

A FUNERAL SERMON

PREACHED AT NANTWICH, JUNE 25TH, 1714,

ON OCCASION OF THE

DEATH OF THE REVEREND MATTHEW HENRY,

LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

BY JOHN REYNOLDS.

TO HIS TRULY HONOURED FRIEND

MRS. MARY HENRY,

LATE PIOUS RELICT OF THE DECEASED.

MADAM,

Little could I suspect that the report of such a discourse (meditated in such haste, and amidst such tumultuary thought and passion) would so soon have reached London; and be, from thence, so solicitously desired to the press; and that, as a piece of further respect to the worthy memory that occasioned it. While that is pleaded, I must resign it, that it may sensibly appear (to those that will not otherwise be persuaded) how incompetent it is to serve so great a name and memory. And while I resign it, I must present it unto you, that I may take occasion thereby to beg of you, Madam, to dry up the falling tears, and put on, now, a sympathizing spirit: *Rejoice with him that rejoiceth*: the heavenly mind is got within the heavens; far beyond mortality and the mournful contingencies of it. Since the divine Good-will ordered your so long converse together in pious, pleasant harmony, let not the disposal of the same will occasion present discord. Rejoice that he has been (by grace) so good, so faithful unto death, and that he is now added to the triumphant communion. As you bless that God that gave him to you, bless him also that he lent him to you so long; and by him gave you so much cheerful assistance and encouragement in the way to heaven. Good Madam, do all you can to refuse the importunity of

debilitating grief. Regard your health, even for the sake of those dear, living remains, that are now left upon your care. You know time is short. Rejoice in hope of that glory to which he is gone, and where you will find him more loving, more amiable, and more happy than ever; and where (though the society of perfected saints will be an inconceivable felicity, yet) the blessed God and the Redeemer will be the supreme portion and delight. That the God of all grace would please to enlarge your patience to your trial, and sanctify the important affliction to you, and the young bereaved mourners with you, and proportion his strong consolations thereto, and be, jointly, your everlasting inheritance, is the sincere prayer of,

Madam,

Your truly sympathizing friend.

And real servant in sacred offices,

JOHN REYNOLDS

DID our reverend, honoured, faithful brother (now withdrawn) act by prophetic instillation, when at the obsequies of the late pious minister of this place he chose to treat upon that passage, Sorrow upon sorrow? This day are these words fulfilled in your eyes, before your eyes. He himself is now become the occasion of our successive sorrow; of multiplied, aggravated sorrow; sorrow to city and country; sorrow to the church of God. But I would call to your meditation, upon this sorrowful day, a few characters:*

* See his sermon at Mr. Lawrence's funeral.

3. The Lord Christ hath his servants in this world of ours, and good and faithful ones too; though they are but few, indeed, now; and one the fewer by Tuesday's blow and breach. But as bad as the world is, there have been in it, there are and will be, those, that are intent upon the Redeemer's service. Where else will be the kindly issue and effect of his redemption? By the same right that he hath a seed, he must have servants; for his seed shall serve him, and shall reckon it their honour so to do. His spouse shall be his servant, and shall think her dignity consistent with her office, for *he is thy Lord, and worship thou him*. They that are good and faithful in this world, are peculiarly the servants of the Lord Christ. The Father's, that is, the Creator's, are fallen and lost. The grace, or the sanctity, given by the law of creation was soon forfeited and removed; the obligations that lay on man, on the account of original creation, were soon rejected and deserted. The exterminating curse of the law, and the devil, (by the temptation first, and the curse afterward,) soon prevails over the world. So, the Creator, as such, is like to have no servants here. It is a Redeemer must raise and regain them. The Lord Christ comes to purchase, hire, and persuade them. He comes to purchase them. To purchase them out of the hands of legal, vindictive justice; out of the various thralldom and captivity in which they lay. *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself* (and to his own service) *a peculiar people, zealous of good works*; to hire them for himself and his service. He is the householder, that went out early in the morning to hire

labourers into his vineyard. He hires them by proposing and promising to them an unconceivable recompence of reward. He sets before them a crown of righteousness, a crown of glory. He says to them all, *Be ye faithful to the death, and I will give you a crown of life.* And not only so, but he persuades into his service. Persuades not only by moral motives, and intellectual incentives, but by the power of his determining grace, sweetly concurring therewithal. He so persuades as to prevail with souls to be good and faithful unto him. And so, the good and pious are peculiarly the Lord Christ's servants. They are his, not only by this efficiency of his love and grace, but by the disposition and inclination of their minds. They are sensible of their numerous and vast obligations to him. *The love of Christ* (the contemplation of his love to us) *constrains us* to judge, that we must live to him. They are desirous, in and by all their services, to be more acquainted with him: *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection.* They resign up themselves to his command and conduct, cleaving to him with purpose of heart. They love him with an incorruptible affection; love the service he requires, and particularly, what is suitable to redeemed ones. They are concerned for his interests on earth, desire the support and enlargement of his kingdom here, and breathe after his presence and glory. Well, therefore, may he take cognizance of them, as those that have been his own servants; faithful to himself.

4. Our Lord hath, among his servants, those that are eminently good and faithful. Such, that by way of discrimination, shall hear that applauding sentence, *Well done, good and faithful servants!* At least, some are faithful in the employment and improvement of more talents than others, having received more. Were we, indeed, to insist upon the accuracy and rigour of the parabolical account here, we might say, that all that are found faithful, are equally so. For he that well improves two talents, is as faithful as he that well improves five: the disparity lies not in the improvement, but in talents communicated and received. But, (not to intimate, that proportionably there may be a greater improvement of two talents by some than of five by others,) we may justly suppose, that it is not the design of our Lord's parabolical representation of things here, to signify that all his faithful servants are, with exact equality, so, in proportion to what they received; but only that, in general, of his servants (that are so by his trust, and their obligation) some are faithful, and some are not so. Of those that are faithful, some have received more than others, and have accordingly improved and gained more than others. As their stock hath been greater, so they have had their heads, and heart, and hands full of business, in order to manage and advance their

stock. They have wrought hard; they have redeemed time; they have traded far; they have been concerned that their Lord should receive his own (as much as it was) with proportionable interest of usury. And so there is room and reason to give them, in the first place, the remunerant approbation, *Well done, good and faithful servants!* And surely, experience will testify, that all that are sincerely faithful under equal talents, are not yet equally faithful. Nay, have not many of our Lord's servants intrusted with few talents, been much more faithful than others, intrusted with more? May not this be spoken to our shame? How eminently faithful were they that lived in the dawning of the gospel and reformation among us! There are of those, to whom the Lord will in a distinguishing manner say, *Well done, good and faithful servants!*

5. Our goodness lies especially in faithfulness to the Lord Jesus. Then we are good, when we are faithful servants to him. The disciples have, otherwise, much sin. Should they be compared with the Father's, that is, the Creator's, law, they will be found miserably corrupt, defective, and guilty. Moral pollution runs through all their powers. Many transgression they commit, and many an egregious defection they make from God, and their duty to him. His original law would condemn them all for their faith in, their faithfulness to, the Redeemer may be styled their evangelical goodness. They are good in his eye, while they heartily abide with him. As amidst the exercise of moral virtue, and the servance of those laws that secure the peace and order of this world, something is still wanting, if there is not a sovereign respect to the Lord Christ, Mark x. 17. So, if that dwell in the heart, it is habitually and denominatively good, whatever corruptions and disorders may also dwell there. All believers are, at present, far enough from perfection. But this sovereign respect to the Lord Christ, dwells in all the sanctified. The *saints* are *faithful* brethren in Christ. This faithfulness, in mind and heart, continues with them, amidst their falls and failures. Though temptations, sometimes, make a prey of them; yet they would not, for all the world, renounce their Lord and Master. They are desirous to follow him still, though sometimes they are faint, weary, discouraged, or sometimes stumble in their way. They may fall out sometimes among themselves, as Paul and Barnabas,) yet neither fall out with their Lord, nor with his service; but resolve to go on, and maintain their contract made to serve him. Should, in an hour of temptation, the proposal be made, as once it was, *Will ye also go away?* it would be refused with the same distaste, *Whither shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* And while this disposition and choice abides, thy Lord will acknowledge thy goodness. Thou art good as long as thou art faithful to him.

6. The Lord Christ will call all his servants together, when he comes again. His faithful ones shall all be collected and united. He has something to say to them; something to do with them. Something to say to them, that will be to their utmost transport and joy. Something to do with them: to receive them to himself, and to conduct them to the felicity he has prepared for them, and promised to them. What a noble congregation will that be! The universal assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven! Oh holy, happy society! Holy, without blemish and mixture. Without blemish in their own persons. Incorporated spirits made perfect! made like to the angels of God! without mixture of any other persons among them. No goats then among the sheep, or tares among the wheat. Sinners shall not dare to stand in the congregation of the faithful. Happy society! Joyful in the love and smiles of their Lord, and in their love to each other! We know not how the transactions of that day will be so accurately managed as they are to be, without the knowledge of those we have known and conversed with before. We shall see those that we have offended, and that have offended us; those we have done good to, and those we have received good from. An account is to be given either with joy or with grief. *As ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.* Then shall these tears be wiped from your eyes. Ye shall see the faithful *Henry* again; see him rejoicing in and with all those, to whom his love and friendship, his ministrations and sacred services, have been savingly beneficial here.

7. When the Lord Christ comes, he will call his servants to an account; to an accurate, severe account: all his servants, good and bad, faithful and unfaithful. The words themselves, indeed, only bespeak an account of the good; but that account must suppose a discrimination of them from the bad; and the context extends the account further. The world is his; the church is his. The dwellers there are, by profession and obligation, his servants. The sacred advantages they enjoy, are talents committed to them by him. He sets them in a state of probation. He calls them to work, intrusts them with goods, and says, *Occupy till I come.* Negotiate, merchandize, trade and traffic, till I return. Intimating, that he will come to call to an account. And how strict is that account! He knows very well, to whom he has committed ten talents; to whom five; to whom one single one. O how little do we remember this account! how little do we study to give it up with joy!

8. When our Lord comes, his good servants shall appear in all their faithfulness before him. They shall come attended with all their faithful services to him. The servant here approved, shines in the

improvement of his ten talents. The Lord takes notice of it all. Of their faithful offices it may be said, as well as of their persons, that none of them shall be lost; but the Lord will raise it up (to light and to remembrance) at the last day. He will have it so; for there was but little faithfully done for him in the world; and that, that was so, he will not forget. He has had but few real servants, though many pretenders to his house and family. It may be, few of the seeming great and pompous works of religion have been done seriously and sincerely for him. Many corrupt principles have founded monasteries, colleges, churches, hospitals and almshouses. A great many famous, splendid works will be lost at the fiery day. Many will appear such, as for which the authors have either already received their reward, or must expect no other, than the wages of sin. Nay, possibly, the good servants were not good in all their services, but must lose some at the day of fiery trial; as seems intimated in that of the apostle, 1 Cor. iii. 15. *If any man's works shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so, as by fire.* Since little has been well done, evangelically done for him, he designs that his faithful ones shall appear attended with all their faithful services. The *Gaiuses*, the *Henrys*, shall be illustrious in all that they have done faithfully, both to the brethren and to strangers. Also, wherein faithful service has been done, therein was dutiful, honourable regard paid to the Lord: it was done for his name's sake; out of love to him, and respect to his glory. And will he not consider what has been so done? Will not his love to himself and to his own name, engage him to remunerate such sacred regard to himself? Sure it will. *In that ye did it unto the least of these, ye did it unto me.* And he is not unrighteous, (or ungrateful,) to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed to his name. And then, he hath promised remuneration to each piece of faithful service. None of their labour to him and for him shall be in vain, or shall be thought to have been so, at the great day of account. Happy they, that come loaded with faithful services for the Redeemer! Happy (we must needs say) the three *Henrys* most nearly related, and last deceased! the present object and occasion of our grief, with both his parents. The father gave himself up to the active life, and was eminently skilful and faithful therein. The mother (as the son hath informed me) was as eminent in her place, as the father in his. The son, the present object and occasion of our grief, was (as is well known) in labours more abundant. Singular vessels of mercy here, of glory now, and especially at the great day of their joyful account!

9. The Lord Jesus means to commend his faithful servants at the day of his return: he will openly, solemnly commend them, at the day of their ac-

count. Angels, men, and devils shall be witnesses of the complacential suffrage and approbation that he will then give them. It shall appear how he loved them, how he was pleased in them and with them, when heaven and earth shall hear the loud, commendatory sentence, *Well done, good and faithful servants!*

We know not now the nature, the parts, the organs of a spiritual, glorified body; we know not what voice is among spirits, or how, without voice, they communicate their intentions and sentiments one to another. We know not how the spiritual body of the Redeemer, far transcendent to, and more glorious than, those of his saints, will differ from a spirit. We know not particularly, how his approbatory mind and good-will will be reported to them. It is sufficient to us, at present, that he will so represent to them his acceptance of them and their faithful services, as will amount to an abundant commendation, and to their abundant satisfaction, exultation, and joy. Our Lord, we may say, commends his servants now, in his intercession and advocacy for them; while he recommends them to his Father's favour, protection, and grace. This we may see in his last prayer for them, which seems to be the pattern and substance of his intercession above. Though in his converse with his disciples, he had had occasion enough to find fault with them, and to chide them for the dulness of their minds and earthiness of their apprehensions; for their unbelief and hardness of heart; the deficiencies of their love and courage, and readiness to forget his word and works; yet, when he is leaving the world, and willing to leave them, thereupon, to his Father's care, he has nothing but good to say of them; no mention of their faults; but—*They have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee; and—I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them,* (though they had received them at a slow rate,) *and have known surely, that I came out from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me.* Endearing Lord! how good and kind is he, thus to make the best of his servants' case! And does he commend them now, and will he not do so when he comes again? That is the day of retaliation and reward! The day, in which he will be admired and glorified in his faithful ones. The day of account is the proper season for approbation; and that he will afford in and with an open commendation, *Well done, good and faithful servants!*

In the reason or reasonableness of this generous transaction of his, his public commendation of his faithful servants, we may satisfy ourselves by such considerations as these:

He will commend them, we may suppose,

1. For his Father's honour. From him they obtained mercy to be made and to be found faithful. His grace was displayed in leading them unto the

Mediator, and confirming them in him: in leading them to him: *No man can come to me* (by reason of the predominant corruption of nature) *except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.* As the Father sent him into the world, so, by potent persuasion, he draws disciples to him; and confirms them in him, and in a holy faithfulness to him. *Now, he who establishes us with you, in Christ, and hath ensouled us, is God.* He pours on them the same unction as on the Redeemer; and so implants and enlivens them in him unto all fruitfulness. Their faithfulness honours him as the prime root and cause of it; and not only as such, but as the final cause, and ultimate end, of it. The Redeemer's servants were the Father's also: they were restored and returned unto the eternal God. As none came to the Father, but by the Son; so none come to the Son, but they come to the Father also. We come to him as Mediator; and coming to him in that office and notion, we come on purpose to be directed, led, and united by him unto the blessed God. The true worshippers, and those that are represented, by the apostle, as the object of his intercession, are styled, *Those that come to God by him.* At that day, says he, viz. when the divine Spirit shall be plentifully poured out, *ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you,* John xiv. 20. Ye shall be certified then, that as I act by the concurrence of the great God with me, so I conduct you to him, and join you with him. The faithful servants of the Lord Jesus, are the faithful servants of the eternal God. *All mine are thine.* They that belong to me, and are devoted to my name, are devoted to thine also. And where else, truly, are the servants of the eternal God to be found, but among the disciples of Jesus? We may talk of natural religion, but where is it to be found in the life and practice, but within the church of Christ? We may talk of moral virtue, but what an empty shadow is it, if not founded on the love of God? And where is that to be found, but among the servants of Jesus? It is he that opens to them the nature and excellences of the eternal God, the counsel, law, and love of the eternal God. It is he that calls them unto the worship and obedience of the eternal God; that, by his heavenly revelations and Spirit, kindles in their hearts the love of the eternal God. His servants then are, and must be, the servants of the eternal God. In being faithful to him, they have been faithful to God. In their faithfulness, they glorified God; and demonstrated thereby their true discipleship to him. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.* Having by their faithfulness glorified the eternal God, according to the law of discipleship to him, he will be ready (almost to thank, but sure) to commend them, when he comes again. *Well done, good and faithful servants!*

2. For his own honour. His grace has been displayed in their faithfulness. Without him they could do nothing. He was the vine, from which their life, their fruitfulness, and faithfulness was derived. He is the second *Adam*; and he appears, them, much more potent and successful than the first was. The first was, indeed, a living soul; but he secured neither himself, nor his posterity: he soon proved unfaithful, and entailed unfaithfulness upon his race. The second *Adam* is a quickening spirit; not only continued faithful himself throughout the whole course of his obedience, but teaches and enables thousands to be faithful too; thousands of the old *Adam's* apostate race. He transferred them to himself, ingrafted them into his vital body, shed sanctifying virtue and Spirit upon them; in recounting the products of which, he may well, to his own praise, say to his faithful ones, *Well done, good and faithful servants!*

3. To manifest his approbation of their active, diligent holiness. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and hath promised to crown it at the last day. By the same rule, that sin is offensive to him, obedience must be acceptable and grateful. He sanctified their nature, that it might be capable of, and intent upon, regular and sanctified operations. He purified his people, that they may be zealous of good works: and when they are so, they answer a great design of his redeeming, purifying grace. In their holy faithfulness, they act most suitably to the original law of creation and integrity. They most nobly employ the native powers bestowed upon them; they act most rationally, spontaneously, and agreeably to heaven-born spirits. Most rationally. Their pious faithfulness is dictated by the highest reason. They must needs serve him, that served them to the death, served their chief interests and eternal salvation. They see, that all other service, separate from his, is folly and madness. They see, that time is short, the world is vanity, and death approaching: that it is his service, faithfully performed, will give them peace and satisfaction then. Most spontaneously, as the scales are dropped from their eyes, the ill bias and load is removed from the heart and will. They run the way of their Lord's commandments with an enlarged heart; and are sorry that they can run no better, and do no more. They gladly design and meditate the ways wherein they may serve him. Most agreeably to heaven-born spirits. As those that, in their first formation, came from the Father of spirits; and as those that have been anew created by him. They now show that they are returned to God, to his law and love. They please him, and are aspiring towards the enjoyment of him. To this, the Mediator called them; and this must be delightful to him. If the steps of moral virtue, and observance of the secondary table of the

law, be pleasing to him, (as in the young man, whom, upon the assertion of such virtuous observation from his youth, our Lord is said to love, Mark x. 21.) much more will the zealous exercise of his own sanctifying grace, in his faithful servants, be approved and commended by him. The exercise of their integrity and love, of their faith and faithfulness, will be found to their praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ. Therefore they have endeavoured to conform themselves to their Lord himself.

4. To vindicate them from the vile aspersions cast upon them by a blind, malicious world. Holy faithfulness has seldom here appeared in its true light and colour. The servants of God, and of his Christ, have, in all ages, had their abuses, reproaches, and misrepresentations. Their innocence and integrity have been usually clouded and obscured. Thence, they have not been able to do the good they might and would, nor have been such an honour to their Lord and his cause as they should have been. They were not of the world, and so the world hated and reproached them. They were opposers of the devil's kingdom; and the devil hath found ways enough to vilify and blacken them, and make deluded miscreants believe, they were his complices and friends. Do any of them come in the severe, abstemious spirit of the reformer, John the Baptist; they are melancholy, or have a devil. Do they come in the familiar, sociable mind and conduct of the Redeemer himself; they are then friends of publicans and sinners. An irreligious world will not be pleased with any of their deportment and conversation, as long as they walk according to the great rules and end of divine religion. In modern times they are loaded with the scandalous names of *heretics* and *hypocrites*; of *schismatics*, *precisians*, and *fanatics*: and under such names they are sent to exiles and galleys, stakes and prisons. But he that knows their integrity, will bring forth their righteousness as the light; will vindicate his cause and them; will silence and confound all their implacers, and particularly the great accuser of the brethren, by one public sentence of his, *Well done, good and faithful servants!*

5. They were his honour here. That little honour that he had in and from this world of ours. As they were called and culled out of the world to be a people to his name, so they lived to the honour of his name. They were witnesses for him, for his truth, and office, and glory, in the several generations in which their lot was cast. On this account he recommends them to his Father's tuition, when he was leaving the world: *Thine are mine, and I am glorified in them*, John xvii. 10. They speak him, preach him, exemplify and commend him to an ignorant, unbelieving world, and in kind

retaliation, he will commend them at his return. *I say unto ye, (and ye may depend upon my word for it,) that whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man confess before the angels of God,* Luke xii. 8. Since, then, the name of the Lord Jesus was here glorified in them, they shall be glorified by him, and particularly receive the glory of a solemn acknowledgment and commendation from him, at the day of their account, and appearance before him.

6. To set them on admiring at his surprising condescension and love. Unutterable grace is to be poured out at that day. The Redeemer resolves to do every thing, by which he may be admired and glorified in his saints, at that astonishing day. And this shall be a piece of the wonder of the day, that he will take notice, approving notice, of such servants and such services. Such servants, that were in themselves so sinful and defective! sinful in nature, to their own continual shame and grief! so dark and destitute of spiritual light! so impenitent and hard-hearted! so unbelieving, remiss, and cold in their love, and grateful resentments of his goodness! Alas! they knew not how to bear themselves and their own hearts, while they were here. They were their own continual disease and burthen. So defective in what they did, and in the omissions of what they should have done. Had they done all that was required, they were, at best, but unprofitable servants. And will the Lord of life so kindly regard such impertinent ones as they? He needed them not. And how much did they omit of their duty? *Lord, forgive my sins of omission!* said the pious, famous *Usher*, when he came to die. How oft did the laziness of the flesh, the temptations of the world, the discouragements of the times, divert them from plain and excellent services! And then, how defective in those they wrought! And will he respect and recount such services as theirs? proceeding from such imperfect principles, and so darkly levelled at his glory? O the unspeakable goodness, and favour! Will he approve what they had forgotten, or what they thought would never have been forgiven! Surprising grace! This must needs overwhelm them with wonder, and set them upon the reflection and inquiry, when ever such works were done by them: *Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or naked, or in prison, and did so minister unto thee?* But he knows the times when, the persons to whom, the cases in which, they ministered, in all their services, to him. They are recorded, and shall be recounted at that day, to their surprise, and unconceivable amazement at his grace and love. With what rapturous astonishment will the strange but charming accents strike their souls, when the blessed Judge shall say, *Well done, good and faithful servants!*

7. To show to all, the reason of the difference he makes among the natives of this world at that day. Vast distinction he makes among them. Some he raises with such horrid, yet deathless bodies, as devils would have, were they to wear any. Then he sets at his left hand, frowns upon with utmost disdain and indignation, and then dooms to the region and flames designed and prepared for the implacable rebels against heaven, the devils themselves. Others he raises in honour, power, and glory; clothed with immortal bodies, glorious like his own. Them he sets at his right hand, the place of reputation and renown. Them he adjudges, not to the mansion of angels only, but to an endless blessedness with himself and his Father in the glory. In so doing, he acts not merely at a despotical, arbitrary rate; it is not the office of a judge to do so. For then he might as well confer this glory on the opposite black rank and company. But it is the function of a judge to do justice, to administer law, and put in execution the rules of government. However arbitrary our Lord may seem now in distributing his grace, to prepare persons for the honour of the day; *As he will have mercy on whom he will have mercy*; yet, then he appears as the righteous Judge. And as such, he must execute gospel sanction, and fulfil the threatenings and promises he himself hath made. He hath promised to his faithful ones the crown of life, and he will be sure to bestow it. Accordingly, he will find out all his faithful ones; will recount their faithful services; will let the world know, that though they have no merit, they have done the work he commanded and approves; they have cleaved unto him and his service, when others would not; they are the persons to whom his promises of life and glory appertain; to whom, as righteous Judge, he is obliged to give the crown of righteousness; whom therefore in open court before men and angels, he must pronounce and commend as his good and faithful servants.

8. To cast (as we may well suppose) a tormenting reflection upon those refractory souls, that would not be faithful. They shall see what they have lost; what honour and approbation they have forfeited and fallen short of. O the dismal regret that will seize unfaithful souls at that day! They shall bethink themselves how they were invited and called unto like faithfulness. That the same crown of glory was proposed and promised unto them, as to others. The process of that day was opened to them: the honours of the faithful were set before them: the loss, the misery and shame, of unfaithful ones were sufficiently represented; but they would not believe, would not be faithful. They regarded not the honours that were to be adjourned till the last day. They loved the praise of men and approbation of the world. They would be of some noise

and figure here, whatever became of eternal glory. And now they are debarred the Judge's commendation. Horror and confusion must seize them, while they are separated from the good and faithful company, and excluded their applauses and joys. What unspeakable honour and dignity have they lost, and what eternal, blessed consequences thereupon!

9. To reflect a tacit honour upon faithful angels. Consequentially, to approve and commend them also. They will stand by; and their faithfulness cannot but redound to their honour, in the day when faithfulness is publicly commended. We know not that those unblemished spirits will be brought into judgment at that day. *Know ye not, what we shall judge angels?* is usually and plausibly restrained to those that are confined in chains of darkness. Though it may, perhaps, be thought, that there may be reason for a solemn judgment in reference to the one, as well as the other. Have the evil angels, since their fall, been continually opposing the Redeemer and his kingdom; the pious ones have, on the contrary, ever since their conservation, been diligently serving the Redeemer and his kingdom. Have the evil ones been the tempters and opposers of the saints, and so capable of being judged and condemned by them; the pious ones have been also their friends and ministers, and so as capable of being approved, thanked, and commended by them. But let us not be wise above what is written. Will the Mediator commend his faithful mortals? those that were so imperfectly and defectively faithful? What respect must he have for his perfectly faithful servants! They that always rejoiced in his commands, and never failed in the complete execution of them. While the saints of earth are commended, the commendation must ascend, and affect the saints of heaven; their consciences, in the mean time, will applaud them; and they rest assured of the Judge's good-will towards, and approbation of, them also. Saints on earth were faithful in few things. Their time was short. The saints of heaven (the natives there) were faithful in many things; faithful in the great crisis, when thousands of their brethren fell; faithful, each of them, through all ages of the world; faithful in all things. Commendation is much more due to them.

10. To cast shame and torture (as we may well suppose) on those angelical spirits, that refused to be faithful. Angelical spirits we may call them for distinction sake; though in refusing to be faithful, they refused to be angels; i. e. messengers and ministers to the heirs of God in the world. They soon renounced their allegiance, and faithfulness to their God and Creator. Yea, and some think to their Redeemer too; i. e. to the Son of God considered in the capacity of the Redeemer

of this world. For it is apprehended by some divines, that the primitive sin of the angels lay here; it was discovered to them, that this world of ours would revolt and fall from God; that the blessed Son of God would put on human nature and accomplish our redemption; that this Redeemer (thus humanized, or incarnate) should be made head of men and angels; that by his redemption he should advance a great body of mankind to their seats, or seats superior to their own; that now, some of the angelical tribe acquiesced in this discovery of the divine counsel, comported with it, and secured their station and the divine favour; that others, in their pride disliked the method of the divine purpose, stomached the superior advancement of the human nature in the person of the Mediator, and so, were thrown down from their illustrious habitations. But however plausible this sentiment may, at first, appear, yet, upon maturer thoughts, it will appear attended with irrational or unsupportable consequence. For should it be revealed to the angels, in the state of their integrity, that this world would apostatize, it must be revealed also by whose means and seduction we should be induced so to apostatize; viz. by the seduction of angels antecedently apostatized. At least, the revelation of the Redeemer must represent to them out of whose hands we must be redeemed; viz. out of the hands of fallen angels; the seed of the woman must be supposed to bruise the serpent's head, and destroy the power and works of the devil. And should it be known to the angels, before they sinned, that they should sin, and be thrown down to horrid darkness, be trampled upon by the Redeemer, and tortured for ever, what a blast must that be to their happiness, what a beginning of despair, and desperate occasion of their sin and ruin! But in what instance and particular soever their sin was exerted, sinned, we know, they have, and fallen from their integrity and faithfulness. Faithful they would not be to their God, to the law of their creation and of the happy region where they dwelt. What sharp regret and envy will torment them, to see fallen mortals (such that were fallen by their instigation and inducement) raised to a noble degree of faithfulness to their Lord! to hear them commended by the Lord of life and death, from a resolved faithfulness to him in the midst of a perfidious world! yea, to hear them commended for their faithfulness in opposition to them and all their wiles and storms! These revolted spirits were here grieved and vexed, that any of our race were recovered out of their hands; were reconciled to heaven; and walked faithfully with their great reconciler. They did all they could to reduce them from their steadfastness. They laid snares, employed stratagems, and raised storms of persecution against them.

The devil shall cast some of ye into prison, and ye shall have tribulation ten days. But be thou faithful unto death. They would neither be faithful themselves, nor let others be so. And it may justly be determined that the faithful ones, that thus stood it out to the last against them, shall be solemnly commended in their hearing, for striking utmost shame and confusion into them. They see, with horror and despair, the glories they have lost. They see sinning mortals (such that were once so) raised to their happy seats. They see them received with joy, approved and applauded by the Judge; while themselves are hurled down to endless shame and contempt. O the direful lashes of their own conscience! O the reproach and disdain cast upon them by the great God, by the flaming Judge, by the faithful angels, and faithful saints! Away with such proud, rebellious, cursed miscreants, into the lake of inextinguishable fire!

Thus we see there may be reason enough, why the Lord Christ will publicly commend his faithful servants, when he comes again.

May this now prepare us for some application of this affecting truth. O that it may strongly affect our hearts! And may the application be taken in such inferences as these:

1. We see what a good Master the Son of God is. What condescension is here, not to admit only, or barely accept, but to commend such servants, such service! He knows very well what they are; he sees through their hearts; and sees all the corruption and corrupt principles there. And so, discerns well enough, how impure they are, and how imperfect their services; and might justly disdain them all. He is holy and jealous; his eyes are as a flame of fire. And the more holy and jealous he is, the more naturally and justly might he slight and abhor such servants. But here is an instance of gospel indulgence. He commends those whom he might condemn. Here is something more than mere pardoning grace. He does not only pass by their faults and follies, does not only forgive the iniquity of their holy things, but commends the work, applauds the service. Who dare say that he is an austere person, or a sour master? Can any one be more candid and generous? He knows the weakness, the failures, the defects of all the service offered him. He knows how indebted his servants are to him and to his grace; that without him they can do nothing, and yet he is resolved to commend them in the day of their account. O how happily deceived and disappointed will many of them be! They were continually poring on their sins, and thought that such as they should never be accepted. They were continually meditating the imperfection of their grace and holy principles, (if they could suppose they had any,) and could not believe that such blind, lame, cold services, could be par-

doned, much less approved by their Judge. But be of good cheer, ye faithful ones! Your Judge is far better than you; and better than you can imagine. He remembers the work that you have forgot. Wherein or whereon ye are ready (and have reason in some respects) to say, or write, *Ill done*, he will say, *Well done!* What you have given up for lost, he has laid up for your joy. How will you be transported, when you shall hear him say of such as you, *Well done, good and faithful servants!* Admire his noble candour and generosity! ye are thus glorified in him and by him, according to the *grace* of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Lord Jesus will himself be faithful. He commends his servants for being so. And will he be defective in that, that he reckons, and declares before the world, to be their commendation? No, he cannot; so far as that can belong to him. And faithfulness does. He is the *faithful and true Witness*. Depend then upon his word and covenant. Rest assured of the infallible accomplishment of all his promises. Intrust him with your souls, your bodies, and all the affairs of your salvation. *Faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it*; will do all that he hath called you to expect at his hands.

3. May it not seem strange, that he does not take more care to vindicate his servants here; to wipe off the reproaches and opprobrious reflections cast upon them? It would tend to his honour, as well as theirs. How is his glory eclipsed, while his servants lie under such clouds here! We are reckoned *as the off-scouring of all things*, (as the filth of the world,) says one of the most faithful of them. Will he commend them at last, and not commend now? or suffer them to lie under all manner of shame and ignominy? Let us take it as a piece of his mysterious providence.

4. See what honour awaits the Redeemer's servants at the day of his return. None of the applauses of the world may be set in the balance with his commendation. Not all the trophies, triumphal arches, or ensigns of honour, on the globe, can give the fame, that attends the breath of his approving lips. He can soon make your name ring through the heavens, assumed and shouted by angels there. Let his holy servants be content with their obscurity at present; content with the scandalous names and imputations now falsely affixed upon them. They are not fit for great honour and applause now. They know not how to bear it. When they are fit to bear it, they shall have it. When they are purged from all their pride and vanity; from all their self-conceit and self-assuming apprehensions, they shall have it in abundance. The King of saints will bring forth their names to open light, and fix it in the heavens. The Lamb that was slain, will make it appear, that their names were wrote in his adamant book, before the foundation of the world. The prince of the kings of the

earth, the Judge of quick and dead, will bring forth all their exploits in religion, all their achievements for his cause, and in his service; will publish them before heaven and earth; will give the performers of them an *encomium* befitting angels; and so, consecrate their name and memorial to eternity.

5. Is it not strange, that he will carry his servants to all this honour through all the obscurity of the grave? Will he commend them at last, but slay them now? Will he applaud them, when he comes again, but now lay their honour in the dust? What strange transaction is here? Must now the head and heart, that so faithfully served him, be lodged where they can praise him no more? Must the lips and tongue, that were so much our dear brother's glory, and with which he so faithfully glorified his Lord, be laid aside to crumble into dust? What sovereign determination is here? How easily could his pleased Lord despatch for him (as for *Elijah*) an angelical chariot to fetch him home, as a pre-sage of future applause! If the minister and ministration of and under the law were so glorious, should not the minister and ministration of the gospel be much more so? But we see that heavenly treasure is committed to earthen vessels; that the vessels must be broken, in order to be re-framed, and fitted for glory. We see, that mysterious counsel governs the world.

6. Where is the belief of this great report? a report, that should vividly strike the power of our souls? Where is the faith, that is due thereto? Will the Redeemer commend his servants, at the end of the day, at the end of the world; what work would this believed make upon our minds! What a turn would it give to our souls, and all their faculties! It would awaken the drowsy and lethargic; rouse the negligent and remiss; warm the frozen and benumbed; resolve the slow deliberator; invigorate and inspirit the fearful and discouraged; confirm and cherish the faithful servant; and instil new life and strength to all. Is so grand encouragement set before us? the Lord pardon and cure our unbelief!

7. Will our Lord commend his faithful servants, and will he take it ill, if we do so too? Nay, does he not expect we should? Must we esteem them highly in our own minds, and may we not tell our estimation to others? Sure we may. And that for the same reason for which he commends them, and for which he would have so much of the lives and acts of his faithful ones recorded in his own book, the New Testament; the honour of his own name and grace in them. They therefore have done good service, that have portrayed the holy lives and transactions of his zealous servants, and transmitted them to posterity. The lights of the world should be set up to be seen. The epistles of Christ should be read of all men. But who shall speak the excellences, the faithfulness of that servant, whose departure occasions this

day's sorrow and solemnity? It is a subject quite too big for me. I cannot satisfy myself (much less you, who knew him longer, and knew him more) in any representation I can make of his natural endowments, acquired ornaments, or sacred dispositions and virtues. I must leave it to some one better instructed, (and more akin to himself,) to tell you the largeness of his mind, and of his heart. To tell you the strange readiness and fertility of his invention on any subject, to which he, at any time, applied his thought; the faithfulness of his memory amidst various studies and perusals; the solidity of his judgment both in secular and divine affairs. To tell you the various parts of learning into which he travelled, particularly languages and law. To tell you the sweetness of his disposition, in modesty and meekness, affability, candour, and love; and to tell you how all these were sanctified and consecrated by divine grace. Faith and love, you might see, instigated to such unwearied labours. You knew something of his eminent piety and devotedness unto God. His life was like a continued scene of actual devotion; continually employed (besides the necessary repasts and converses of life) in prayer, exposition of Scripture, singing of psalms, instructing of catechumens, preaching the words of life, or meditating something for the service of his Lord and the benefit of souls, to be communicated from the pulpit or the press. And all this was done with such spontaneity and cheerfulness, as if he would regularly prove the truth of the title of a discourse, (which he told some of us was in the press, and which, now, must be the last he will send thither,) the *Pleasure or Pleasantness of Religion*. The abundance of his public labours you pretty well know; instant in season, and out of season (if such work could be so). The excellency of the subjects he treated on; the sweetness and spirituality of his management of them; the seriousness and affection of his spirit in treating with you by them, you have often seen and experienced. His compassion and liberality to the poor and indigent: his extensive charity and love to all Christians, under their relation to their common Lord, and common character as saints: his sincere affection encouraging respect to his brethren in ministerial bonds, you cannot be altogether unacquainted with. His exemplary duty and faithfulness in his various relations, as son, (that was a crown to his parents,) husband, father, master, and pastor, (first at *Chester*, and afterward at *Hackney*,) may not now be insisted on. These many and more great things belonging to him, it is to be hoped, will, in due time, be reported to you. His singular acquaintance with holy writ, his dexterity in making it familiar and useful to meanest capacities, as well as to others, will, in his expositions, be published to the world, as

long as time shall last, or the *English* language live. Happy man, that was touched with lethargic symptom but one day, or part of a day, while it is the chronical disease of our lives! So ill could his zealous constitution comport with that drowsy disorder, that, next morning betimes, he withdrew from it, and retired into that lucid, perfect world, where alone uninterrupted, sacred activity and unweariness concur together. In one thing mercifully disappointed; whereas he expected to be ground to the dust by the *stone*, or dissolved by the *diabetes*; from the time of his last sermon (on the Monday here) he slumbered away without sickness or pain, (as he usually confessed, when asked how he did,) till the next morning, that he fell fast asleep in his blessed Master's arms. Happy servant, that had said and done so much in the proper season of life and health, that he had nothing to say or do, when he came to die, but silently retire to bed, and enter into his Master's joy! Yet, being dead, he loudly speaks. Speaks the monitory words he last insisted on at his beloved *Chester*, *Let us fear! Let us fear, lest a promise being left us* (or, lest the promise being left, or deserted by us) *of entering into rest, any of you should seem to come short of it!* Prophetical, sure, in the choice of the last words he was allowed to preach upon; the last opened to you in this place, in this pulpit; *Surely I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself*; when, the next day, all the country was in tears, and true *Israelites* were bemoaning themselves for loss of him. O what a friend have we, has the church of God, yea, the whole world, lost! The *chariots of Israel!* the *horsemen* thereof! In him we have, particularly, lost the sixth volume of Expositions on Scripture; (unless any *apparatus* be found, that will assist some competent hand to send it forth;) a seventh volume, that was to be critical on difficult places of Scripture; and an eighth, that was to be a body of divinity, in sermons; besides what other he would have occasionally sent into the world: these I know he intended. O let us bemoan the sins that have forfeited this light, and procured this loss! But this loss to us is gain to him. To be with Christ above is far better, in respect to his own felicity, than to be serving him here below. With what joy must such a servant be received into the heavenly regions! What solace and delight must overflow his active soul at the great day of his joyful account, (joyful, as concerning himself, however it be concerning you,) when his great Master shall receive him with these loud accents, (containing a character above all that flesh can say,) *Well done, thou good and faithful servant!* And this I speak with the more confidence, (for I would dread being swayed by party prejudice, especially in matters of such moment,) as being persuaded that not you only, but all the

pious of all persuasions, that had opportunity of being acquainted with him, with his spirit, life, and labours, unanimously concur in this sentiment, that this must be his entertainment by his Judge at the great day, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant!* And since there will be subordinate judges too, those that approve and applaud the determination of him that is supreme; we may well suppose, that *Chester, Cheshire, Lancashire, Shropshire, Hackney, London*, and other places, will bring in their verdict, and add their concurrent suffrage to the Judge's sentence, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant!* Yea, shall the *stone cry out of the wall*, and the *beam out of the timber answer it*, against the wicked and perfidious; and must we not say, that the walls of his own house, and particularly of his study therein, the pulpit, and the press, will all be ready to resound and echo to the Judge's applauding accents, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant!*

8. What a provocation and incentive, now, is here to holy faithfulness! Be faithful, brethren, to the Son of God! His commendation will be your sufficient reward. Are you ambitious? It is incident to polite, refined minds, so to be. Here is a mark for your highest ambition. Corset the approbation, the applause, of the great Judge of the world. One commending word from his lips will secure your glory and renown for ever. One word of his will confound every accuser. Will cancel or prevent any condemnation from sin, or the world; from conscience or the devil. One such word of his will recommend you unto the most august, angelical spirits, and fix you in their favour and company for ever. Yea, it will recommend you to the eternal God, to his complacency and endless communion; you will, thereupon, be immediately presented before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. This sentence, then pronounced, will be sufficient retribution to our dear brother for all his work of faith and labour of love. It would now be epitaph for him, long and large enough, as good and as great as he was, supposing it spoken by those sovereign lips, *Well done, thou good and faithful servant!* Do not the accents charm your ears, and dissolve the heart, and instigate you to a holy, ambitious aspiration after them? Is the faithful servant thus commended? Have ye had such a wonderful example of sacred faithfulness before your eyes; *Go ye, and do likewise*. Be faithful (brethren) to the Redeemer, to his interests and kingdom in the world. Be faithful to the ministry ye have received, to the souls he hath redeemed, to the vocation wherewith ye have been called, to your light, and numerous talents and obligations: and when the opener of the graves shall come, the arbitrator of life and death shall appear in the clouds, he will make the heavens ring with your praise and applauses; *Well done, ye good and faithful servants! Amen, and Amen.*