

# A FUNERAL SERMON

PREACHED AT HACKNEY, JUNE 27TH, 1714,

ON OCCASION OF THE

DEATH OF THE REVEREND MATTHEW HENRY,

LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

BY DANIEL WILLIAMS, D. D.

TO MRS. HENRY,

LATE WIFE OF THE

REV. MR. HENRY.

MADAM,

At the desire of your relations I submitted to make known to you the sad and unexpected news of the death of your late husband. The surprise of that afflictive stroke made this to me a very difficult undertaking.

On the following day you were pleased, by several worthy gentlemen of Hackney, to request that I should preach there a funeral sermon on the next day; the honour I had for the dead, and for you his elict, conquered my backwardness to such a performance upon one day's warning. Your circumstances not admitting you to appear so soon in public, I was willing to send you what I had delivered, with some additions of what I formerly preached on the same text. I heartily wish, that what I have said of the deceased may contribute to your comfort, and conduct too. What I collected from the text, will show you not only your duty, but that the happiness of saints is secure under all the vicissitudes of life and death. The surest mercies are dispensed in both. You have a great charge upon you; viz. the education of many of the children of father so near to God. But you have also much to encourage your endeavours; they are dedicated to God, the pains taken with the capable have well succeeded, the rest are hopeful; many prayers for them are recorded in heaven, they are children of the covenant, and of one well beloved by God and

good men; he has left many printed instructions for your assistance, which they will be apt to regard; and above all, you may, you ought, in all your good attempts, and in every pressing difficulty, to look to and depend upon the Almighty God, as the *Husband of the widow, and Father of the fatherless*. May you find constant tokens of his fulness, truth, and favour, and from him receive comforts by all your remaining mercies! I am

Your sympathizing brother,

And faithful servant,

DANIEL WILLIAMS.

ROMANS xiv. 8.

*For whether we live, we live to the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

THE scope of this chapter is to maintain peace, and urge moderation, among Christians, notwithstanding their different sentiments and practices in rituals and other matters, wherein the essentials of faith and godliness were unconcerned. The *text* assigneth a convincing reason, why a charitable opinion of each other should obtain, although such differences remained; *q. d.* both parties are the Lord's in life and death, both parties live and die unto the Lord, and therefore they should neither despise nor censure one another; *i. e.* they are subject to the dominion and judgment of the Lord as their sole *Proprietor*, they are also received and accepted by him as devoted saints, and as such they serve him, according to their *different* sentiments. It must

then be unjust usurpation, and dangerous uncharitableness, to condemn such because of some inequality in their degrees of light. But more of this afterwards.

Observe, I. Sincere believers are the Lord's in life and in death.

Jesus Christ is the Lord, for, *v. 9.* it immediately follows, *For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.*

Life here expresseth man's present state, and connotes all the time, endowments, abilities, interest, opportunities for improvements and service, with every talent possessed by us in this life.

Death puts a period to this present life by a separation of the soul from the body. Upon death the immortal soul passeth safely into the unseen state; which state is also referred to, because the interest of Christ in his saints is not interrupted by death, and his dominion is over the inhabitants of that world of spirits.

Christ is indeed Lord of all men, as truly as of believers; *All being created for him and by him,* they owe to him obedience in life, and must abide his judgment after death. *All must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.<sup>a</sup>* But sincere Christians are the Lord's in a more peculiar sense; for they were assigned to him by the Father, *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.* They are his by special redemption. He also apprehended<sup>b</sup> them by effectual calling, whereby they dedicated themselves to Christ, and by mutual covenant they further became his own; *They are for him, and not for another.<sup>c</sup>* Upon such accounts it is justly said to all believers, *You are Christ's;<sup>d</sup>* nor is it a small part of their privilege that they can say, *I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine.<sup>e</sup>*

Quest. 1. What is intended by a Christian's being the Lord's in life?

Ans. 1. He alone has authority to rule them, especially in what concerns religion. His will ought to be a rule to them; whatever power others can claim over them must be subordinate to his, and by delegation from him. He is *Head* of the church, to govern, as well as influence, his members.<sup>f</sup> His propriety is of that sort as to be a foundation of such an absolute dominion, as admits no challenge or excuse. All his laws bind the conscience immediately; nor can any person dispense with, or authority control, them. Our Lord has reserved to himself to appoint officers in his church, sacraments, qualifications of ministers, and terms of communion, &c. To add to these is to usurp his rights; to alter or refuse these is rebellion against his crown and dignity.

Ans. 2. They are his to use and dispose of them whilst they live. Shall not he do *what he will with his own?* His justice and wisdom will preserve the rules of equity in disposing of them, and yet he is so true to his own rights, as to claim the disposal of all our circumstances, and the appointing how our time and talents shall be employed. It is an unjust denial of his propriety to murmur at the work he ordains, be it never so mean or difficult. His title to his people is such as to serve his purposes by their health or sickness, prosperous or low estate, higher or lower station; they are not to choose or dispute. The interest of our Lord in us authorizeth him to effect his own ends by us, and by all that is ours, as his wisdom shall direct. Nor is this to be in some cases, but in all; or at some certain times, but as long as life endureth.

Ans. 3. The Lord is sure to be concerned for their good in all the occurrences of life.

The vicissitudes, wants, and dangers in this present life are many; the Lord's people are exposed in this world to more distresses than others, because of their fidelity to him; but as their being his brings on them the hatred of the wicked, so the same thing is their security and relief under all their troubles. He oft, on this account, restrains their enemies, saying, *Touch not my anointed, and do my prophets no harm.<sup>g</sup>* They find cause to say, *We which live are delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal bodies.<sup>h</sup>* He who saith, *He is worse than an infidel* who provides not for his own, cannot neglect to provide for his own, the care of whom he has undertaken when they became his: they are not sent to war at their own charges.<sup>i</sup> His eye guides them in the way he orders them to go; by his strength they are enabled to perform what he enjoins. His consolations abound with their troubles. When weak, he carrieth his lambs in his arms.<sup>k</sup> When they go astray, he brings them back as his own sheep; and will say, *Of them whom thou hast given me, I have lost none.<sup>l</sup>* Their whole life shall evidence the truth of that place; *He will be our guide, even unto death.<sup>m</sup>*

Quest. 2. What is it to be the Lord's in death, or dying?

Ans. 1. The time and the manner of a believer's death are in his hand.

He has the keys of hell and death.<sup>n</sup> His saints shall not die when their enemies please, but when he thinks it most for his glory, best for his servants, and in the fittest time. The weakest shall live as long as he has work for them; and commonly they who have been very useful, are taken away before a longer life shall prove dishonourable, useless, or intolerable to them. It belongs also to him to prescribe, whether the death of his servants shall be

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. v. 10. <sup>b</sup> Phil. iii. 12. <sup>c</sup> Ezek. xvi. 8. <sup>d</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 23.  
<sup>e</sup> Cant. vi. 3. <sup>f</sup> Eph. v. 23. <sup>g</sup> Ps. cv. 15.

<sup>h</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 11. <sup>i</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 7. <sup>k</sup> Isa. xl. 11  
<sup>j</sup> John xviii. 9. <sup>l</sup> Ps. xlviii. 14. <sup>m</sup> Rev. i. 18

hidden or slow, easy or painful, natural or violent, youth or age, by what disease, and by what means they shall die. He has ends worthy of himself in this variety; and what is so equal, as that those ends should be subserved by such as are his own? Peter had no cause of repining, when Christ signified to him by what death he should glorify God, though it was to be a violent death; and he asserts his right to determine of such matters; when Peter asked, Lord, what shall this man do? i. e. Shall John, thy beloved, die as I must? Christ replies, *If I will it he tarry till I come, what is that to thee; follow thou me.*<sup>a</sup>

Ans. 2. When believers die, they are to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.<sup>b</sup>

He alone has a right to judge them. By his sentence their state will be determined, and not by the censures of men; or their own mistaken opinion of themselves. His own gospel will be the rule of judgment; the great and convincing witness, will be his omniscient mind, to which the gracious secrets of their hearts were known; viz. their good desires, resolves, contrivances, affections, and governing maxims; these are better than what appeared oft, in their actions and attainments. It is the same all-seeing eye which observed those prayers, fasts, and arduous works, which they concealed from the world, to avoid ostentation, and to approve themselves to him as satisfied with his sole approbation.

Ans. 3. Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death of his saints.<sup>c</sup>

He who bottles his tears, cannot be prodigal of his blood, for it is precious in his sight; it shall not be spilled but for valuable ends; as to attest his truth, and be the seed of his church; and they shall pay dear who are guilty of shedding the least drop of it. So the cry of this brought utter ruin upon Rome pagan. And in revenge, shall Rome pagan have blood to drink, because she was drunk with the blood of the saints.<sup>d</sup> She may shortly boast those wounds are healed, which she received by the word of Christ's mouth, but she will, after a short triumph, find her plagues shall come in one day, and she be utterly burnt with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her; though the protestants will be so much reduced to effect it.

Ans. 4. When dying, and when dead, he will deal with them as his own.

The sting<sup>e</sup> of death he will take away by an assured pardon, and full absolution. He sets them above its terrors, by a firm persuasion that he overcome death, to deliver them from the fear of it; and by some foresight and foretastes of that good which follows their release. To render them meet

for the upper world, their souls shall be set free from all that is carnal and earthly, by their separation from the body; and the divine principle alone reigning in all its faculties, his angels<sup>f</sup> shall guide and defend the departed souls through the upper regions, till they arrive to the place of the blessed, where Christ will receive them to himself; to possess the mansions<sup>g</sup> he has prepared, and enjoy that perfect light, love, life, glory, and delights, which he purchased for, and becomes the members of such a head. *Them he will bring to appear with him in his glory,*<sup>h</sup> when he comes to judge the world. Their bodies shall his Spirit raise,<sup>i</sup> as the bond of union betwixt him and them, which death could not dissolve; those bodies he will frame to that spirituality, as shall suit the heavenly regions, and the employment of exalted souls. These bodies will not only be freed from all blemishes, pains, weakness, listlessness, and weariness, but made like unto Christ's glorious body,<sup>j</sup> then their whole persons are solemnly absolved and vindicated, and Christ is glorified and admired in them, upon which they ascend, and be ever with the Lord, to be perfectly happy in a full conformity to Christ, and the beatific vision.

*Exhortation.* Be all of you persuaded to become the Lord's, by a sincere dedication of yourselves to him.

Acknowledge that right he has to each of you; at the judgment-seat of Christ, every tongue shall confess to God,<sup>k</sup> i. e. to Christ, who is God, unless Isa. xlv. 23. be spoke of some others besides the true God. If you are among those who are devoted to Christ, you will confess as they, v. 24, 25. *In the Lord we have righteousness and strength, in him we glory;* but if unbelievers, you shall be ashamed that you were so incensed against him, as to deny to come and yield up yourselves to him; this you shall confess to be injustice towards him, and destructive to yourselves. He now puts in his claim, that by your consent you may become his for your own benefit. *What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God,*<sup>l</sup> was what better became the devils to say, than you; for he invites you; your salvation depends on him entirely; and it is possible to be obtained for his sake; nay, it is certain to all, who will yield up themselves to their blessed Lord.

Motive 1. For this end he died and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord of the dead and living.<sup>m</sup>

He has not only a claim to you as your Creator,<sup>n</sup> but as your Redeemer too. You are bought with a price, and that no less than his precious blood; to offer up yourselves to him, is your reasonable service;<sup>o</sup> he might well expect, when bleeding on the cross, that he should draw all men to him;<sup>p</sup> for what ene-

<sup>a</sup> John xxi. 19-22. <sup>p</sup> Rom. xiv. 10. <sup>q</sup> Rom. ii. 16.  
<sup>r</sup> Matt. vi. 4, 5, 18. <sup>s</sup> Ps. cxvi. 15. <sup>t</sup> Ps. lxxii. 14.  
<sup>u</sup> Rev. xvii. 6. <sup>v</sup> Rev. xviii. 7, 8. <sup>w</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 55.  
<sup>x</sup> Heb. ii. 14, 15. <sup>y</sup> Luke xvi. 22.

<sup>z</sup> John xiv. 2, 3. <sup>a</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 14. <sup>b</sup> Rom. viii. 11.  
<sup>c</sup> Phil. iii. 21. <sup>d</sup> Rom. xiv. 10, 11. <sup>e</sup> Matt. viii. 30.  
<sup>f</sup> Rom. xiv. 9. <sup>g</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 1.  
<sup>h</sup> Rom. xii. 1. <sup>i</sup> John xii. 32.

mies could be so unconquered by his love, as rather die by their wounds than come to him to be healed? He merited a propriety in you by his death; he is *risen*, and entereth his claim; he is *alive*, to observe how it is received, and has *all power in heaven and earth*, to avenge himself on such as reject him, as well as to confer all his blessings on those who accept his offer, by dedicating themselves to him. O be-think you, whose are you, if you be not the Lord's? it is an usurper, even the devil, who possesseth you.

Motive 2. You comply not with the chief design of the gospel, unless you become the Lord's.

The gospel is an invitation of sinners to Christ; and all that is recorded therein, tends to incline men to be the Lord's. What is historically declared of Christ, the account given of the Spirit's operations, the promises, and threatenings, all concur to prevail with men to yield up themselves to him. What is mentioned of the evil of sin, the misery of sinners, the dangers, weakness, and emptiness of self, the vanity of the world, the wiles and cruelty of devils; all this is to bring us to *renounce* these, as competitors with Christ for our affections and choice.

No minister can think his labours are effectual, till he can say, *I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ.*<sup>k</sup> All the authority of the gospel, all its directions, all its allurements, encouragements, and helps, are not only in vain to such as refuse to be the Lord's, but they will *aggravate* their condemnation, and expose them to the *severer* punishments. This Jesus *will come in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them who obey not the gospel.*<sup>l</sup> Flatter not yourselves by any impressions the word has made upon you, or by the hopes you have gathered from it; for unless it has prevailed with you to give your hearty consent to be the Lord's, it has had no saving effects upon you. That is its chief intention, for that it is adapted, and its design is not fully answered, till every *thought and imagination be brought to obedience to Christ.*<sup>m</sup>

Motive 3. To be the Lord's, includes the highest honour and felicity.

The godly are pleased with the title of being his *servants*, and oft mention it as their honour. But if you will be the Lord's, you shall not only be his servants, but his *peculiar people*, his *friends* and *favourites*, his *brethren*, *joint heirs with him*, his *temple*, his *spouse*, the *members of his body*, and his *heritage.*<sup>n</sup> Our Lord Jesus declares all these concerning every true believer. He fills up every relation to the extent of it; and must you not admire his condescending goodness, in inviting such as you into such relations. What honour, what safety, what power, what riches, what happiness, must any *one* of these contain! what then must all of them together include? To be his, that is, to be his in all

these respects, connotes a happiness not to be expressed by fewer terms. Look back to what I have said of the Lord's concern for his in life; how precious their death is to him, and how he deals with them dying and dead; and will you not find *cards* fit to draw you to him, or enough to convince you what enemies you must be to yourselves, as well as to him, as long as it is your resolve, *We will not come unto thee.* I reserve another exhortation, as proper to the next head, as well as to this.

Observe, II. All true believers evidence their being the Lord's by living and dying to him.

This is the *duty* of every man, but it is the peculiar *character* of saints, they live and die to the Lord; it is the best and most undoubted evidence of their being the Lord's that they can give: nor will it be proved by any thing without this. All saving acts suppose our being the Lord's, and are comprehended in *living and dying to him.*

Self is excluded in both, *v. 7. None of us lived to himself, no man dieth to himself.* Self is the great rival with Christ, and therefore to *deny ourselves*<sup>o</sup> is made one of the first conditions of men's becoming the disciples of Christ. Man by his apostasy set up carnal self as his chief end, and supreme ruler; his own humour, his own will, his own honour, yea, *his belly, are to him his God.* Therefore till self be renounced we cannot become the Lord's, nor live or die to him.

Quest. 1. Wherein do believers live unto the Lord?

Ans. 1. In general they live to the Lord, *where* throughout their lives they act for Christ and towards him, as they who *are his in life.* The course and tenor of their lives must express a true acknowledgment of his propriety in their persons and all their endowments; and this not by starts, but as the scope of their lives; not for a short time at first, but as long as life shall continue. St. Paul sums it up in these words, *To me to live is Christ.*<sup>p</sup> More particularly,

(1.) They live and act in subjection to his authority as their Lord. You heard that the Lord has the supreme right to govern them; this believers confess, by their obediential regards to him; they walk as he commandeth them; and *put away none of his statutes from them.*<sup>q</sup> What he prohibits they forbear, what he enjoineth they account themselves obliged to perform, and to exercise sincere repentance, when they fail in either of these. Their solicitous inquiry is, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*<sup>r</sup> This they impartially study, with a sincere purpose to observe it against all the motions of their lusts, and without respect to their secular interests. His word they esteem a sufficient warrant, though

<sup>k</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 2.

<sup>l</sup> 2 Thess. i. 8.

<sup>m</sup> 2 Cor. x. 5.

<sup>n</sup> Rom. viii. 17.

<sup>o</sup> Matt. xvi. 24.

<sup>p</sup> Phil. iii. 19.

<sup>q</sup> Ps. xviii. 22.

<sup>r</sup> Phil. i. 21.

<sup>s</sup> Acts ix. 6.

many censure them; nor can the greatest powers make them forbear to do what the Lord enjoins, or comply with usages he has not warranted them to impose; for they are at a point,<sup>1</sup> whether they shall obey the almighty God, or feeble mortals. If men assume to prescribe rules in matters the Lord hath reserved to himself, they dare not follow them; but from a loyal regard to him, they reject all human inventions in the worship of God, and sacred ministrations of his house.

(2.) They live to his glory, as their great end.

The glory of Christ is their *governing end*; this they propose in their undertakings; they contrive and pursue the best means to exalt his name,<sup>2</sup> and carefully avoid what would be a dishonour to him. So he be glorified by what they do, they are contented to want the praise of it, yea, to be despised; and therefore are most solicitous after considerable performances, to observe whether Christ is exalted thereby, and not how they are applauded. As the Lord is greatest in their eye, so they contribute what they can to render him excellent in the esteem of others, and are grieved when any treat his name, his word, or his image, with contempt.

To him they ascribe the praise of all their gifts and graces, and of all their benefits and blessings; whenever they find any good effect of their labours, they humbly confess, that herein *Christ has wrought with me; and glory through Christ Jesus, in those things which pertain to God.*<sup>3</sup> Believers strive to be what they account the highest character a man is capable of, viz. *the glory of Christ.*<sup>4</sup> Not that they think they can make him more glorious in himself, but they desire his own glory may *shine* forth in more illustrious instances, and that they may discern it as far as he is pleased to manifest it, and may discover it to others in all the ways he has appointed for that purpose; and among the rest, that his perfections may, as in a mirror, shine forth in their Christian temper, labours, and behaviour. What pleasure was it to the apostle to be assured, *Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.*<sup>5</sup>

(3.) They serve his interest with faithfulness and diligence, as the chief business of life. They impartially desire to know it, they heartily espouse it as a *trust* committed to them; it is just and honourable in their judgment, even when despised and condemned by the great and learned. This lies near their heart, as their great concern, whoever are unconcerned. They dare not deny or betray it, whatever hardships they are exposed to by their faithful adherence; nor will they neglect it even when the defence and propagation of it require the greatest application of mind, the hardest labours, the largest

expense, the severest self-denial, and very manifest peril of both losing the best friends, and undergoing the wrath of the most powerful enemies.

Such as are his owe him all service. The *angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, stood by me.*<sup>6</sup> Not to serve him at all times, and in all things, directly or indirectly, is defrauding him of his right. But though in all acts of obedience in every station, and doing what prepares us for his service, we are *serving the Lord,*<sup>7</sup> and especially in all acts of religious worship, nevertheless an eminent part of this service consists in being witnesses and agents for him in the world.<sup>8</sup> If we neglect this, we live not to him but to ourselves.

The interest of our Lord is too glorious to make us ashamed, afraid, or backward to promote it to our utmost; for the design he is carrying on, and the purposes to be served by us, are what become his wisdom, holiness, and goodness, and they are conducive to the good of men, as well as glorious to himself. If you ask, What of this kind is it wherein you must be active? I answer, You must resist sin and destroy the works of the devil, as far as your station admits; with all your might *promote* reformation of manners, the welfare of mankind, the purity of worship, a godly discipline, the conversion of sinners, the edification and comfort of saints, and peace among all such as call on the name of the Lord. Again, *propagate* the gospel for the knowledge of Christ, and the salvation of sinners, and defend the faith of the gospel against popery and all damnable errors. In a word, enlarge and advance the kingdom of our dear Lord to the extent of your ability.

(4.) They approve themselves to him, and study to please him from day to day. They are under the influence of that rule, *Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.*<sup>9</sup> They appeal to him for their sincerity, when censured; they are satisfied with his approbation of what they perform, and are not free from doubts of the truth of their graces, till they can appeal to him as St. Peter, *Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.*<sup>10</sup>

The same care they take to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing;<sup>11</sup> they avoid what may grieve his Holy Spirit, who is their only Comforter. They are ready to communicate to his necessitous ministers, and relieve his poor, for *with such sacrifices God is well pleased.*<sup>12</sup> Every duty and good work they endeavour to perform *acceptably to God,*<sup>13</sup> and to stand on good terms with him, whoever are displeased; as knowing, if *they pleased men they should not be the servants of Christ,*<sup>14</sup> for he justly claimeth, that our doctrine and actions should not be directed

<sup>1</sup> Acts v. 29.      <sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 19.      <sup>3</sup> Rom. xv. 17, 18.  
<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. viii. 23.      <sup>5</sup> Phil. i. 20.      <sup>6</sup> Acts xxvii. 23.  
<sup>7</sup> Col. iii. 24.      <sup>8</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 19.

<sup>9</sup> Col. iii. 23.      <sup>10</sup> John xxi. 17.  
<sup>11</sup> Col. i. 10.      <sup>12</sup> Phil. iv. 18. Heb. xiii. 16.  
<sup>13</sup> Heb. xii. 18.      <sup>14</sup> Gal. i. 10.

to be acceptable to men, further than as they please him, by a conformity to his declared will. And this is wisdom for ourselves; for he hath the disposal of all that concerns our welfare in both worlds.

(5.) They are well contented with his disposal of all the circumstances of life.

They refer themselves to him to choose their lot, and acquiesce fully in his determination, as persuaded he knows what is best for them, and most conducive to his own blessed purposes; to subserve which they are devoted, and every way obliged. They have learnt in every state to be content.<sup>b</sup> What condition, work, and station he appoints, they submit to without repining; and labour to accommodate themselves to it, so as to answer the ends of God in that disposition of their affairs. It is their care to improve the advantages, watch against the temptations, perform the duties, and exercise the graces, proper and peculiar to that condition wherein they are placed. They dare not attempt a change of their station, but under his conduct; and are more solicitous to acquit themselves well in a present mean condition, than to get it altered. If sickness, poverty, afflictive relations, or reproach, be their trial, by the hand of an *unoffended God*, every word of his supports them. If they are culpably accessories, they submissively accept their *punishment*, and rest not till a pardon frees them from guilt, which is the bitterest part of their exercise.

But the worst things that they endure for the Lord's sake, they can glory and rejoice in, as what will work for their good in this life, and add an exceeding weight of glory in the life to come.<sup>c</sup>

(6.) They labour to clear their interest in him, and to grow up into him, as the greatest end of life next to the glory of God.

All believers have a covenant interest in Christ, but many of them doubt about it: they who have some good hope, want a full assurance; they who have this, enjoy it not alway. The most blessed comfort, next to a saving interest in Christ, is an uninterrupted full assurance of it. This they, who live to the Lord, strive to obtain, by an exact walk, eminent service, willingly suffering for the cause of Christ, constant, intimate communion with God, growth in grace; and by the lively actings of love to Christ, and of faith in him, and in the gospel constitution and promises. This is what *Paul* was so intent upon, *to be found in Christ, and to win Christ*.<sup>d</sup> He had an interest in him, he had accounted all as loss for him; yea, he had attained assurance, for he rejoiced in him. What then he was still intent upon, and pursued, is either a constant assurance well established, and more strengthened, or a further growth into Christ, with a fuller conformity to him, or both.

All believers are in Christ; Christ in them, by his Spirit and image, is the hope of glory.<sup>e</sup> They are all new creatures, but some are weak, others stronger; all have some degree of conformity to Christ, but some have less of his image, Spirit, life, and power; others have more. But they who have most of these, are still pressing after further degrees. They forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to those things that are before.<sup>f</sup> They would grow up into him in all things which is the head, even Christ; they propose no less than to come to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. For this they pray, and go from one ordinance to another. They endeavour to derive more virtue from Christ; they desire the most transforming sight of him, that they may be changed from glory to glory.<sup>g</sup> They thirst for such communications, as that they may find all of Christ's image, in the whole of them.

Thus I have shown what it is to live to the Lord. All believers do live thus in some measure: to come up to the full of it is our duty, and happiest are they who come nearest to this description.

Quest. 2. In what respect do believers die to the Lord?

Ans. 1. They are resigned to him as to the time and way of dying. They will wait till their change come,<sup>h</sup> how bitter soever their lives may be; and with *Simeon*,<sup>i</sup> receive God's *dismissal* and *release*, before they die. But when he sends the message of death, they receive it, whatever age they are of, and dare not fret at the manner or means by which God will have them die. How composedly does *St. Peter* speak of his approaching death, *Knowing that shortly I must put off my tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus has showed me*.<sup>j</sup> Was this to be by an easy or natural death? No. Christ had showed him, that he should be bound,<sup>k</sup> and forced to die on a cross, which was a shameful, painful death.

Ans. 2. They willingly die for the Lord's name and cause, when he calls them to it.

Every believer is a martyr in purpose and resolution. The Lord is pleased to call some out to resist unto blood, and sacrifice their lives in the honour of his name. Such loved not their lives unto the death.<sup>l</sup> Innumerable are the witnesses, whose blood was shed by heathen and popish idolaters. And still there remain many, who say, in the strength of Christ, *Neither bonds nor afflictions move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my course with joy*.<sup>m</sup> A life is justly and profitably laid out by dying for Christ.

Ans. 3. They apply themselves to him as their Judge, upon the approach of death.

When we see death before our eyes, we know we are near the judgment-seat of Christ, (or what is

<sup>b</sup> Phil. iv. 12. <sup>c</sup> Rom. viii. 28. <sup>d</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 17. <sup>e</sup> Phil. iii. 7, 8.  
<sup>f</sup> Col. i. 27. <sup>g</sup> Phil. iii. 13. <sup>h</sup> Eph. iv. 13, 15.

<sup>i</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18. <sup>j</sup> Job xiv. 14. <sup>k</sup> Luke ii. 26. <sup>l</sup> 1 Pet. i. 18.  
<sup>m</sup> John xxi. 18. <sup>n</sup> Rev. xii. 11. <sup>o</sup> Acts xx. 24.

equivalent) the sentence we must expect from his mouth, which shall determine our state for ever, for he is to be our Judge. The favourable opinion, or rash censures, of men, signify nothing; nay, our own apprehensions and sentence will not be decisive in this important case; but *he that judgeth me is the Lord,*<sup>a</sup> therefore believers apply to him, that he would prepare them, that he would undertake their cause as their advocate, as well as judge; and that he would so work in them, and so assist them to *finish their course*, that they may, by the testimony of his Spirit, have ground to say, *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day.*<sup>a</sup>

Ans. 4. They long for death, that they may go to him, and be for ever with him.

It is not love to the world, nor a mere natural aversion to death, nor a fondness of a present life, that must hinder any true Christian from saying, with *Paul, I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.*<sup>a</sup> No, it is a suspicion of their state, the awfulness of judgment and eternity, and the weakness of their faith, which do represent death as undesirable. If the Spirit of God set them right in all these things, death must appear amiable, for it opens the prison doors, and sets them in the way to behold the glory of their Lord, to whom they are so obliged; and enjoy him without interruption, to whom their hearts cleave with ardent love. As terrible as death is to nature, they cannot but embrace it, as it lets them into the full possession of all their Lord has purchased for them; the very hopes whereof yielded them more joy than all this world could give. Such things make them judge, *that to die is gain,*<sup>a</sup> and therefore to be coveted by them.

Ans. 5. They leave a good testimony for him, when their death is near.

They are far from repenting of any service done to him; they wish it had been greater. They regret not the heaviest suffering they had endured, but are thankful that they were enabled to bear it; esteeming it a *benefit that was given them*<sup>a</sup> to suffer for him. They have such experiments of his conduct and assistance in distresses; they have found such constant instances of his faithfulness and power, that they can without anxiety pass into the endless state. *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.*<sup>b</sup> *Paul* knew the importance of what he deposited in the hands of Christ, a soul capable of the greatest happiness or misery, and this to be determined in the day of death, and published at the judgment day. Nevertheless, he was cheerful, and his mind at quiet, on the very borders of eternity; but that none might accuse him of in-

discretion, he tells you, the ground of his confidence was the acquaintance he had with Christ, by experiments, wherein any one besides this Lord had failed him; and so leaves it upon record, that the Lord had manifested his kindness, faithfulness, and truth to him, in the whole course of his warfare: he had so discharged the trust he had committed to him from his first conversion, that he is not ashamed of his labours or sufferings, and has no doubt concerning him, as to what concerned his perseverance in death, and his welfare in the proceedings at judgment. I might instance in *Polycarp*, and many others, who left a glorious testimony for Christ as a good master, and fit to recommend his service to all survivors.

Ans. 6. They believingly commit their departing souls to him for their final happiness. *They stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*<sup>c</sup> He knew his intelligent rational part must subsist after death; this was the *man*, and though of dignity far superior to the body, yet it was incapable to conduct, defend, or adapt itself to that world of spirits, upon which he was entering. He therefore puts himself into the hands of Jesus Christ, not doubting his willingness to receive him, or his fitness to discharge his undertaking. He was persuaded that if he received it, he would wash it from all its filth,<sup>d</sup> supply all its wants, make up all its defects, answer for all its faults, secure it against all its enemies, enlarge all its capacities, and replenish them to their utmost extent. Happy souls! thus lodged with him, who fully knows that state, of which we are so ignorant; and has the entire disposal of all that good which can make us happy there: *He saves to the uttermost.*<sup>e</sup>

*Exhortation.* Resolve to live to the Lord; and see that you maintain and exercise that resolution.

This is your duty and your interest too: a life thus spent will yield comfortable reflections upon a death-bed. *This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in this world.*<sup>f</sup> But see that your purpose extend to all the six particulars, wherein I have described wherein believers live to the Lord.

But I must consider this duty with some special respect to the *context*. There you will find, that the Holy Ghost calleth you to live to the Lord; more particularly,

1. In a strict adherence to his rules in the matters of religion.

2. In a Christian behaviour towards his servants who differ from you in lesser matters. Therefore,

1. Live to the Lord by a strict adherence to his rules in the matters of religion. It is his prerogative

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.    <sup>x</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 8.    <sup>y</sup> Phil. i. 23.  
<sup>a</sup> Phil. i. 21.    <sup>a</sup> Phil. i. 20.

<sup>b</sup> 2 Tim. i. 12.    <sup>c</sup> Acts vii. 59.    <sup>d</sup> Eph. v. 27.  
<sup>e</sup> Heb. vii. 25.    <sup>f</sup> 2 Cor. i. 12.

to appoint rules in this; for none but he knows what he will accept as worship, or what he will use as means which shall be blessed by him to spiritual benefit, and he is most jealous in things of this kind.

We find in this chapter the following directions about this matter:

(1.) Place not religion in things indifferent, v. 17. *The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost.* Men by not obeying this rule, abridge themselves as to their spiritual liberty; they are tormented with scruples, spend their time and zeal about trifles, which profit not, and neglect to mind what is accepted with God, and conducive to salvation. They who are hot for ceremonies, seldom mind the substance of religion.

(2.) Sincerely endeavour to get thy conscience rightly instructed in the mind of God; pray, and study his word, to find out what he enjoins and forbids, and what he allows as indifferent, v. 14. *I am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself.*

(3.) Admit no man to prescribe to thee in matters of religion, further than they show God's warrant. In this, the Lord is thy only master, and thou art his servant only; and not the servant of any one on earth. Therefore, *If thou keep a day, keep it to the Lord, and if thou keep it not, let thy forbearance be because he has not appointed thee to keep it, v. 4, 6.*

(4.) Be well persuaded in thy own mind as to every thing thou accountest to be sin or duty, that thou apprehendest it to be so, by divine direction, v. 1. *One believeth that he may eat all things, another eateth herbs.* And, v. 5. *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, i. e. of the lawfulness of it by God's word.*

(5.) Be true to thy conscience, and do nothing doubtingly, for the sake of any man, v. 22, 23. *He that doubteth, is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for what is not of faith, is sin.*

These comprehend much of that rule by which the apostle declares, that he and others *lived to the Lord*; it is incumbent on you to follow their steps; for he is your Lord as well as theirs, and he will be your Judge. In this, therefore, be faithful; and what matter is it who condemns you? for he is sure to justify you, and approve of your practice. Men may reproach, imprison, take away your estates and lives too, for not obeying them, against this his declared will: but obedience to him will give you inward peace; and your Lord is sure to reward your fidelity with a *hundred-fold more in this life, than you can lose by it, and in the world to come eternal life.*<sup>g</sup> Loyalty to Christ will be found more gainful, than all the preferments you can get by will-worship, and compliances with human inventions.

A day is near, when this Lord whom you serve will publicly applaud you. He will say, *Well done, good and faithful servants*, who would not violate my laws, nor act against conscience to please the greatest, or to gain the pomp, the riches, or power, which your base compliance might have procured. It was to me you my ministers did live, when you refused such conditions of your ministry, as I appointed not. To me you lived, in executing your office when rulers forbade you. I will ratify your administrations, which the profane accused as nullities. To all the faithful members of his churches, he will say, To me you lived, when you adhered to my ministers, who were rejected because they durst not submit to sinful terms; well done you, who concurred with them in attempts for reformation, and kept your garments clean, in a time of common degeneracy and revolt. It was for me you became subject to calumnies, and branded as incapable of civil offices. For it was my cause you espoused, when you adhered to a pure worship, and refused to acknowledge that men had right to impose any terms of the communion of saints, which I had not appointed. His commendations may well encourage you to persevere, for they will be attended with a *crown of glory*, and ravishing pleasures for evermore.

2. Live to the Lord, by a Christian behaviour towards the servants of Christ, who differ from you in lesser matters. The apostle distinguisheth Christians here as strong and weak. The *strong*<sup>h</sup> (elsewhere called *Ταπεινοι*;) were such as understood their liberty by the gospel from the *Mosaic* ceremonies and rites. These were free to eat any wholesome food, and to omit the Jewish festivals, v. 2, 5. The *weak* were such as scrupled to eat flesh upon the principles of *Pythagoras*, or did forbear meats offered to idols. Many also of the Jews apprehended that *Moses's laws*,<sup>i</sup> which prohibited some meats, and enjoined the observation of certain days and months, were not abrogated. The strong despised<sup>k</sup> the weak as ignorant; the weak judged the strong as profane and ungodly; both quarrelled, and would force him, who differed, to comply with his own usages, and do as himself practised.

You find here many directions as to our behaviour in this case.

(1.) Own such to be his servants, as appear so in the judgment of charity. He is thy brother, v. 6. *God has received him whom you judge, yea, he shall be holden up, v. 4.*

(2.) Neither despise nor judge those that differ in such matters, v. 3.

(3.) Do not offend or grieve them, much less impose on them a compliance with you against their consciences, v. 13. *But judge this rather, that none put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his*

<sup>g</sup> Mark x. 29, 30.

<sup>h</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 6.

<sup>i</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 7.

<sup>k</sup> Col. ii. 16, 22.



ther's way, v. 15. *If thy brother be grieved with meat, now walkest thou not charitably, destroy not with thy meat, for whom Christ died.* If we st forbear the use of our liberty in lawful things,<sup>1</sup> the good opinion they have of our goodness, or ter judgment, induce them to act against their sciences, and so destroy themselves; surely the ument is much stronger against compelling them do so by any penalties; as loss of place or vileges, times, &c.

The arguments are strong, by which these direc- is are enforced, viz. Christ is our *only* Lord, and allows no man to possess his throne, either to ose on conscience, or to judge men's state. To they and you are accountable, v. 4, 11. Again, s from a dutiful regard to the Lord, that they are upulous, and act by their light, v. 6. yea, the rd may serve very good purposes by their differ- light and practice in those lower matters.

4.) *Follow the things that make for peace, and things erewith we may edify one another,* v. 19. This uld both restrain from hurting each other, and d to common benefit. He is wiser than the xstle, that under our present imperfections expects uniformity, by another rule than that, viz. *Whereto have attained, let us walk by the same rule; and if any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal n this to you.*<sup>2</sup>

I shall, from the connexion of the words, and to ply what I have said of dying in the Lord,

Observe, III. They who live to the Lord shall die the Lord, and be found to be his for their endless icity.

Though in the former observations I began with last clause, viz. living and dying we are the rd's, yet the conjunction may import, that because live and die to the Lord, we shall be the Lord's ing and dying; and as we shall be his both living d dying, so, as we live to him (which is what th depends on) we shall also die to him, as far that expresseth our comfort and benefit by death. which I have spoken at large.

*Exhortation 1.* Be the Lord's in life, if you would his at death. The state of men at death, is what vas at the end of life. Accept, therefore, of his rs at present, for *now is the accepted time;*<sup>3</sup> now invites and pleads, this is the time of espousals, you reject him whilst this life continues, it is in n to think you can ever be joined to the Lord. ere will be no further overtures made, death will d you up under an eternal separation from the rd, other than as he will be thy Judge, and an nger of thy contemptuous refusals of him.

*Exhortation 2.* Live to the Lord, if you desire to to the Lord, for your eternal advantage.

All of you must die, it is appointed.<sup>4</sup> You shall die when, and where, and how the Lord pleaseth, whether you consent or not. But would you find death unstung, and friendly? Would you have Christ receive your departing souls, to fit them for, and admit them into, the heavenly mansions? Would you find it a release from all that is grievous, and to be a joyful entrance into the everlasting kingdom of your Saviour?<sup>5</sup> Then live unto the Lord. These are inseparably joined by the gospel constitution. O ask then, to whom do you live, is it to God or the devil? After what do you walk, is it after the flesh or the Spirit? This is your seed-time; *If you sow to the Spirit, you shall reap life everlasting: if you sow to the flesh, you shall of the flesh reap corruption.* It is high time the youngest of you should begin to live to the Lord, for you may die in youth. It is truest wisdom in any of you who have begun, to hold on to the end: for a life spent to the Lord, will at death end in happiness to yourselves, and great comfort to your godly friends.

This may afford some allay to our grief, when we reflect on the very afflictive occasion of our present meeting, viz. the death of the reverend, laborious, and useful Mr. Matthew Henry. I could not have chosen a fitter text, for it was eminently exemplified in him. Few ministers so acknowledged Christ's propriety in them, much fewer arrived to an equal degree of activity in the Lord's service.

He was the son of two eminent saints, who were the glory of Christ in their day; and their character has eminently survived in his life and temper, as in the account of their lives which he published. As they took more than ordinary pains in his education when young, so they received the highest pleasure in his probity and usefulness in their aged years. Nor did God give a testimony to their pious care in making it successful to him alone; but gave them the comfort of seeing all their grown children walking in their integrity.

God, to whom all his works are known from the beginning, oft lays a foundation for the service he designs, by fitting persons from the womb, as to constitution and genius, in great variety; as we see in St. Paul, Luther, Melancthon, &c. in like manner, having determined to do great things by our deceased brother, gave him a very strong body, without which his labours had wasted him in his youth: he also framed the organs of speech to the advantage of his public performances; his fancy was lively, his memory retentive, and his judgment solid.

Such a natural capacity rendered him capable of uncommon improvements, and being cultivated at home, and at the Reverend Mr. Doolittle's, he soon signalized himself in all the useful parts of learning proper to his designed employment, which was the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. viii.    <sup>2</sup> Phil. iii. 15, 16    <sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 2

<sup>4</sup> Heb. ix. 27.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Pet. i. 11.

ministry. Having finished those preparatory studies, and apprehending that the knowledge of the laws might contribute to more distinct conceptions of some subjects and terms in theology, he applied himself for some time to that study, and made good use of that knowledge in several of his composures.

After he had attained what he proposed to himself in the *Inns of Court*, he set himself toward entering upon the ministerial work, though in a time of persecution! He preferred this to all other employs, because (as himself oft suggested) the work was more pleasant, the subject which still employed the mind, more helpful to promote a heavenly life, and the power of religion in his own heart; it gave the best opportunity of serving Christ in his greatest designs on earth, and of benefiting mankind in what most concerned them, viz. the salvation of their souls.

In order to his undertaking this work, he impartially studied the controversy between the established church and the dissenters, and upon the maturest thoughts, he chose to be a *presbyterian* minister, being fully persuaded, the cause of Christ, in the matters debated, was in their hands, and for this, resolved to embark with them, notwithstanding the reproach and hardships to which he might be exposed; for it was not earth, but heaven, to which he directed his course. Yet, with his non-conformity, he highly esteemed all pious conformists, and kept up a Christian charity towards such as differed from him.

Upon the evidence of his eminent gifts and graces, with a strong propension to discharge the duties, and promote the blessed ends, of that sacred office, he was regularly invested in it by fasting and prayer, and the imposition of the hands of presbyters.

He always accounted the work of the ministry the most honourable employment; and was to his death a singular honour to it, by his unwearied diligence and exemplary conversation. From his undertaking the service of Christ in this function, the *business* of his life was, both to improve in meetness for it, and to *fulfil the ministry he had received of the Lord*. His *profiting appeared to all*, by being able on the sudden to perform so well upon any subject, and thereby he commended the close study of the Scriptures; for the whole *Bible* being fixed in his head, (as well as heart) facilitated his work on all occasions. Can the most invidious point to the man alive, of whom it can be more justly said, He laboured much in the Lord. If you consider how oft he preached, you must wonder how he could write so much. But if you reckon how many books he printed, could you imagine he preached so frequently? What time must be laid out in the five volumes on the Bible, besides many other valuable books and printed sermons!

Whilst he continued pastor in *Chester*, which was

two-and-twenty years, he filled up that station with service on Lord's days and week days: besides this, he laid out himself in the adjacent counties, as one who had upon him the care of all the churches. How frequently did he preach seven or eight times a week!

Since his transplanting to this place, he spent himself here and in the city, as if his strength were miraculously supplied to do much, upon a foresight that his time was short. And of this he seemed to have some presages, when he assigned it as an apology to a godly person who cautioned him against over doing; and truly some such impulse was the best reason he had to give.

Great was his acceptance, though his lot was to be in an *age* wherein the office is so despised, that the same qualifications which commend all others can scarce preserve a minister from contempt. But Providence peculiarly smiled on our brother in this respect, though he neither courted applause, nor sought his worldly interest by flattery, or other unbecoming methods. What gave him esteem were his integrity, affableness, the triumph of grace over his passions, forwardness to speak well of all and ill of none, savoury discourses readily fitted to all occasions, useful and unwearied labours, and a readiness to serve all, with a pleasant acknowledgment of what endowments or success any others were blessed with. By these means the places were full where he was employed, persons of all denominations greatly affected him, and his surprising death is the subject of universal mourning.

All must acknowledge the aptitude of his performances to common benefit. Thus he studied, and accommodated his labours to persons of all ages. Young ones he catechised in a way that exceedingly conduced to give light, and beget an affection for gospel truths. Early religion he warmly pressed, and meltingly invited youth to close with Christ Jesus. Such as were converted, he laboured to improve to higher degrees of grace, and an exacter walking. For this end he published tracts, wherein most of the heads of practical religion are treated of with that judgment, as shows his acquaintance with the power of godliness and the hearts of men. His words were decent, though familiar, and his proverbial sentences were contrived to affect, and retain in the memory some important truth. If it be objected that he oft made use of Scripture phrases allusively, rather than in their *proper* sense, yet it must be granted, some *pious* things were ever gravely expressed by those words; and I think, that from his being so very conversant in Scripture words, they first presented themselves to his mind, when the matter he treated of would be aptly expressed thereby.

Whether he prayed or preached, it was with such a *fervour*, as declared his heart was in it, and that

was employed therein from the vigorous actings of his faith and love.

As he earnestly implored the presence of God for success, so through his blessing he found it granted in a signal manner. Many, very many, were comforted and edified by his ministerial labours. These were now his crown.

This is the person whom God *has taken away with a stroke, and so suddenly*, as not to allow us time to grieve for his life. You can hear him no more, nor see him any more, till the general assembly. He is cut off (at the age of fifty-two) when ripest for service. Need I call you to *lament* this loss; a loss so great, that I cannot aggravate it; so extensive, that scarce know where to begin or end. A tender wife has lost a faithful affectionate husband, filling up its relation to all good purposes. Hopeful children deprived of the kindest of fathers; one concerned to see *Christ formed in them*, and fitted to promote their welfare in every respect. You, *his people*, are bereaved of a faithful, profitable pastor, whose office is not easily filled up. *We ministers* have lost a bright example, an affectionate brother, a general assistant as occasion offered; a man, whose excessive pains must put the slothful to many wishes. The loss is *public*, we have one fewer to promote the kingdom of our Lord, and stand in the gap to avert impending judgments; yea, I fear we may lament the fall of such a pillar in the church, *taken away from the evil to come*.

We are stupid, if we weep not *for ourselves*. But for his part, his sudden death has no terror attending it, for his Lord found him employed as the wise and faithful servants, whom he declareth blessed.<sup>a</sup> He had preached twice on the Lord's day, preached also on *Monday*, and had appointed to preach the same on *Tuesday*, but died that morning; and, by death, released him from his labours. Submission to the divine will only, could have reconciled his active soul long to survive his work; this our God prevented, by not suffering him to live one year beyond his labours. But the *rest* in heaven after death, was what he longed for, and it seems that by the presage he apprehended he was not far from it; for the last head in the last book he published, this, *Let us long for the perfection of those spiritual assures in the kingdom of glory*. And adds, *Our rest to God in this world, is a love in motion, in heaven it will be a love at rest; O when shall that sabbath come, &c.*

His present happiness yields some allay to our sorrow; but yet it is a greater relief under all losses, that our Lord is the King *eternal*;<sup>b</sup> his word endureth forever;<sup>c</sup> with him is the residue of the Spirit; he has secured ends in this sore dispensation, and can make work for good.

That this end may be attained, be all of you attentive to the voice of God by this rebuke, and comply therewith.

Let each impartially inquire, whether you have not a hand in removing this mercy, by your forfeiture. The death of very useful ministers (especially when much needed) is generally a punishment for some sins of those who were most concerned in them. Wherein conscience points to any guilt, neglect not repentance; and apply to the blood of Christ by faith, lest even a worse thing come unto you. Again, see you act as becomes Christians under this providence.

Let the afflicted *widow* trust in God, as able to fill up the place of the deceased, and the *children* walk worthy of his name, and not depart from such a father's ways, as too many have done in this degenerate age. How solemnly would he have laid this charge, if he had seen them about him in his dying agonies! O may they find the return of his many recorded prayers!

You who here attended on his ministry, see you live the truths he dispensed, for you are accountable for great advantages: Christ will not account them *good servants*, who gained but *two talents* when they received *five*. Nor is it proper for you to overlook it; that since the death of the eminent Doctor Bates, you have lost two such worthy men, as Mr. Billio, and Mr. Henry, in the midst of their days, and the greatest capacity for service.

Many observe you, and your influence on our public interest, as dissenters, is very considerable. Therefore it is your concern, unanimously, to get a well qualified pastor; but regard sincerely the real benefit of your *souls*, in the choice you make; for if lower matters govern your inclinations, it discovers *carnality* of mind, and will grow more so, if indulged in this instance.

*We ministers* are hereby called to double our care in serving the designs of our Lord; we have fewer hands, and may soon meet with harder work. The aspect of things warns us to apply ourselves to get more wisdom, faith, and fortitude; that we may neither mistake our duty, or treacherously desert it, in the greatest trials.

Finally, It is incumbent on all to lay to heart the *suddenness* of your pastor's death. When he left you, he was likelier to live than many of us, and no symptom of any danger, till within a very few hours before his dissolution. We must be stupid unless it excite us to pray, *Lord, teach us to know how frail we are!*<sup>d</sup> And to endeavour so to know the frailty of your state, as to be always *ready*.<sup>e</sup> O get oil in your lamps, and those lamps trimmed: he that may die without warning, has reason to see that he delay not repentance, nor trifle in what eternity depends

<sup>a</sup> Luke xii. 43.<sup>b</sup> 1 Tim. i. 17.<sup>c</sup> 1 Pet. i. 25.<sup>d</sup> Ps. xxxix. 4.<sup>e</sup> Matt. xxiv. 44.

on. He *who applies his heart to wisdom*,<sup>v</sup> must so number his days, as to finish the proper business of every day in its day; for the morrow is not ours, and if it come, its own work is assigned with it.

It will be vain to wish we could recall past time, when conscience represents the many abuses and neglects of a past life now ending. The summons may be so hasty, that you have not many moments to set heart or house in order.

Therefore take care that your pursuits of this world be not excessive, lest you be arrested by that voice, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee*.<sup>w</sup> When you are tempted, remember, you may be cut off in the very act of sin, as *Zimri*<sup>x</sup> was. Entertain every call to duty, and opportunity for service and spiritual benefit, with this thought, there is *no working*<sup>y</sup> in the grave, where I must soon be; the night cometh, wherein no man *can work*.<sup>z</sup>

You must all confess, that you cannot die *safely*, unless you have served your generation,<sup>a</sup> are real converts, and in temper of spirit meet for heaven:

nor can you die *comfortably*, unless your grace flourish, your fruit abound, and have at least a grounded hope of your interest in Christ, with a true sense of his favour.

These are too great, too necessary, and too difficult, to be postponed, or negligently applied to, by men, who are *crushed before the moth*.<sup>b</sup> The greatest haste, and the utmost diligence, are scarce enough to quiet us, when we realize how much depend upon a life subject to be cut off in a moment, by a thousand accidents. Happiest he, who *soonest*<sup>c</sup> enters into wisdom's paths, passeth the whole time of his sojourning here, with the *most* solicitous care in discharging all present duty, and improving all present helps. This is the way to finish well.

This *finishing well*, was a sentence oft made use of by my deceased brother, and therefore I conclude with an importunate desire, that we may have solemn regard thereto in all our sacred and civil transactions.

<sup>v</sup> Ps. xc. 12.  
<sup>x</sup> Numb. xxv. 14

<sup>w</sup> Luke xii. 20.  
<sup>y</sup> Eccl. ix. 10.

<sup>a</sup> John ix. 4.  
<sup>b</sup> Job. iv. 19.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xiii. 26.  
<sup>d</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 17.