calls us to plead with him, Isa. i. 18. " Come now let us reason together." " God (as " one † observes) reasoneth with us by his word and providences " outwardly, and by the motions of his Spirit inwardly: but we " reason with him by framing (through the help of his Spirit) cer- " tain holy arguments, grounded upon allowed principles, drawn " from his nature, name, word, or works." And it is condemn- ed as a very sinful defect in professors, that they did not plead the church's cause with God; Jer. xxx. 13. " There is none to plead " thy cause that thou mayest be bound up." What was Jacob's wrestling with the angel, but his holy pleading and impor- tunity with God? and how well it pleased God, let the event speak, Gen. xxxii. 24. Hos. xii. 4. " As a prince he prevailed, " and had power with God." On which instance, a Worthy ‡ thus glosseth: " Let God frown, smite or wound, Jacob is at a " point, a blessing he came for, and a blessing he will have; " I " will not let thee go, (saith he) unless thou bless me." His limbs, " his life might go, but there is no going from Christ without a " pawn, without a blessing." This is the man, now what is his speed? The Lord admires him, and honours him to all genera- tions. " What is thy name?" saith he; *q. d.* I never met with such a man, titles of honour are not worthy of thee: thou shalt be called, not *Jacob* a shepherd with men, but *Jacob* a prince with God. Nazianzen said of his sister Gorgonia, That she was modestly impudent with God; there was no putting her off with a denial. The Lord, on this account, hath honoured his saints with the title of, His *recorders* ||, men fit to plead with him, as that word [*maskir*] signifies: Isa. lxii. 6. " Ye that make mention of the " Lord, keep not silence, give him no rest." It notes the office of him that recorded all the memorable matters of the king, and used to suggest seasonable *items* and *memorandums* of things to be done.

By these holy pleadings, " the King is held in his galleries," as it is Cant. vii. 5. I know we are not heard, either for our much speaking, or our excellent speaking; it is Christ's pleading in heaven, that makes our pleading on earth available: but yet surely, when the Spirit of the Lord shall suggest proper arguments in

* *Subordinata non pugnant.*

† Mr. Corbet, of Prayer.

‡ Dr. Harris, in his Sermon on Luke xviii. 6, 7, 8.

|| המזכירים *Rememorantes, vel, qui reminisci faciunt res Domini.* Mont.

prayer, and help the humble suppliant to press them home believ-
ingly and affectionately*, when he helps us to weep and plead,
to groan and plead, God is greatly delighted in such prayers.
“Thou hast said, I will surely do thee good,” said Jacob, Gen.
xxxii. 12. It is thine own free promise; I did not go on mine
own head, but thou badest me go, and encouragedst me with this
promise. O this is pleasing to God, when by his spirit of adop-
tion we can come to God, crying, *Abba Father*; Father, hear,
forgive, pity, and help me. Am I not thy child, thy son, or
daughter? To whom may a child be bold to go, with whom may
a child have hope to speed, if not with his father? Father, hear
me. The fathers of our flesh are full of bowels, and pity their
children, and know how to give good things to them, when they
ask them. When they ask bread or clothes, will they deny them?
And is not the Father of spirits more full of bowels, more full of
pity? Father, hear me. This is that kind of prayer, which is
melody in the ears of God.

*Corollary 3. What an excellent pattern is here, for all that have
the charge and government of others committed to them, whether ma-
gistrates, ministers, or parents, to teach them how to acquit them-
selves towards their relations, when they come to die?*

Look upon dying Jesus, see how his care and love to his people
flamed out, when the time of his departure was at hand. Surely,
as we are bound to remember our relations every day, and to lay
up a stock of prayers for them in the time of our health, so it be-
comes us to imitate Christ in our earnestness with God for them,
when we die. Though we die, our prayers die not with us: they
out-live us, and those we leave behind us in the world, may reap
the benefit of them, when we are turned to dust.

For my own part, I must profess before the world, that I have
a high value for this mercy, and do, from the bottom of my heart,
bless the Lord, who gave me a religious and tender father †, who
often poured out his soul to God for me: he was one that was in-
wardly acquainted with God; and being full of bowels to his chil-
dren, often carried them before the Lord, prayed and pleaded with
God for them, wept and made supplications for them. This stock
of prayers and blessings left by him before the Lord, I cannot but
esteem above the fairest inheritance on earth. O it is no small
mercy to have thousands of fervent prayers lying before the Lord,
filed up in heaven for us. And O that we would all be faithful to

* The heart cries to God more by groans than by words, and more by tears than by speaking. *Aug. Mr. R. A. vind.*

† Mr. Richard Flavel, a faithful and laborious preacher of the gospel, at Haseler in Warwickshire, and afterwards in Willersay in Gloucestershire, now with God.

this duty! surely our love, especially to the souls of our relations, should not grow cold when our breath doth. O that we would remember this duty in our lives, and, if God give opportunity and ability, fully discharge it when we die; considering, as Christ did, we shall be no more, but they are in this world, in the midst of a defiled, tempting, troublesome world; it is the last office of love that ever we shall do for them. After a little while we shall be no longer sensible how it is with them; for, (as the church speaks Isa. lxiii. 16. "Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledgeth us not") what temptations and troubles may befall them, we do not know. O imitate Christ your pattern.

Corollary 4. To conclude; Hence we may see, what a high esteem and precious value Christ hath of believers; this was the treasure which he could not quit, he could not die till he had secured it in a safe hand: "I come unto thee, holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me."

Surely believers are dear to Jesus Christ; and good reason, for he hath paid dear for them: let his dying language, this last farewell, speak for him, how he prized them. The Lord's portion "is his people, Jacob is the lot of his inheritance," Deut. xxxii. 9. "they are a peculiar treasure to him, above all the people of the earth," Exod. xix. 5. What is much upon our hearts when we die, is dear to us indeed. O how precious, how dear should Jesus Christ be to us! Were we first and last upon his heart; did he mind us, did he pray for us, did he so wrestle with God about us, when the sorrows of death compassed him about? How much are we engaged, not only to love him, and esteem him, whilst we live, but to be in pangs of love for him, when we feel the pangs of death upon us! to be eyeing him, when our eye-strings break! To have hot affections for Christ, when our hands and feet grow cold! The very last whisper of our departing souls should be this,

Blessed be God for Jesus Christ.