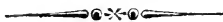


ed his *work* with care, can never finish his *course* with *joy*. O what a dismal case is that soul in, that finds itself surprised by death in an unready posture! To lie shivering upon the brink of the grave, saying, Lord, what will become of me! O I cannot, I dare not die! For the poor soul to shrink back into the body, and cry, *Oh, it were better for me to do any thing than die*. Why, what is the matter? Oh, I am in a Christless state, and dare not go before that awful judgment-seat. If I had in season made Christ sure, I could then die with peace. Lord, what shall I do? How dost thou like this, reader? Will this be a comfortable close! When one asked a Christian that constantly spent six hours every day in prayer, why he did so? He answered, *Oh, I must die, I must die*. Well then, look to it that you finish your work as Christ also did his.



SERMON XXXVI.

The seventh and last Word with which CHRIST breathed out his Soul, illustrated.

LUKE xxiii. 46.

And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

THESSE are the last of the last words of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, with which he breathed out his soul. They were David's words before him, Psal. xxxi. 5. and for substance, Stephen's after him, Acts vii. 27. They are words full, both of faith and comfort; fit to be the last breathings of every gracious soul in this world. They are resolved into these five particulars:

First, The person depositing, or committing: The Lord Jesus Christ, who in this, as well as in other things, acted as a common person, as the head of the church.* This must be remarked carefully, for therein lies no small part of a believer's consolation: When Christ commends his soul to God, he doth as it were bind up all the souls of the elect in one bundle with it, and solemnly presents them all with his, to his Father's acceptance: To this purpose one aptly renders it.

“ This commendation made by Christ, turns to the singular

* He commends not his soul to the Father on his own personal account, but the souls of all the faithful, bound up as it were in one bundle, that they might be kept in safety together with his own. *D. Parcus.*

“profit and advantage of our souls; inasmuch as Christ, by this very prayer, hath delivered them into his Father’s hand, as a precious treasure, whenever the time comes that they are to be loosed from the bodies which they now inhabit*.” Jesus Christ neither lived nor died for himself, but for believers; what he did in this very act, refers to them as well as to his own soul: You must look therefore upon Christ, in this last and solemn act of his life, as gathering all the souls of the elect together, and making a solemn tender of them all, with his own soul to God.

Secondly, The depository, or person to whom he commits this precious treasure, and that was to his own Father: “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Father is a sweet encouraging, assuring title: Well may a son commit any concernment, how dear soever, into the hands of a father, especially such a son into the hands of such a father. “By the hands of the Father into which he commits his soul, we are not to understand the naked or mere power, but the fatherly acceptance and protection of God †.”

Thirdly, The depositum, or thing committed into this hand, [*my spirit*] i. e. my soul, now instantly departing, upon the very point of separation from my body. The soul is the most precious of all treasures, it is called the darling, Psal. xxxv. 17. or, “the only one ‡,” i. e. that which is most excellent, and therefore most dear and precious: A whole world is but a trifle, if weighed, for the price of one soul, Mat. xvi. 26. This inestimable treasure he now commits into his Father’s hands.

Fourthly, The Act by which he puts it into that faithful hand of the Father, παραθησομαι, I commend §. We rightly render it in the present tense, though the word be future: For, with these words he breathed out his soul. This word is of the same import with στυσημι, I present, or tender it into thy hands; It was in Christ an act of Faith, a most special and excellent act intended as a precedent for all his people.

Fifthly, and lastly, The last thing observable is, *the manner* in which he uttered these words, and that was with a loud voice;

* *Hæc Christi commendatio, in animarum nostrarum commodum cedebat. Quippe quas ille a corpore quod inhabitaverant absolutas, quasi quoddam depositum, in Dei viventis manu ex oratione tradebat.* Vict. Antioch. in Mark ix.

† *Manus hæc patris alias Dei potentiam significant, hic vero paternum Dei præsidium,* §c. Pareus.

‡ יהיתי *Unicam meam.*

§ Παραθησομαι, i. e. στυσημι. Erasmus observes that the word here used, signifies, I will commend, for even in Psal. xxxi. 6. whence these words of Christ are taken, the word אֶפְקִיד אֵל is read in the future tense. *Bez.*

he spake it that all might hear it, and that his enemies, who judged him now destitute and forsaken of God, might be convinced that he was not so, but that he was dear to his Father still, and could put his soul confidently into his hands: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Taking then these words, not only as spoken by Christ, the head of all believers, and so commending their souls to God with his own, but also as a pattern, teaching them what they ought to do themselves, when they come to die. We observe,

Doct. That dying believers are both warranted, and encouraged, by Christ's example, believably to commend their precious souls into the hands of God.

Thus the apostle directs the faith of Christians, to commit their souls to God's tuition and fatherly protection, when they are either going into prisons, or to the stake for Christ, 1 Pet. iv. 9. "Let them (saith he) that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

This proposition we will consider in these two main branches of it, viz. what is implied and carried in the soul's commending itself to God by faith, when the time of separation is come. And what warrant or encouragement gracious souls have for so doing.

First, What is implied in this act of a believer, his commending or committing, his soul into the hands of God at death?

And if it be thoroughly weighed, you will find these six things, at least, carried in it.

First, It implies this evidently in it *, *That the soul outlives the body,* and fails not, as to its being, when its body fails; it feels the house in which it dwelt, dropping into ruins, and looks out for a new habitation with God. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The soul understands itself a more noble being than that corruptible body, to which it was united, and is now to leave in the dust: it understands its relation to the Father of spirits, and from him it expects protection and provision in its unbodied state; and therefore into his hands it puts itself. If it vanished, or breathed into air, and did not survive the body; if it were annihilated at death, it were but a mocking of God to say, when we die, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Secondly, It implies *the soul's true rest to be in God.* See which

* Whoever believes in Christ, will not at his death, breathe out his soul into the air; but fly to the faithful keeper of souls, who keeps in safety whatever is committed to him. *Cato.*

way its motions and tendencies are, not only in life, but in death also. It bends to its God: It reposes, it even puts itself upon its God and Father; "Father, into thy hands." God is the centre of all gracious spirits. While they tabernacle here, they have no rest but in the bosom of their God: when they go hence, their expectation and earnest desires are to be with him*. It had been working after God by gracious desires before, it had cast many a longing look heaven-ward before; but when the gracious soul comes near its God (as it doth in a dying hour) "then it even "throws itself into his arms;" as a river, that after many turnings and windings, at last is arrived to the ocean; it pours itself with a central force into the bosom of the ocean, and there finishes its weary course. "Nothing but God can please it in this "world, and nothing but God can give it content when it goes "hence †." It is not the amœnity of the place, whither the gracious soul is going, but the bosom of the blessed God, who dwells there, that it so vehemently pants after; not the Father's house, but the Father's arms and bosom: "Father, into thy hands I commend "my spirit: Whom have I in heaven but thee? And on earth there "is none that I desire in comparison of thee, Psal. lxxiii. 24, 25.

Thirdly, It also implies *the great value believers have for their souls.* That is the precious treasure; and their main solicitude and chief care, is to see it secured in a safe hand: "Father, into thy hands "I commit my spirit:" They are words speaking the believer's care for his soul, that it may be safe, whatever becomes of the vile body. A believer when he comes nigh to death, spends but few thoughts about his body, where it shall be laid, or how it shall be disposed of: He trusts that in the hands of friends; but as his great care all along was for his soul, so he expresses it in these his very last breathings, in which he commends it into the hands of God: It is not, Lord Jesus receive my body, take care of my dust, but *receive my spirit*: Lord, secure the jewel, when the casket is broken.

Fourthly, These words imply *the deep sense that dying believers have of the great change that is coming upon them by death; when all visible and sensible things are shrinking away from them, and failing.* They feel the world and the best comforts of it failing: Every creature and creature-comfort failing: For, at death we are said to fail, Luke xvi. 9. Hereupon the soul clasps the closer about its God, cleaves more close than ever to him: "Father, into thy "hands I commend my spirit." Not that a mere necessity puts

* *Ruere in amplexus.*

† The place avails nothing, neither does the very pleasantness of heaven itself increase the happiness of blessed spirits, but only as it is God's dwelling place. *Parker de decensu, lib. 2. p. 152.*

the soul upon God; or that it cleaves to God, because it hath then nothing else to take hold on: No, it chose God for its portion, when it was in the midst of all its outward enjoyments, and had as good security as other men have for the long enjoyment of them: but my meaning is, that although gracious souls have chosen God for their portion, and do truly prefer him to the best of their comforts; yet in this compounded state, it lives not wholly upon its God, but partly by faith, and partly by sense; partly upon things seen, and partly upon things not seen. The creatures had some interest in their hearts; alas, too much: but now all these are vanishing, and it sees they are so. I shall see man no more, with the inhabitants of the world, (said sick Hezekiah;) hereupon it turns itself from them all, and casts itself upon God for all its subsistence, expecting now to live upon its God entirely, as the blessed angels do; and so, in faith, they throw themselves into his arms: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Fifthly, It implies the atonement of God, and his full reconciliation to believers, by the blood of the great Sacrifice; else they durst never commit their souls into his hands: "For it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. xii. 29. i. e. of an absolute God, a God unatoned by the offering up of Christ. The soul dare no more cast itself into the hand of God, without such an atoning sacrifice, than it dares approach to a consuming fire; And, indeed, the reconciliation of God by Jesus Christ, as it is the ground of all our acceptance with God; for we are made accepted in the beloved: So it is plainly carried in the order or manner of the reconciled soul's committing itself to him: For, it first casts itself into the hands of Christ, then into the hands of God by him. So Stephen, when dying, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit:" And by that hand it would be put into his Father's hands.

Sixthly, and lastly, It implies both the efficacy and excellency of faith, in supporting and relieving the soul at a time when nothing else is able to do it: Faith is its conductor, when it is at the greatest loss and distress that ever it met with: it secures the soul when it is turned out of the body; when heart and flesh fail, this leads it to the rock that fails not: it sticks by that soul till it sees it safe through all the territories of Satan, and safe landed upon the shore of glory; and then is swallowed up in vision: many a favour it hath shewn the soul while it dwelt in its body. The great service it did for the soul was in the time of its espousals to Christ. This is the marriage-knot, the blessed bond of union betwixt the soul and Christ. Many a relieving sight, secret and sweet support it hath received from its faith since that; but, surely, its first and last works are its most glorious works. By faith it first ventured itself

upon Christ; threw itself upon him in the deepest sense of its own vileness and utter unworthiness, when sense, reason, and multitudes of temptations stood by, contradicting and discouraging the soul: by faith it now casts itself into his arms, when it is launching out into vast eternity.

They are both noble acts of faith; but the first no doubt, is the greatest and most difficult: for, when once the soul is interested in Christ, it is no such difficulty to commit itself into his hands, as when it had no interest at all in him. It is easier for a child to cast himself in the arms of his own father, in distress, than for one that hath been both a stranger and an enemy to Christ, to cast itself upon him, that he may be a father and a friend to it.

And this brings us upon the second enquiry I promised to satisfy, viz.

Secondly, What warrant or encouragement have gracious souls to commit themselves at death into the hands of God? I answer, Much every way; all things encourage and warrant its so doing: For,

First, This God, to whom the believer commits himself at death, is its Creator: the Father of its being; he created and inspired it, and so it hath the relation of a creature to a Creator: yea, of a creature now in distress, to a faithful Creator, 1 Pet. iv. 19. "Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing; as to a [faithful Creator]." It is very true, this single relation, in itself, gives little ground of encouragement, unless the creature had conserved that integrity in which it was originally created*. And they that have no more to plead with God for acceptance, by their relation to him as creatures to a Creator, will doubtless find that word made good to their little comfort, Isa. xxvii. 11. "It is a people of no understanding, therefore he that made them, will not have mercy on them; and he that formed them, will shew them no favour." But now, grace brings that relation into repute: holiness ingratiates us again, and revives the remembrance of this relation; so that believers only can plead this.

Secondly, As the gracious soul is his creature, so it is his redeemed creature; one that he hath bought, and that with a great price, even with the precious blood of Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. i. 18. This greatly encourages the departing soul, to commit itself into the hands of God; so you find, Psal. xxxi. 5. "Into thy hands do I commend my spirit, thou hast redeemed it, O Lord God of truth." Surely this is mighty encouragement, to put itself upon God in a dying hour. Lord, I am not only thy creature, but thy redeemed crea-

* *Haustus ex divina origine. i. e.* Descended of a divine original.

ture; one that thou hast bought with a great price: O, I have cost thee dear! for my sake Christ came from thy bosom, and is it imaginable, that after that thou hast in such a costly way, even by the expence of the precious blood of Christ, redeemed me, thou shouldst at last exclude me? Shall the ends both of creation and redemption of this soul be lost together? will God form such an excellent creature as my soul is, in which are so many wonders of the wisdom and power of its Creator? will he be content, when sin has marred the frame, and defaced the glory of it, to recover it to himself again, by the death of his own dear Son, and after all this, cast it away, as if there were nothing in all this? "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:" I know thou wilt have a respect to the work of thy hands; especially to a redeemed creature, upon which thou hast expended so great sums of love, which thou hast bought at so dear a rate.

Thirdly, Nay, that is not all; the gracious soul may confidently and securely commit itself into the hands of God, when it parts with its body at death; not only because it is his creature, his redeemed creature, but because it is his renewed creature also: and this lays a firm ground for the believer's confidence and acceptance; not that it is the proper cause, or reason of its acceptance, but as it is the soul's best evidence, that it is accepted with God, and shall not be refused by him, when it comes to him at death: for, in such a soul, there is a double workmanship of God, both glorious pieces, though the last exceeds in glory. A natural workmanship, in the excellent frame of that noble creature, the soul; and a gracious workmanship upon that again; a new creation upon the old; glory upon glory. "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 10. The Holy Ghost came down from heaven on purpose to create this new workmanship; to frame this new creature; and indeed, it is the top and glory of all God's works of wonder in this world; and must needs give the believer encouragement to commit itself to God, whether at such a time, it shall reflect either upon the end of the work, or upon the end of the workman; both which meet in the salvation of the soul so wrought upon, the end of the work is our glory. By this "we are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," Col. i. 12. It is also the design and end of him that wrought it, 2 Cor. v. 5. "Now he that hath wrought us for the self same thing, is God." Had he not designed thy soul for glory, the Spirit should never have come upon such a sanctifying design as this: surely it shall not fail of a reception into glory, when it is cast out of this tabernacle: such a work was not wrought in vain, neither can it ever perish: when once sanctification comes upon a soul, it so roots itself in the soul, that where the soul goes, it goes; gifts indeed, they die: all na-

tural excellency and beauty, that goes away at death, Job iv. *ult.* but grace ascends with the soul; it is a sanctified, when a separate soul. And can God shut the door of glory upon such a soul, that by grace is made meet for the inheritance? O, it cannot be!

Fourthly, As the gracious soul is a renewed soul, so it is also a sealed soul; God hath sealed it in this world for that glory, into which it is now to enter at death. All gracious souls are sealed objectively, i. e. they have those works of grace wrought on their souls, which do, (as but now was said,) ascertain and evidence their title to glory; and in many are sealed formally; that is, the Spirit helps them clearly to discern their interest in Christ, and all the promises. This both secures heaven to the soul in itself, and becomes also an earnest or pledge of that glory in the unspeakable joys and comforts that it produces in the soul: So you find, 2 Cor. i. 22. "Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." God's sealing us gives high security; his objective seal makes it sure in itself, his formal seal makes it so to us; but, if over and above all this, he will please, as a fruit of that his sealing, to give us those heavenly inexpressible joys and comforts which are the fruit of his formal sealing-work, to be an earnest, a foretaste and hansen of that glory, how can the soul that hath found all this, fear in the least of a rejection by its God, when at death it comes to him? Surely, if God have sealed, he will not refuse you; if he have given his earnest, he will not shut you out; God's earnest is not given in jest.

Fifthly, Moreover, every gracious soul may confidently cast itself into the arms of its God, when it goes hence, with "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." Forasmuch as every gracious soul, is a soul in covenant with God; and God stands obliged by his covenant and promise to such, not to cast them out, when they come unto him. As soon as ever thou became his, by regeneration, that promise became thine, Heb. xiii. 5. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." And will he leave the soul at a time when it never had more need of a God to stand by it, than it hath then? Every gracious soul is entitled to that promise, John xiv. 3. "I will come again, and receive you to myself." And will he fail to make it good when the time of the promise is come, as at death it is? It cannot be. Multitudes of promises; the whole covenant of promises, give security to the soul against the fears of rejection, or neglect by God. And the soul's dependence upon God and his promise; its very casting itself upon him, from the encouragement the word gives it, add to the engagement upon God. When he sees a poor soul that he hath made, redeemed, sanctified, sealed, and by solemn promise engaged himself to re-

ceive, coming to him at death, firmly depending upon his faithfulness that hath promised, saying, as David, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Though Lord, there be many defects in me, “yet thou hast made “a covenant with me, well ordered in all things, and sure; and this “is all my salvation, and all my hope.” Lord, I am resolved to send out my soul in an act of faith: I will venture it upon the credit of thy promise. How can God refuse such a soul? How can he put it off, when it so puts itself upon him?

Sixthly, But this is not all; *the gracious soul sustains many intimate and dear relations to that God into whose hands it commends itself at death.* It is his spouse, and the consideration of such a day of espousals, may well encourage it to cast itself into the bosom of Christ, its head and husband: it is a member of his body, flesh and bones, Eph. v. 30. It is his child, and he its everlasting Father, Isa. ix. 6. It is his friend. “Henceforth (saith Christ,) I “call you not servants, but friends,” John xv. 15. What confidence may these, and all other the dear relations Christ owns to the renewed soul, beget, in such an hour as this is! What husband can throw off the dear wife of his bosom; who in distresses casts herself into his arms! What father can shut the door upon a dear child that comes to him for refuge, saying, Father, into thy hands I commit myself!

Seventhly, and lastly, The unchangeableness of God’s love to his people, gives confidence they shall in no wise be cast out. They know Christ was the same to them at last as he was at first: the same in the pangs of death, as he was in the comforts of life: having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end, John xiii. 1. He doth not love as the world loves, only in prosperity; but they are as dear to him when their beauty and strength are gone, as when they were in the greatest flourishing. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s, Rom. xiv. 8. Take in all these things, and weigh them both apart, and together, and see whether they amount not to a full evidence of the truth of this point, that dying believers are both warranted and encouraged to commend their souls into the hands of God; whether they have not every one of them cause to say as the apostle did, 2 Tim. i. 12. “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded “that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him “against that day.” The improvements of all this you have in the following practical deductions.

Deduction I. *Are dying believers only warranted and encouraged thus to commend their souls into the hands of God? What a sad strait then must all dying unbelievers be in about their souls?* Such souls will fall into the hands of God, but that is their misery, not their privi-

lege: they are not put by faith into the hands of *mercy*, but fall by sin into the hands of *justice*: not God, but the devil is their father, John viii. 4. Whither should the child go but to its own father? They have not one of those forementioned encouragements to cast themselves into the hands of God, except the naked relation they have to God as their Creator, and that is as good as none, without the new creation. If they have nothing but this to plead for their salvation, the devil hath as much to plead as they. It is the new creature that brings the first creation into repute again with God.

O dismal! O deplorable case! A poor soul is turning out of house and home, and knows not where to go; it departs, and immediately falls into the hands of justice. The devil stands by, waiting for such a soul (as a dog for a crust) whom God will throw to him. Little! ah little, do the friends of such a one think, whilst they are honouring his dust by a splendid and honourable funeral, what a case that poor soul is in that lately dwelt there; and what fearful straits and extremities it is now exposed to! He may cry, indeed, Lord! Lord! open to me, as in Mat. vii. 22. But to how little purpose are these vain cries! Will God hear him when he cries? Job xxvii. 9. It is a lamentable case!

Deduction 2. Will God graciously accept, and faithfully keep what the saints commit to him at death? How careful then should they be to keep what God commits to them, to be kept for him while they live? You have a great trust to commit to God when you die, and God hath a great trust to commit to you whilst you live: you expect that he should faithfully keep what then you shall commit to his keeping, and he expects you should faithfully keep what he now commits to your keeping. O keep what God commits to you, as you expect he should keep your souls when you commit them unto him. If you keep his truths, he will keep your souls. "Be-
" cause thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep
" thee, &c." Rev. iii. 10. Be faithful to your God, and you shall find him faithful to you. None can pluck you out of his hand; see that nothing wrest his truths out of your hands. "If we deny him, he also will deny us," 2 Tim. ii. 12. Take heed lest those estates you have gotten as a blessing, attending the gospel, prove a temptation to you to betray the gospel. "Religion
" (saith * one) brings forth riches, but the daughter devours the
" mother." How can you expect acceptance with God, who has betrayed his truth, and dealt perfidiously with him.

Deduction 3. If believers may safely commit their souls into the hands of God, how confidently may they commit all lesser interests and lower concerns into the same hand? Shall we trust him

* *Religio peperit divitias, sed filia devoravit matrem.*

with our souls, and not with our lives, liberties or comforts. Can we commit the treasure to him and not a trifle? Whatever you enjoy in this world, is but a trifle to your souls. Sure, if you can trust him for eternal life for your souls, you may much more trust him for the daily bread for your bodies. I know it is objected, that God hath made over temporal things to his people upon conditional promises, and an absolute faith can never be grounded upon conditional promises.

But what means this objection? Let your faith be but suitable to these conditional promises, i. e. believe they shall be made good to you so far as God sees them good for you: do you but labour to come up to those conditions required in you, and thereby God will have more glory, and you more comfort: If your prayers for these things proceed from *pure ends*, the glory of God, not the satisfaction and gratification of your lusts: If your desires after them be *moderate* as to the measure, content with that proportion the Infinite Wisdom sees fittest for you: If you take God's way to obtain them, and dare not strain conscience, or commit a sin, though you should perish for want: If you can patiently wait God's time for enlargements from your straits, and not make any sinful haste, you shall be surely supplied; and he that remembers your souls will not forget your bodies. But we live by sense, and not by faith; present things strike our affections more powerfully than the invisible things that are to come. *The Lord humble his people for this.*

Deduction 4. Is this the privilege of believers, that they can commit their souls to God in a dying hour? Then how precious, how useful a grace is faith to the people of God, both living and dying?

All the graces have done excellently, but faith excels them all: faith is the *Phœnix grace*, the queen of graces: deservedly it is stiled *precious faith*, 2 Pet. i. 1. The benefits and privileges of it in this life are unspeakable: and as there is no comfortable living, so no comfortable dying without it.

First, While we live and converse here in the world, all our comfort and safety is from it; for all our union with Christ, the fountain of mercies and blessings, is by faith, Eph. iii. 17. "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." No faith, no Christ: all our communion with Christ is by it: he that cometh to God must believe, Heb. xi. 6. The soul's life is wrapt up in this communion with God, and that communion in faith. *All communications* from Christ depend upon faith; for look, as all communion is founded in union, so from our union and communion are all our communications. All communications of quickenings, comforts, joy, strength, and whatsoever serves to the well-being of the life of grace, are all through that faith which first knits us to Christ,

and still maintains our communion with Christ; believing we rejoice, 1 Pet. i. 8. The inner man is renewed, whilst we look to the things that are not seen, 2 Cor. iv. 18.

Secondly, And as our life, and all the supports and comforts of it here, are dependent on faith, so you see our death, as to the safety and comfort of our souls then, depends upon our faith: he that hath no faith, cannot commit his soul to God, but rather shrinks from God. Faith can do many sweet offices for your souls upon a death-bed, when the light of this world is gone, and all joy ceases on earth: it can give us sights of things invisible in the other world, and those sights will breathe life into your souls, amidst the very pangs of death.

Reader, do but think what a comfortable foresight of God, and the joys of salvation, will be to thee, when thine eye-strings are breaking; faith can not only see that beyond the grave, which will comfort, but it can cleave to its God, and clasp Christ in a promise, when it feels the ground of all sensible comforts trembling, and sinking under thy feet: "My heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength (or rock) of my heart, and my portion for ever." Reeds fail, but the rock is firm footing; yea, and when the soul can no longer tabernacle here, it can carry the soul to God, cast it upon him, with "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." O precious faith!

Deduction 5. Do the souls of dying believers commend themselves into the hands of God? Then let not the surviving relations of such sorrow as men that have no hope. A husband, a wife, a child, is rent by death out of your arms: well, but consider into what arms, into what bosom they are commended. Is it not better for them to be in the bosom of God, than in yours? Could they be spared so long from heaven, as to come back again to you but an hour, how would they be displeased to see your tears, and hear your cries and sighs for them: They would say to you as Christ said to the daughters of Jerusalem, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." I am in a safe hand, I am out of the reach of all storms and troubles. O did you but know what their state is, who are with God, you would be more than satisfied about them.

Deduction 6. Lastly, I will close all with a word of counsel. Is this the privilege of dying believers, to commend their souls into the hands of God? Then as ever you hope for comfort, or peace in your last hour, see that your souls be such, as may be then fit to be commended into the hands of an holy and just God: See that they be holy souls; God will never accept them if they be not holy, "Without holiness no man shall see God," Heb. xii. 24. "He that hath this hope, (viz. to see God) purifieth himself, even as he is pure,"

1 John iii. 3. Endeavours after holiness are inseparably connected with all rational expectations of blessedness. Will you put an unclean, filthy, defiled thing into the pure hand of the most holy God? O see they be holy, and already accepted in the beloved, or woe to them when they take their leave of those tabernacles they now dwell in. The gracious soul may confidently say then, *Lord Jesus! into thy hand I commend my spirit.* O let all that can say so then, now say,

Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXXVII.

CHRIST'S Funeral illustrated, in its Manner, Reasons, and excellent Ends.

JOHN XIX. 41, 42.

Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes, with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews preparation-day, for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.

YOU have heard the last words of dying Jesus commending his spirit into his Father's hands. And now the life of the world hangs dead upon a tree. The light of the world, for a time, muffled up in a dismal cloud. The Sun of Righteousness set in the region and shadow of death. The Lord is dead, and he that wears the keys of the grave at his girdle, is now himself to be locked up in the grave.

All you that are the friends and lovers of Jesus, are this day invited to his funeral: such a funeral as never was since *graves* were first digged. "Come see the place where the Lord lay." There are six remarkable particulars, about this funeral, in these three verses.

1. The preparations that were made for it, and that was mainly in two particulars, viz. the *begging* and *perfuming* of the body. His body could not be buried, till, by begging, his friends had obtained it as a favour from his judge. The dead body was by law in the power of Pilate, who adjudged it to death, as the bodies of those that are hanged, are in the power of the judge to dispose of them as he pleases. And when they had gotten it from Pilate,