

S E R M O N

Preached for the FUNERAL of that Excellent and Religious
GENTLEMAN,

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2 CHRON. XXXV. 24, 25.

His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; 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.

IN this context we have the history of the *pious life*, and *tragical death* of good king Josiah. The history of his life gives us an account of both what he *was*, and what he *did*. As to his personal endowments and qualifications, they were singular and eximious, as appears by the fourfold character by which he is described in the context: For,

First, He espoused the interest of religion betimes, even in his youth; chap. xxxiv. ver. 3. “For in the eighth year of his reign, “while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David “his father:” And that under the great disadvantage of an ill education, such a morning promised a glorious day.

Secondly, He hated all corrupt mixtures in the worship of God, and was answerably zealous for reformation: “And in the twelfth “year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, “and the groves,” &c. as knowing well he and his people might expect no more of God’s blessing on the ordinances, than there was of his presence in them; and no more his presence can rationally be expected, than there is of his own order and institution.

Thirdly, He was of a very tender and impressive heart, mourning for public sins and dangers; chap. xxxiv. 26, 27. “Because thy heart “was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when “thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof; and humblest thyself before me, and didst rend thy “clothes and weep before me,” &c. He was not so intent upon his own pleasures, (though in the sprightly vigour of youth) nor on the

weighty concerns of the kingdom, as to forget the interest of God, and the greater concerns of his glory.

Fourthly, He was exceeding careful to propagate the interest of religion, and spread it far and wide among his people. Though he could not infuse the *inward principle*, (that was the work of God) yet he did enjoin the *external practice* of it upon all his subjects, which was his part and duty: chap. xxxiv. ver. 33. "He made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the Lord their God. And all his days they departed not from following the God of their fathers."

But yet good Josiah had his mistakes and failings. The best of men are but men at best: he was too rash and hasty in resolving, and too stiff and obstinate when resolved; and this was the occasion of his ruin. The case was thus:

Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, was at that time making war upon Charchemish, a place that belonged to him, but was taken from him by the king of Assyria; so the war of Necho was a just war; and Judah lying between him and Charchemish, and being at peace with Judah, he requests leave of Josiah to march his army peaceably through his country to the seat of war: Josiah takes an alarm from this message, and arms against him. Hereupon Necho sent ambassadors to Josiah, chap. xxxv. ver. 21. saying, "What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: For God commanded me to make haste; forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not."

Expositors conceive Necho had this discovery of the mind of God, from the prophet Jeremiah, *Per oraculum non scriptum, sed viva voce editum* *: even by word of mouth. If so, no doubt Jeremiah also dissuaded Josiah from going out against him: however, this is clear, Josiah did not consult the mind of God about that expedition as he ought, and was too hasty and resolute therein; chap. xxxv. 22. "Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him," &c. By this means this excellent man came to a tragical end, and that in the very flower of his days. He dies in that unhappy expedition, from which he would not be diverted; is brought home to Jerusalem in the second chariot: dies, and is buried in the sepulchre of his fathers, to the universal sorrow of all good men in Israel, as you read in the text; wherein we have these two parts to consider;

I. The nature and quality of the lamentation.

II. The cause and grounds of it.

1. For the lamentation here made, it was extraordinary; never such cries heard before in Israel at any funeral, whether we consider it either,

* Jerom. a Lapide. Just. Mart.

1. Extensively,
2. Intensively, or,
3. Protensively.

1. *Extensively*, All Judah and Jerusalem, that is, city and country mourned that day; not every individual, but all that had any sense of the worth of the man, the good that he did, or the evils that followed upon his removal. No doubt the priests of Baal, their abettors and associates, secretly rejoiced at his fall; but all good men mourned. But among all the mourners, one is only specified by name, and that is Jeremiah the prophet, in whom all the faithful ministers of God were included. To them he was a true and faithful friend; and in him they lost a father, and a famous instrument of reformation.

2. Consider it, *Intensively*, as to the degree of the sorrow, it was a bitter lamentation: so pungent, intense, and deep, that the mourning of the Jews for Christ, at the time of their conversion to him, is compared to this mourning for Josiah, Zech. xii. 11. "In that day" "there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of" "Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon." This Hadadrimmon was a little town in the valley of Megiddon, near the place of this fatal battle, whose inhabitants receiving the first tidings of the fall of Josiah, made the town ring with doleful cries and lamentations.

3. Consider it *Protensively*, in its continuance and duration, it was "made an ordinance in Israel;" and accordingly "the singing-men" "and singing-women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this" "day;" i. e. Whenever any solemn funeral or public calamity was solemnized in Israel, those persons that were skilful in lamentations, brought in the story of Josiah's death, as the burden of that doleful song or funeral elegy.

II. Let us consider the cause and ground of this lamentation, which certainly was great and weighty enough to justify that sorrow, as great and bitter as it was: for in him they lost a faithful, public, useful, zealous, and tender-hearted instrument, whose life had been eminently useful to the church of God, and whose death opened the gap to all the following calamities upon Judah.

Now, considering Josiah here, especially in his religious capacity, as so faithful, industrious, and useful an instrument for the church of God, rather than in his political capacity as a king, the note from it will be this,

Doct. *That faithful, active, and public-spirited men in the church of God should not be laid in their graves without great lamentations.*

When Jacob was buried, a man famous for religion, a great and sore lamentation was made for him, Gen. l. 10. And when Aaron died all the house of Israel mourned for him thirty days, Numb. xx. 29. When Stephen the proto-martyr died, devout men carried him to his grave with great lamentations, Acts viii. 2. and indeed for any good man to be laid in his grave without lamentation, is lamentable. The living saints have ever paid this respect and honour to dead saints,

as men sensible of their worth, and how great a loss the world sustains by their removal.

I know the departed souls of saints have no concernment in these things, yet respect is due to their very bodies, as the temples wherein God hath been served and honoured, as they are related to Christ, who will one day put great glory and honour upon them.

In the explication and confirmation of this point, I will shew you,

1. *Negatively*, On what account the death of good men is not to be lamented.

2. *Positively*, On what account tears and lamentations are due to them, with the grounds and reasons thereof.

1. *Negatively*, There is not a tear or sigh due to the death of any good man, upon the account of any real loss or detriment that he sustains thereby. No, in this case all tears are restrained, all sorrow prohibited by the principles and rules of Christianity, 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. Religion differences the sorrows, as well as the joys of its professors, from the common joys and sorrows of the world. Dead saints are better where they are, than where they were; to be with Christ is far better: death to them is gain and infinite advantage, Phil. i. 21, 23. This world is the worst place that ever God designed his people to live in; for if a state of perfect holiness and purity be better than a state of temptation and corruption; if a state of rest and peace, be better than a state of labour and sorrow; if it be better to be triumphing above than sighing and groaning beneath; then it is better for departed Christians to be where they are, than where they were. And could they now communicate their minds to us by words, as they lately did, they would say to us as Christ said, Luke xxiii. 28. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children." Or, as he spake to his disciples under their sad resentments of his departure, John xiv. 28. "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I go to the Father." So then no tears of sorrow are due to them, or becoming us, upon the account of any real loss or detriment they receive by death.

2. *Positively*. But the true grounds and causes of our lamentation, are upon divers other weighty accounts; as,

1 *Reason*. First, Because so much of the Spirit of God as dwelt in them, when amongst us, is now recalled and gathered up from this lower world. Those precious graces which they exercised among us, in prayer, conference, and other beneficial duties, are now gone with them to heaven.

The church had the benefit of them during their abode with men, but now no more, except only what the remembrance of their holy words and instructive examples (whereby they still speak to us, though dead) may afford unto us.

There are choice effusions of the Spirit at the time of our sanctification, of which the church reapeth the benefit whilst we live; but all these are recalled at our dissolution, and thenceforth we can be no

farther useful in this lower world: for as the soul is the subject in which these precious graces inhere, so they accompany and go along with the soul into glory.

Now, as it is a real loss to a company when any merchant withdraws a great stock he had running in trade, out of the bank; so certainly it is a great loss to the church of God, when the precious gifts and graces of the Spirit, dwelling in the saints, are drawn out by death; so as the church can have no farther benefit by them, their prayers for us, and with us, are now ended; Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel is ignorant of us.

2 Reason. Secondly, The death of the saints deserves a bitter lamentation, because thereby a breach is made, a gap opened, to let in the judgments of God upon the remnant that is left. It is said of Moses, Psal. cvi. 23. "Therefore he said, that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, lest he should destroy them." A metaphor from a besieged city, when a breach is made in the walls, and an enemy ready to enter; but some champion stands in the breach to defend the city. Such a champion was Moses, who by his constant and fervent prayers, put a stop to the inundation of God's judgments against Israel. And such another was Lot, Gen. xix. 22. whose prayers for that wicked place he lived in bound up the hand of judgment, insomuch as the Lord told him, *I can do nothing till thou art gone.* But when the Lord by death removes such men, he thereby makes a way to his anger, as the expression is, Psal. lxxviii. 50. Hence the death of eminent saints, especially when many are taken away at or near the same time, hath been ever looked upon as a direful omen, and dreadful presage of ensuing judgments, and that not without good scripture-authority, Isa. lviii. 1. "The righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come."

Thus Methuselah, whose very name signified a *flood cometh*, died the year before the flood: Augustine, a little before the sacking of Hyppo: Paræus, a little before the taking of Hydelberg: And Luther, before the wars broke out in Germany. Death, as a *pioneer*, clears the way to a troop of miseries following after. This, therefore, is a just and weighty ground of our lamentations for the death of useful and godly men.

3 Reason. Thirdly, The beauty and ornaments of the places they lived in, are defaced and removed by their death; they look not like themselves, when the godly are removed out of them: for as wicked men are the spots and blemishes, so good men are the beauty and ornaments of their country. A good man was wont to say of Mr. Barrington, of Barrington-hall, in Essex—Methinks the town is not at home when Mr. Barrington is out of town. How desolate and dismal doth a family look (whatever other ornaments be about it) when the religious governor of it is gone! Take away good men from their

families and country; and what are they but like a vineyard when the vintage is past? as the prophet speaks, Mic. vii. 1.

4 Reason. Fourthly, The death of good men deserves a bitter lamentation, because thereby the passage of the gospel, and propagation of religion, is obstructed in the places from whence they are removed. Of how great use in a country may one zealous, public-spirited man be? Hundreds may have cause to bless God for such a man. It was the apostle's desire to the Thessalonians, "to pray that the word of the Lord may have its free course, that it might run and be glorified," 2 Thess. iii. 1. The removal of such a person as naturally took care for the souls of those that were about him, to provide food for them, is no small loss, nor lightly to be passed over.

5 Reason. Fifthly, The consideration of the time in which good men die aggravates the loss, and justly incenses the sorrow of them that remain, and that upon a threefold account (1.) That it falls out in the declining state of religion, when the spirit and power of godliness is so much weakened and impoverished. This is like the loss of good blood in a consumptive body, which must bring it very low. (2.) That it falls out also in a time when the numbers of the godly are so much thinned and lessened, not when the church's children say in her ears, the place is too strait, give place that we may dwell: but when they are every where lamenting the paucity of good men, as the psalmist did, Psal. xii. 1. "Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the righteous fail from among the children of men." At a time when they are bewailing themselves in the language of the prophet, Micah vii. 1. "Woe is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desireth the first ripe fruit." Alluding to a hungry man that goes into a vineyard to refresh his spirits with the fruit thereof; but, alas! there is not one pleasant bunch to be found, none but sour grapes to increase his hunger, and set his teeth on edge (3.) And that which more aggravates the loss is this; when it falls in a time wherein the spring and succession of good men is obstructed. In this case death, like a storm of wind, overturns the fairest, pleasantest, and most fruitful trees in the orchard, when there is no nursery from whence others may be taken to plant in their rooms.

6 Reason. Lastly, There is just cause to lament the removal of public and pious men, when we consider what influence our sins and provocations have had upon those judgments and calamities: our unworthiness of them, unthankfulness for them, and non-improvements of such mercies have bereaved us of them. I look upon every good man, as a good book, lent by its owner for another to read, and transcribe the excellent notions and golden passages that are in it for his own benefit, that they may return with him when the owner shall call for the book again: But in case this excellent book shall be thrown into a corner, and no use made of it, it justly provokes the owner to take it away in displeasure.

Thus you see upon what account our sorrows for the death of good men are restrained, and upon what accounts and reasons they are a due debt to the death of eminent and useful instruments for God. What remains, is the application of this point. And,

1. *Use. First*, The point before us justly reproves three sorts of men.

1. The worst of men, such as secretly rejoice, and are inwardly glad at the removal of such men; they took no delight in them while they lived, and are glad they are rid of them when they are dead. Those that persecuted and hated them when alive, may be presumed to be pleased and gratified with their death. But, alas! poor creatures, they know not what they do! The innocent preserve the island. "Except the Lord of hosts (saith the prophet) had left us a small remnant, we had been as Sodom, we had been like unto Gomorrah," Isa. i. 9. It is a proverb among the very Jews, *Sine supplicationibus non staret mundus*: The world stands by the prayers of the godly. Let the world think what they will of them. I tell you these men are a screen, a partition wall, betwixt them and destruction.

2. It reproves the insensibleness of good men, who are apt too slightly to pass over such tremendous strokes of God: For this it was that God reproved his own people, Isa. lvii. 1. *No man layeth it to heart*. Where the want of *affection* is charged upon the want of *consideration*, none considering their worth, their use, or the consequences of their fall. Such rebukes of God do certainly call for a deeper sense and sorrow, than is found in most men.

3. It reproves the very best of men, who though they do bewail and lament the loss of such men, yet they do not lament it in the due manner. They lament it one to another, saying, Alas! alas, such a worthy is fallen, such an eminent instrument in the church or state is dead; but they do not lament it in prayer to the Lord, they mourn not over the matter to him, as David did, Psal. xii. 1. "Crying, Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth." Help, Lord, the remnant that is left; help, Lord, to repair the breach made by their death; let the God of the spirits of all flesh raise up a man to fill the room, and supply the want. Alas, how insignificant are the lamentations of most men upon this account.

Use 2. Secondly, This point invites us all this day to bewail the stroke of God that is upon us. I could wish that he that looks upon this text and then upon the countenance of this assembly, might be able to discern the agreeableness of the one to the other, on such a sad and solemn occasion.

O let all that love Zion lament, this day, the fall of one of her true friends and lovers. I know funeral *panegyrics* are apt to be suspected of flattery; but as I want a rhetorical tongue for such a work, so if I had it, it should never be saleable for so bad a use and purpose. I am sure, by sending the generality that die to heaven, many are confirmed in the way to hell: Nor can I but think of that serious

line in Chrysostom, 'What a poor comfort is it to be praised, where 'a man is not; and to be tormented where he is:' "But yet the "righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance," Psal. cii. 6. Expect nothing from me on this occasion, but what may be spoken with the greatest assurance of truth, and that intended for the benefit and imitation of all that hear it. Some may think it a strain too high, to compare a private person with such a glorious king as Josiah was; but if Christ compared and preferred the very grass of the field to Solomon in all his glory, I know no reason why we may not compare and parallel the precious graces of a private person with a royal saint; especially since the comparison is made in the *religious*, not in the *civil* capacity.

I am sure the graces, and gracious performances of David, Hezekiah, and Josiah, with all the other dignified saints, were intended and propounded as patterns for our imitation; and no doubt but private Christians may measure by their pattern. Beside, it is abundantly more safe to relate the virtues of the saints when they are dead, than whilst they were alive; for now there is no danger of provoking pride and vain-glory in them that are praised, but much hope of provoking a holy emulation and imitation in them that hear them.

Well then, *Absit invidia verbis*: Suffer me this day to erect a pillar, to perpetuate the memory of this deceased worthy; to pay the tribute of my tears due to that mournful *hearse*; and to engage you to imitate those excellencies of his, which I shall, with equal truth and modesty, display this day; that we also may be duly affected with the rebuke of God upon us, and mourn over it before him.

If, when an eminent *commander* in any army falls, the whole army is affected with, and concerned at his death:

*The mourning drum, the lance and ensigns trail'd,
The robes of honour all in sables rail'd.*

Let it not be thought much, Christians should express their sense and sorrow in sighs and tears, for so useful and worthy a man as God hath this day removed from among us; whose character I shall give you in the following imitable particulars.

1. That worthy man, whose fall we lament this day, was seasoned with religion in his youth, by God's blessing upon his pious education; In this he had the advantage of Josiah. His progenitors were men of piety, and himself a child of many prayers: and as Monica said of her son Austin, it was not likely that a child of so many prayers should perish. How importunately did they request the fervent prayers of their pious friends for him, in the time of his education? Nor was it in vain, for they were manifestly answered in him: He soon discovered that *probity* and *piety*, in his youth, which justly raised great expectations from him in his riper years.

2. Nor did he frustrate those hopes; for as soon as ever God had fixed him a proper *sphere* of activity (I mean a family of his own) those graces that were in him shone forth to the comfort and benefit of

all that were about him : Joshua's pious resolution was his ; " At
" for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord."

He kept up the worship of God in his closet, as well as in his family : And truly, if religion languish in the closet, it will quickly die in the family. His house was a *temple* consecrated to God ; there the morning and evening sacrifices of prayers and praises were offered up : He called his children and servants to those duties, not reckoning that time lost to him which was spent for God. The Lord had endowed him with an excellent spirit of prayer himself. I have sometimes accidentally heard him praying in his family, with such solidity of judgment, pertinency of expressions, and holy warmth of affection, that hath at once edified, refreshed, and reprov'd me in hearing him.

He constantly read the scriptures in course before prayer, and oft-times with a *commentary* upon them, for his own and his family's edification.

The Lord's day he sanctified, not only in more public attendance on the ordinances, but in the duties of reading, repeating, singing, and catechising all his children and servants about him : And all this before he allowed himself or them any bodily refreshments, lest the edge of their affections should be blunted in duty, by the clogging of nature with creature-repasts. And thus did he, as Job, continually : to this course he was severe and constant ; no incident occasions, how great or many soever, could divert him from it.

3. Neither was his holy zeal and Christian care limited and circumscribed within his own family, but was extended to the souls of all in his neighbourhood, who desired helps and means in the way of salvation.

His house was seldom without a godly minister in it ; and loth he was to eat his pleasant morsels alone. It was the joy of his heart to see his house filled on this account : How many witnesses to the truth of this are here this day ! Like another Joseph, he provided food for your souls ; he loved, honoured, received, and encouraged the ministers of the gospel in their deepest sufferings ; gave them opportunities of service, when some durst not own them, and others violently persecuted them.

4. When God called him to public employments in the commonwealth, he neither purchased, nor abused that trust ; but with a true English, rather a Christian, zeal and courage, he dedicated himself to the service of God and his country ; cheerfully quitting all domestic concerns, spent his estate, time, and pains, to heal the breaches of England. I know not a man, whose zeal for the common good would have carried him nearer to the example of that noble Roman, who, when a *chasm* was made by an earthquake, and the *oracle* had declared, that it could never be closed, except something of value was thrown into it, cast in himself to close it.

I could truly have said, had there been conveniency and opportunity for it, when he was laid in his grave. ' Here lies a man that

‘ never betrayed nor deserted the public, for any private interest of his own.’

5. He was a man that came as near Josiah in tenderness of heart, as ever I had the happiness to be acquainted with. The church’s troubles were his troubles; they all met in him as lines in a centre; he even lived and died with the interest of religion: And of him I will say, as the apostle said of Timothy, Phil. ii. 20, 21. “ I have “ no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state, for “ all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” *Naturally*, in this place, is not opposed to *spiritually*, but to *artificially*. Many can *artificially* act the part of a zealot, when their own interest lies in it; but he *naturally*, and therefore, freely, cheerfully, and constantly.

6. But though these excellencies were in him, he had his *nævi*, blemishes, and imperfections. Elias was a man of like passions and weaknesses of spirit. All these I doubt not but God hath covered, and he is now perfectly freed from them all.

There is now no passion left within him to be stirred by temptation; no despondencies and sinkings of spirit under dismal aspects of providence. His graces are perfected, and his corruptions finally eradicated.

7. To conclude; He was a man of great *afflictions*, as well as tender *affections*. And as the Lord greatly honoured him in the course of *active obedience*, so he greatly proved and tried him in a course of *passive obedience*. He not only gave the *cross* in his *coat*, but bare it upon his *shoulders*: For besides those troubles which were properly *sympathetical*, he had his *idiopathetical* sufferings also, and that both from the hands of men, and from the hand of God. His piety made and marked him for an object of persecution; the archers shot at him, and sorely grieved him; he and his family were hunted with a net: The Lord lay it not to their charge; *Et hinc illæ lachrymæ*. The sad effects thereof I chose rather at this time to pass over with a sigh, than in this place to commemorate.

And as the hand of man was upon him, so the hand of his God also: first lopping off all the pleasant branches that sprang from him, and that one after another, when come to the endearing age, opening and disclosing the bud; and, as the complement and issue of all, breaking his constitutional strength with a long languishing disease, which at last extinguished this bright lamp, and hath left his family and neighbourhood in darkness and sorrow. His poor heart was the *anvil* on which many *hammers* of affliction had been a long time beating; and no wonder it appeared relaxed and tumified when it was inspected, having endured so many successive strokes of sorrow.

And now what the Lord spake of Israel, in Jer. xi. 16. is fulfilled upon this worthy person: “ The Lord called thy name a green olive “ tree, fair and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he

“hath kindled a fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken.”

Use 3. Thirdly, I shall wind up the whole in several seasonable and necessary counsels; some more general, others more particular, and some most particularly and especially.

First, Counsel to all in general to awaken themselves, and recover a due sense of such sore rebukes of God as this is. When Saul fell, “David lamented it, saying, The beauty of Israel was slain on thy “high places.”

God hath this day stript off an ornament from this country. Such dispensations of Providence speak indignations coming on: It requires almost an age to breed and furnish a man with due qualifications for the service of the church and commonwealth. England doth not so abound with pious, zealous, and faithful gentlemen at this time, but that it may sensibly feel the loss of such a man.

Secondly, More particularly, let the ministers of Christ lament his fall, as Jeremiah did the fall of Josiah in the text. He was a true friend to Christ’s faithful ministers, and had them in honour for their work’s sake. It is true, he hath no more need of us, he is now wiser than his teachers; but we greatly need him, and men of his spirit, in such a dull degenerate age as we live in.

Thirdly, And most particularly, I shall apply and close all with a few words of counsel to the dear and now *desolate relict* of this worthy person, whose sad lot it is this day, to overlive the mercies and comforts she once enjoyed in him.

Madam, God hath this day covered you with sables, written bitter things against you, broken you with breach upon breach. Your sorrows need not to be excited, but regulated. It is my trouble that I cannot discharge my duty to the memory of your dear husband, without exasperating your griefs, which, alas, were too acute before; but rods have their voices; “Blessed is the man whom God correcteth, and teacheth him out of his law.” Hear you the rod, and who hath appointed it; and, oh! that your soul may this day take in these necessary counsels and cautions, without which your afflictions cannot be sanctified to the advantage of your soul! And,

1. Learn from hence the vanity of the creature, the emptiness, and nothingness of the best things here below. How hath God made your best comforts on earth to shrink up and vanish into nothing? How do your fancies varnish and gild over these empty bubbles? What great expectations are we apt to raise from them? How apt to fall asleep in the bosoms or laps of earthly enjoyments, and say with Job, “I shall die in my nest, and multiply my days as the sand?” When lo, in a moment, the projects and expectations of many years are overturned. O what a difference will you find betwixt hope founded in Christ, comforts drawn out of the promises, and the flattering comforts and vain hopes founded in the creature, whose breath is in its nostrils?

It is time for you, and for us all, to wean off from this vain world;

mortify your fancies and affections to it, and place them where they shall not be capable of disappointment.

2. Guard carefully, I beseech you, against those temptations which probably may accomplish this affliction. It may be Satan will suggest to your heart, what he once put into their lips; Mal. iii. 14. "What profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and walked mournfully before him?" Where is the fruit of prayer? What good have I seen of fasting? What hath religion availed? Do not prayerless and ungodly families thrive and prosper? Beware of this. *Madam*, I doubt not but you will acknowledge, there have been sins and provocations within your walls, yea, within your heart, for which God may as justly and severely judge your house as he did Eli's. Remember the rewards of religion are not in this world; and should we speak thus, we shall offend against the generation of his children. All we must expect from religion, is to save our souls by it.

3. Call not the love of God into question to yourself, or yours, because of these severe strokes of God upon you and them: You know Josiah was dear to God, yet he died in the prime of his days, by a violent hand, remote from his own home, and was brought home in the *second chariot to Jerusalem*; a spectacle of far greater sorrow than your dear husband was; and yet, notwithstanding all these sad circumstances of his death, the promise of his God was punctually performed to him, that he should die in peace, and not behold the evil that was to come. "There is a vanity (saith Solomon) which is done upon the earth, that there be just men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked: Again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous," Eccl. viii. 14. But then remember, that it is but in the earth; here, or no where, God must chastise his children.

4. See that you maintain that holy course of religious exercises in your family, and in your closet, wherein he walked so exemplarily before you. Let religion live, though he be dead; and convince the world, I pray you, that it was God's influence, and not your husband's only, which was the spring and principle of this holy course.

5. Strive not with your Maker, nor fret against the Lord under this irksome and painful dispensation: Remember, there is a *woe* hanging over this sin; Isa. xlv. 9, 10. *Woe to him that striveth with his Maker.* There is a twofold striving of men with God, one lawful and commendable; when we strive with him upon the knee of importunity in prayer; thus Jacob wrestled with God, and prevailed, Hos. xii. 4. The other is highly sinful and dangerous, when we presume to censure, or accuse any of his works, as defective in wisdom or goodness. He that reproveth God, let him answer it, i. e. At his peril be it. This sinful striving with God is twofold; either *vocal* or *mental*.

1. *Vocal.* When men, in bold blasphemous language, arraign the

wisdom, power, goodness, or faithfulness of the Lord, at the bar of their own reason; and there condemn them, setting their mouths against the heavens, Ps. lxxiii. 8, 9. This is the sin of the wicked, yea, of the first-born sons of wickedness.

2. *Mental*. In inward frets, murmurs, repinings against God; Prov. xix. 3. "The foolishness of man perverts his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord." The heart may cry out impatiently against God, when the tongue is silent: And if the frets and murmurs of the heart be (as indeed they are) interpretatively no better than a striving with our Maker; then this sin would be found more common among good men in the *paroxisms* of affliction than we imagine. It will be necessary therefore, for your sake, and for the sakes of many more in a like state of affliction with you, to stay a while on this head, and consider these following queries.

Query I. How far may we enquire of God, expostulate, and complain in times of affliction, without sin?

Query II. Wherein lies the sinfulness and danger of exceeding these bounds?

Query III. What considerations are most proper and powerful to restrain the afflicted soul from this sinful excess?

Query 1. How far may we enquire of God, expostulate with him, and complain to him in times of affliction, without sin?

Sol. 1. We may humbly enquire into the causes and reasons of God's displeasure against us, not to seek matter for our *justification*, but *direction* in the work of our *humiliation*: so David enquired about the three years famine, and the Lord informed him, for whose sake, and for what sin it was, 2 Sam. xxi. 1. And thus Job addressed to him in the day of his affliction, Job x. 2. *Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me*; i. e. convince me, what special sin it is, for which I am thus afflicted. This is so far from being our sin, that it is both our duty, and the excellency of our spirits: it is a child-like temper, willing to know, that we may be particularly humbled for that sin, and for ever the more careful to shun it. "That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more," Job xxxiv. 32. Thus far we are safe.

2. We may plead by prayer, and put him in mind of his mercies, relations, and promises, in order to the change of his providential dispensations towards us: We may say to him under the smartest rod, as the church did, "Doubtless thou art our Father," Psalm lxxiv. 20. Have respect to the covenant; or as Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 9, 12. "Thou saidst, I will surely do thee good."

3. We may complain to God under our sufferings, and spread them before him in all their circumstances and aggravations, as Job, Heman, Asaph, Hezekiah and David did. He allows his children to complain to him, but not of him: "I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble," Psal. cxlii. 2. To whom

should a child make his complaint, but to his father? So far we are safe.

4. We may submissively pray for the removal of his hand from us, and entreat, that his anger may cease, and that he will turn again and heal us and our families, and not draw forth his anger for ever. So did David, Psal. xxxix. 10. "Remove thy stroke away from me; "I am consumed by the blow of thine hand;" q. d. Ah, Lord, I am not able to endure another stroke. All this while, we are safe, within the bounds of our duty. But then,

Query 2. Wherein lies our sin and danger, in exceeding these bounds? I answer,

Sol. When forgetting God's sovereignty, and the desert of our iniquities, we arrogantly censure his affecting, or permitting providences, as if they had no conducency to his own glory, or our good. This is both sinful and dangerous: For,

1. This is a proud exalting of our own reason and understanding above the infinite wisdom of God. God hath made our reason a *judge* and *arbiter* in matters within its own *sphere* and *province*: but when it comes to summon God to its bar, and article against heaven, it is an insufferable arrogancy; and we do it at our own peril. God will have all men know, that he is an unaccountable being, Job xxxiii. 13. Yea, he will have us to know, thot the "foolishness of God is "wiser than men," 1 Cor. i. 25. That is, that those very works of God, which man's proud reason adventures to censure as not so wise a method as their own would be, hath more wisdom in them, than all the deep-laid designs of the greatest politicians in the world. And it is strange that men should dare to attempt such a wickedness as this, after God hath so severely punished it in the fallen angels.

2. It is no less than a spurning at the sovereignty of God, from whose pleasure we derive our beings, and all our mercies, Rev. iv. 11. In these quarrellings at providence, and frets at divine appointments, we invade his throne, and controul his sovereign pleasure: How monstrous were it to hear a child quarrelling with his father, that he was not so and so figured; or the clay to chide the *potter* for moulding it as it is?

3. It is destructive to our inward peace and tranquillity of mind, which is part of the punishment of this sin: and a smart stripe, a sore rebuke it is from the hand of God upon us.

Contention is uncomfortable, though but with a neighbour, worse with a near relation; but a quarrel with God is destructive to all comfort in the world. Afflictions may disturb a good man's peace; but a mutinous spirit against God, destroys and stabs it at the very heart. What is the sin and torment of the devils, but their rage against the Lord, and swelling against the methods of his grace? "He "seeketh rest, but findeth none," Mat. xii. 43. The peace of our spirit is a choice mercy, and might be maintained amidst all our af-

fictions, were but our interest in his promises, and the true level of his providences cleared to us.

4. It is irrational, and highly unjust, to give the cause, and quarrel at the *effects*. God hath righteously and inseparably linked *penal* with *moral* evils; sin and sorrow, by the laws of heaven are tacked and linked together; he that doth evil, shall feel evil, Gen. iv. 7. We adventure upon sin, and then fret at affliction, Prov. xix. 3. "The foolishness of man perverts his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord." Is this becoming a reasonable creature? Doth not every man reap as he soweth? Can the seed of sin bring forth a crop of peace and comfort? "Why doth the living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Lam. iii. 39. Search your hearts, and search your houses, and you will quickly find that all your afflictions in this world, were they ten thousand times more, and heavier than they are, do not come near to the desert of one sin. All sorrows, losses, afflictions on this side hell, are quite below the value of sin, the meritorious and provoking cause of them all.

5. It is foolish and vain, to strive against God, and contest perversely with him. Can our discontents relieve us? * Or our murmurs ease us? Will they turn God out of his way? No, *He is in one mind, and who can turn him aside?* Job xxiii. 13. The wheels of providence go straight forward, and turn not when they go, Ezek. i. 17. We may bring them over us to crush us, by standing thus in their way; but cannot turn them out of their way.

"If they still walk contrary to me, then will I walk contrary to you, and punish you yet seven times for your sins," Lev. xxiii. 14. Or I will walk in the rashness of mine anger,† smiting you without moderation, as men do in their rage and fury. This is all we shall get by fretting against God. Never expect relief under, or release from the yoke God hath laid on your necks, till you be brought to accept the punishment of your iniquities, Lev. xxvi. 41.

6. It is a sin full of *odious ingratitude* towards your God: Which appears (1.) In murmuring because it is so bad, when we should be admiring that it is no worse. Are there not millions in hell that never sinned at higher rates than you have done? Is this affliction as bad as hell! Hath God pardoned you and saved you, and yet doth he deserve to be thus requited by you? (2.) In murmuring that our condition is so bad, when we may every day see others in a far worse case, who are equal with us by nature, and we are equal with them in guilt and provocation. If we speak of outward afflictions, certainly others would be glad to exchange conditions with us, and account themselves happy in our circumstances. Consider the description given of those persons, Job xxx. 3, 4, 5. And how little they differ in the manner

* When a patient struggles under the physician's hand he receives a smarter touch.

† בקרו *temere ambulabo*, i. e. I will walk rashly.

of life from brute beasts: And if we speak of inward troubles, compare your own with those of Heman, and Asaph, in Ps. lxxvii. and lxxxviii. and if both together, and that in an intense degree, consider Job vii. 4. and you will soon find your condition full of sparing mercy: Those excellent persons that were so much above you in grace, were yet plunged so much deeper than you into afflictions. And is it not then vile ingratitude in you, thus to mutiny and *charge your God foolishly*? (3.) But especially here lies our ingratitude, in quarrelling and censuring those providences, whose very end and errand is our eternal good; Heb. xii. 10. "But he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness."

7. It is a sin that deprives us of the fruits and benefits of our afflictions: A tumultuous raging spirit reaps no good by the rod. The fruits of affliction are called the *peaceable fruits*, Heb. xii. 11. because they are always gathered and reaped down by the afflicted soul in a quiet and peaceful temper: *Anima sedendo, & quiescendo fit sapiens*. Blossoms and flowers open not in the boisterous storms of winter, but in the mild and gentle spring.

Well then, be convinced of the sin and danger of a discontented spirit under the hand of God, and instead of mourning over lost relations, now mourn for the loss of patience, the want of submission, and for the pride and arrogancy of your own reason, that presumes to correct the works of the Almighty; and say to God, as Joseph did to his father, when he wittingly crossed his hands in blessing Ephraim and Manasseh, *Not so, my father*. This is not fit.

Query 3. But how may these evils be prevented or cured, and the tempestuous soul calmed under the rod? How shall all strifes betwixt God and his people be ended, and the soul made quiet at his feet?

Reply. This blessed frame of spirit may in a great degree and measure be attained in the use of the following *directions*: I say, in their use and application, not by the prescription or simple knowledge of them. And,

Rule 1. The first rule or direction is this: *Study well the glorious sovereignty of God over you, and awe your hearts with the same consideration of it.* From his mere pleasure, you, and all that is yours, proceeded; on his pleasure you depend, and into that good pleasure of his will, your wills therefore ought to be resolved: "Whatever the Lord pleased, that he did, in heaven and in earth, in the sea, and in all deep places," Psal. cxxv. 6. Man and man stand on equal ground; and if our reason be not satisfied about the equity of men's dealings with us, we may ask who did it, and demand the reasons why he did it; but when we have to do with God, we must not dispute his pleasure. Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth; but let not the clay dispute with the potter. Now the sovereignty of God is gloriously displayed in his *decrees, laws, and providences*. (1.) In his *decrees*, appointing the creatures to their ends, whether to be vessels of mercy, or of wrath, Rom. ix. 18, 19, 20. In

this case there must be no disputing with God. (2.) In his *laws*, appointing the work and duty of the creature, as also the rewards and punishments; Jam. iv. 12. "There is one Lawgiver, that is able to save and to destroy." In this case his sovereignty immediately and indispensably binds the conscience of man, and no human authority can dissolve that obligation: Nor must we snuff at the severest command. (3.) The glorious sovereignty of God is displayed in his providential administrations, appointing every man to that station and condition in which he is in this world; whether it be high or low, prosperous, or afflicted: Ps. lxxv. 6. "I said to the fools, deal not foolishly, &c. for promotion cometh not from the east, nor the west, but God is Judge; he putteth down one, and setteth up another." Let not them that are at the top of the world be lifted up; nor those that are at the bottom be dejected; for God casts every man's lot, and changeth their condition at his pleasure; a word of his mouth plucks down the lofty, and exalts the lowly; he woundeth, and his hands make whole. Hence it becomes the afflicted to be still, and know that he is God, Psal. xli. 10. to put his mouth in the dust, and quietly to wait for his salvation: All our fretting and struggling cannot shake off the yoke which he hath put upon us; but a meek and quiet submission to his will, and compliance with his designs, is the best expedient to procure our freedom. There is not one circumstance of trouble befalls you without his order; nor can you expect deliverance but by order from him.

Rule 2. *Study the transcendent evil of sin, and what the demerit of the least sin that ever you committed is.* This will becalm your tempestuous spirits, and at once work them into *contentment* with your present state, and *admiration* that it is no worse, Lam. iii. 22, 39, 40.

Consider, thou querulous and discontented soul, that the wages of sin is death, Rom. vi. ult. that tribulation, anguish, and wrath, are due by law, to every soul of man that doth evil; that so often as we have sinned, so often have we deserved hell: and shall we then charge God with severity, for scourging us with the rods of gentle, fatherly, chastisements? Is this hell? Dare you say the severest affliction that ever was upon you, is above the demerit of your sin?

It is true, indeed, the Lord tells Jerusalem, that she had "received" of his hand double for all her sins," Isa. xl. 2. But that is not the language of strict justice, but of compassions rolled together. There is not a gracious soul in all the world but will readily subscribe Ezra's confession, that God hath afflicted it less than its iniquities deserve, Ezra ix. 13. Oh! if once we measure our afflictions by our sins, we shall admire they are so few, so mild and gentle as they are!

Rule 3. *Consider what a difference there is betwixt the saints meeting with afflictions, and their parting with them.* You meet them with trembling and astonishment, but you shall part with them with praise and thanksgiving; blessing God for the manifold blessings they have instrumentally conveyed to your souls. It is good for me, saith

David, that I have been afflicted. By these things sin is prevented, discovered, and mortified, the ensnaring world embittered, and the rest to come sweetened.

Many other excellent rules may be added : try these, and the blessing of the Spirit accompany them.

To conclude ; be not swallowed up of sorrows for what you have lost ; but balance all the troubles of this life with the hopes of the next. Your dear children are gone, your sweet husband is gone ; but to consider who took them, and whither. It is said of Enoch, Gen. v. 24. "He walked with God, and was not, for God took him." Mr. Upton is not, and yet he is : he is not with men,—he is with God : he ceases not to *be*, though he ceases to *breathe* : he is taken away, but God took him : he is better where he is than where he was : though he be not in your bosom, he is in Christ's.

Imitate his zeal, plain-heartedness, diligence in duties, and you shall shortly meet him again, and never part any more ; 1 Thess. iv. 15, 16, 17, 18. "For this we say by the word of the Lord, that we
 " which are alive, and remain to the coming of the Lord, shall not
 " prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall des-
 " cend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the arch-
 " angel, and the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise
 " first : Then we which are alive, and remain, shall be caught up
 " together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air :
 " and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one
 " another with these words." Did you but know the deep *emphasis*
 of these words, *ever with the Lord* ; I doubt not, but you would find
 comfort enough in them for yourself, and a great overplus for the
 comforting of others.