

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

FUNERAL OF THE REV. JAMES OWEN,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN SHREWSBURY, APRIL 11, 1706.

ACTS xx. 37, 38.

And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more.

My text is a short account of the solemn farewell which was interchanged between St. Paul and the elders of Ephesus; and you see upon the reading of it, that it was a very mournful farewell: no improper subject, therefore, for a mournful funeral, such a one as we have now been attending. For what are funerals but our farewells to our friends? And this farewell in the text being pronounced by the Spirit of prophecy a final farewell, it was a sort of funeral.

And there is one circumstance of the story, which makes the resemblance the more lively and affecting; it is that which is added, (v. 38.) that *they accompanied him unto his ship*. For methinks, when we follow the remains of our deceased friends, who we trust sleep in Jesus, to the grave, and lodge and leave them in that close and dark cabin, we do in effect the same; we accompany them to their ship, so I would rather call it, than their prison, for the body, though confined to it for a time, is to pass through it to its glory. Let us, therefore, say concerning those whose earth we have committed to the earth, in hope of a resurrection to eternal life, that we have put them on ship-board; not to be tossed with tempests, for there the weary are at rest; but rather to be becalmed and wind-bound a while, till the embargo shall be taken off in the resurrection, and then, like the ship into which Christ was will-

ingly received, it shall immediately land^a its passengers in the desired harbour of endless bliss and joy. Or we will suppose, that we shut them up in such a ship as God shut up Noah in, not so much for passage as for preservation; in which they shall be safe from the waters of the flood, and kept secret till the appointed time comes for God to remember them,^b as he remembered Noah; ^c and then they shall be brought out with joy, and led forth with singing, into a new world.

How does this alter the property of death and the grave! Let the thought of it, therefore, give us quite another prospect of them, than that which we are apt to amuse ourselves with. The sanctified soul, after it is delivered from the burthen of the flesh, goes immediately to joy and felicity, under a convoy of blessed angels; and the deserted body too is taken care of, it is shipped off in a very good vessel, under the protection of a covenant with the dust, which shall be remembered; so that it is sure not to be lost; it is dust which shall never be the serpent's meat, but shall without fail meet its soul again in due time, in the better country, that is, the heavenly, to be separated no more for ever.

In the account here given of this solemn farewell, it is observable, that St. Paul took leave of his friends with prayers, and they of him with tears. Prayers and tears are not only the church's artillery, with which her enemies, as there is occasion, are attacked and repulsed; but they are likewise a part of the church's treasure, with which her friends are enriched and entertained.

1. St. Paul, as became him, took leave of them with prayer; so he concluded his farewell sermon.

^a John vi. 21.

^b Job xiv. 13.

^c Gen. viii. 1.

When he had thus spoken, with the utmost expressions of reverence and fervency, he kneeled down and prayed with them all; knowing, that what he had said to them would not edify them, as he desired, without the grace of God's working by it, he thus implored that grace. Being to leave them, in return for all their respects to him and his ministry, he thus left his blessing behind him, and a prophet's prayers will at any time amount to a prophet's reward.^d He had told them, (v. 32.) he commended them to God, which he did effectually by this solemn prayer. If he must leave them, he will leave them in the best hands, and engage his gracious presence with them, who has promised never to leave nor forsake those who trust in him.^e Our Lord Jesus concluded his farewell to his disciples with a prayer for them, (John xvii. 1.) and at last was parted from them as he blessed them.

Many a prayer St. Paul had put up for those Ephesians, which he gives them a specimen of once and again in his epistle to them; nor would he, after his departure from them, cease to pray for them.^f This is one way, by which the communion of saints is kept up in their present dispersion. But this prayer he prayed with them, partly for their instruction, and the riveting of the things he had said to them in their minds; for which reason, in his epistles to the churches, he tells them particularly what it was that he asked of God for them, that they might study to answer the intention of his prayers, as well as of his preaching and writing; and partly for the alleviating of their griefs, which in this prayer he poured out before the Lord, and that, afterwards, they might reflect with some comfort and satisfaction upon this part at least of the sad solemnity.

It is good for friends to part with prayer, the rather, because when we part we are not sure that ever we shall meet together again; but here we may suppose, the duty was performed with the more affection, and warmth of devotion, because they knew it was to be the last prayer that blessed Paul was to pray with them: and it is very fit that at death we should take leave of our friends with prayer, because then we are to take leave of prayer itself; farewell prayer, and welcome praise, everlasting praise.

2. They, as became them, took leave of him with tears. They wept at prayer, and it was a very proper expression of their pious importunity. Jacob commenced Israel, a prince with God, when he wept and made supplication;^g and our Lord Jesus himself, in the days of his flesh, offered up his prayers with strong crying and tears,^h though he had no sin to lament in prayer as we have. They wept at parting with so good a friend. Paul had, in this discourse with them, more than once intimated how

often he had wept over them; such was his tender affection to them, and hearty concern for their welfare; he had served the Lord among them with many tears, (Acts xx. 19.) and had warned them night and day with tears, v. 31. And now, in a just and grateful return for his love, they weep over him: for he that watereth shall be watered also himself.ⁱ

Let us observe on this sad occasion,

(1.) Who the mourners were. They were the elders or presbyters of the church of Ephesus, whom Paul sent for to attend him at Miletus, v. 17. It appears by the scope of the foregoing discourse, that St. Paul now, in the clear foresight, and actual consideration, both of his own death, and of the rise of heresies and sects thereupon, was deliberately and solemnly committing the conduct and government of the renowned church of Ephesus to the presbyters, or presbytery of that church, for a pattern to other churches; plainly telling all these elders,^k and not any one more than the rest, than the Holy Ghost *ἐδωκεν επισκοπους*—had made them overseers,^l or bishops of that church, and that therefore it was incumbent upon them to feed it; that is, not only to teach, but to rule it; committing the discipline as well as the doctrine of Christ to their ministration, without the least intimation of his doing it only *pro tempore*—for the time being, and with a purpose to alter the constitution afterwards. Accordingly, he charges them with the utmost diligence and application of mind, to set about the discharge of this great office, v. 28. *Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock*; and plainly intimates, that they must not any longer expect the personal residence either of himself as an apostle, or of Timothy as an evangelist, among them, nor depend upon them for any further particular direction in the affairs of their church; but under Christ, and in his strength, take the work into their own hands, and manage it according to the rules they had already received; *Take heed to yourselves. As the eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, and beareth them on her wings,*^m to teach them to fly, as soon as she perceives they are fledged; so does St. Paul here, by these elders, putting some of his honour and spirit upon them, and exciting them now to do that themselves,ⁿ which hitherto himself or Timothy had done for them; and to make full proof of their ministry,^o as hitherto they had under their direction made good proof of it.

Now though this was a great advancement to these elders, thus to come of age, and to be no longer under tutors and governors, yet they were so far from being pleased, or puffed up with the honour, that they fell a weeping at the thought of it; that they should never again have Paul to preside among them, and direct them. Thus the disciples

^d Matt. x. 41.
^e Hos. xii. 4.

^f Heb. xiii. 5.
^g Heb. vii. 7.

^h Eph. i. 16.
ⁱ Prov. xi. 25.

^k 1 Tim. iv. 14.

^l Acts xx. 28.
^m Numb. xi. 17.

ⁿ Deut. xxxii. 11.
^o 2 Tim. iv. 5.

of Christ, though he told them when he parted with them, that greater works than he did should they do,^p yet sorrow filled their hearts, because they should want the advantage of his bodily presence. Those know not their own weakness, and the peril that attends the posts of honour, who are ambitious to stand in the front, and lead the van, to carry the standard, or give the word of command among the soldiers of Jesus Christ. Since it is so difficult to rule well, it is very desirable rather to be well ruled.

But though the presbyters, or ministers only, are mentioned, as attending Paul at Miletus, yet it is probable that some of the people were with them, to pay their respects to that great apostle; for we find at another place, soon after this, that he was thus brought on his journey after a godly sort,^q and accompanied to the ship, by all the disciples with their wives and children, *ch. xxi. 5.*

(2.) Observe how they expressed their sorrow. We read of nothing they said on this occasion; but,

[1.] *They all wept sore, κενος δι' ἔγνετο κλαυθμος παντων*—*There was an abundant weeping of them all*; so the phrase is, perhaps in allusion to that saying of the Canaanites, concerning the lamentation that was made at Jacob's funeral, *This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians.*^r It was not one or two of them, whose spirits were more tender than the rest, that could not forbear weeping on this occasion, but they all wept; there was not one dry eye among them. Nor were they women and children who mourned thus passionately, but the elders of the church, who did not think it any diminution to their gravity, or dignity, in this way to give vent to their sorrows.

Our Lord Jesus was often in tears,^s particularly at the grave of his friend Lazarus; and it is probable, his frequent weeping was that which made those, who fancied him to be one of the prophets risen from the dead, to conclude, that certainly he was Jeremiah the weeping prophet.^t Our way lies through a vale of tears, and it becomes us to conform to the climate: *Blessed are they that mourn, that sow in tears.*

[2.] *They fell on Paul's neck and kissed him*; signifying hereby how dear he was to them, and how loth they were to part with him. They took him in their arms, and laid him in their bosoms, to show how near he lay to their hearts, and that he was to them as their own souls. Thus they embraced at parting, as Jacob and Joseph did at meeting,^u with all the affection that can be supposed, between the tenderest father and the dearest children. Could they have detained him in the cords of love, and with those powerful bands constrained his stay, he had not left them; but there is no remedy, he must go. He loves them well, and would gladly abide with

them, but he loves his Master better, and must preach his kingdom in other cities also.^v Yet they will make it appear, it is with the utmost regret and reluctance imaginable that they bid him farewell; their life they think is bound up in his.

See here one fruit of the gospel of Christ; as far as it took possession of men's hearts, it not only slew all enmities, but strengthened all endearments. If the followers of Christ showed themselves thus mutually kind upon all occasions, well might they say among the heathen, *See how these Christians love one another*: and by this would all men know, that they were the disciples of him, who loved us first.^w O that this fruit might revive, might remain! How happy is it, where there is such sincere and flaming affection as this between people and ministers, between Christians among themselves, and ministers likewise one to another; for where love thus reigns, the God of love no doubt commands the blessing, even life for evermore.^x

(3.) Observe what was the matter of their sorrow, it was chiefly this, because he had said, and had said it with an observable air of assurance, that they should *see his face no more*; which bid them to think that he was now ready to be offered, and that the time of his departure was at hand;^y and for this sorrow filled their heart. He could himself finish his course with joy, it was a pleasure to him to think of it, but to them nothing could be mentioned more painful; this put him into a dilemma between life and death, Phil. i. 22, 23. The joy and gain set before him made death desirable, and yet the grief and loss he should leave behind him, made him, with a noble self-denial, willing to live.

Yet whether he was to die quickly, or live a good while longer, he does not inform them, only that they for their parts should *see his face no more*; this was the word which was as a sword in their bones. We have no reason to think, that St. Paul had any thing charming in his face above other men, it did not shine as the face of Moses did; but, on the contrary, we know that his bodily presence was weak and despicable; and it was probable, his visage, like his Master's, was marred more than any man's, furrowed with tears and toils. But it was not the show of his countenance that they looked at; they therefore loved to see his face, because then they were sure to hear his voice, and the voice of Christ speaking in him; then they were sure to have some spiritual gift^z or other imparted to them, for their instruction and edification; but now they must never expect that privilege again. It is true, after this they might hope to hear from him by letter, and did do so, and his very enemies owned that his letters were weighty and powerful; they had likewise his other epistles to the churches, besides that to them-

^p John xiv. 12.

^q John xi. 35.

^r 3 John 8.

^s Matt. xvi. 14.

^t 3 s

^u Gen. l. 11.

^v Gen. xlv. 29.

^w Luke iv. 43.

^x John xiii. 34.

^y 2 Tim. iv. 6.

^z Pa. cxxxiii. 3.

¹ Rom. i. 11.

selves, to consult and converse with ; yet it troubles them to think that they shall never see him in the pulpit, never hear him preach any more ; and though that which is written remains, yet that which is delivered *viva voce*—with the living voice, is more likely to affect ; and we cannot but desire with St. John, if it may be, to see the voice that speaks to us.^a

But why should they sorrow most of all for this word, that they should see his face no more ? There was another thing which he had said, for which, in my mind, they had more reason to be sorrowful than for this ; for he had told them, that after his departure grievous wolves should enter in among them ; nay, that some of themselves, it should seem, he means some of these very men he was now speaking to, should arise and preach perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them, v. 30. For this, methinks, they should have sorrowed most of all, as the disciples of Christ did, who are said to have been exceeding sorrowful, when their Master told them that one of them should betray him.^b But the truth is, the things of sense make deepest impressions upon us, and affect us most ; we grieve for sin less than we ought, and for trouble more. Or we may suppose, that therefore they thus lamented Paul's departure from them, because this would be the sad consequence of it, which they hoped might have been happily prevented, if he could but have tarried with them.

However, that it grieved them thus to part with him, was both his honour and their praise.

[1.] It was his honour. It was a sign he lived in esteem among them, as one who did good in Ephesus, (as Jehoiada had done in Israel,^c) that he went away attended with so many unforced, undissembled tears.

It is a mark of disgrace to depart without being desired,^d and as an evidence of that, without being lamented, none to say, *Ah ! lord !* or, *Ah his glory,*^e but a branch of honour to be wept over, as Josiah was, and dismissed with the genuine and unbribed lamentations of those that are wise and good.

It is true, there have been those who have triumphed in the fall of the worthiest and best of men ; when Christ's two witnesses are conquered and slain, the inhabitants of the earth will rejoice in it, and make merry ;^f their lives were their torment, and therefore their deaths are their joy ; they who took away their lives, cast out their names as evil, that they might make the world believe they had done God and their country good service. And, probably, the mighty industry of the persecutors, to blemish the memory of the martyrs, might give occasion to their surviving friends so much the more to magnify them, and pay the greater respect to their names ; even such as in after-ages degenerated (as good

things are apt to do) into superstition. But the removal of virtuous and useful men, though it may be the sport and joy of profaneness and bigotry, will be the grief of all wisdom's children. Though Stephen was cast out of the city and stoned, in a popular tumult, as one not fit to live, yet there were found devout men, (who, it should seem, were not as yet professed Christians, but proselytes of the gate, hearty well-wishers to religion in general,) and those carried Stephen to his grave, and made great lamentation over him.^g

St. Paul, for his part, was loaded as much as any man with disgrace and ignominy, wherever he went, and yet there were those of whom he was had in honour.^h Thus did he pass by evil report and good report ; some hated and vilified him, others loved and magnified him. Let none, therefore, be deterred from religion and godliness by the contempt put upon them ; if they have their reproach, they have their praise : set the one, therefore, over against the other, balance the dishonour with the honour, and see the advantage unspeakably on religion's side ; for the reproach is groundless and trifling, may be easily despised, and will quickly be rolled away, but the honour is just, and real, and weighty, and will last to eternity.

[2.] It was their praise. It is upon record to the commendation of these elders, that they thus lamented St. Paul's removal from them ; it was a sign they loved him, and valued him, and had been edified by their conversation with him ; a sign they judged of persons and things not by outward appearance, or according to the corrupt but common sentiment of a vain and inconsiderate world, that sits in darkness ; but that they were governed by their believing regards to an eternal God, an immortal soul, and an everlasting state ; for the sake of which they had this mighty affection and esteem for blessed Paul. A citizen of Zion honours all his fellow-citizens,ⁱ but the priests, and the Nazarites, those precious sons of Zion, are counted worthy of double honour : such was the honour those elders here generously and gratefully yielded to Paul.

We will, therefore, take it for granted, that these tears were truly pearls, pearls of great price, and that in them part of a just debt was paid to St. Paul now at his going away ; and so we may

Observe, That the removal of a good minister from us, is a thing to be greatly lamented by us. Our parting with a faithful minister cannot but be, if we consider it aright, a very sorrowful parting.

I have already seen so many of the tears of this congregation upon this sad occasion, that I could not think of any subject more suitable, nor more pertinent to my purpose, than this. I wish I were able to improve the fair occasion it gives me, to ac-

^a Rev. i. 12.

^b Matt. xxvi. 22.

^c 2 Chron. xxiv. 16.

^d 2 Chron. xxi. 30.

^e Jer. xxii. 18.

^f Rev. xi. 10.

^h 2 Sam. vi. 22.

^g Acts viii. 2.

ⁱ Ps. xv. 4.

count for the justice of your tears, and to direct them into the right channel; to affect you with the providence you are under, and yet to reconcile you to it, and satisfy you in the will of God.

Had your aged pastor's voice (that least considerable of the qualifications of a minister) been but as good as his head and heart, now in his advanced years, and likely to have reached this great assembly, the work had been at this time in much better hands than mine;* but after all our endeavours, the best part of the work, even the sanctifying of this sad event to the spiritual benefit of every one of you, and the furtherance of the life of your souls by the death of your minister, must by faith and prayer be humbly left to a better hand than any of ours; even to that of the blessed Spirit, who worketh all in all.

Tears for the dead carry with them their own justification; when the body is sown in corruption, it is fit it should be watered; we are allowed to sorrow, even for those that we have reason to hope sleep in Jesus, and are only cautioned not to sorrow as those who have no hope.^a The house where death is, is supposed to be a house of mourning,^b and many a good lesson the man of wisdom will learn there.

But it is a particular case we are now to speak of, and to our grief it is a *case in faith*; it is that of a dead minister, whom we have special reason to weep over; and *oh! that our heads were waters, and our eyes fountains of tears*, for this purpose! Mourning for the dead, even for a priest when he died, by the law of Moses contracted a ceremonial pollution; = because that law could not take away sin, which is the sting of death, so that that mourning was then attended with a conscience of guilt unremoved; but the gospel of Christ having abolished death, and altered the property of it, and so enabled us to triumph over it, our sorrow for the dead is now so far from defiling us, that, if it be duly improved, it may, by the grace of God, become a happy means of our cleansing: God grant ours may be so upon this occasion!

I shall endeavour briefly to show, I. Who it is, whose removal is to be thus lamented; and, II. Who they are, from whom it is justly expected that they lament it; and both from the text and context, as God shall enable me.

I. I say, it is a good minister whose removal is to be thus lamented. Shall I give you, in short, the character of such a good minister, as is worthy of this double honour?^a Honour while he lives, and honour when he is gone? You here have lost one, who of his standing, was justly numbered among the first three, for eminent gifts and attainments, and a capacity of serving Christ and his church with

them; but thanks be to God, a man may come far short of him, and yet be found a good and able minister of the New Testament; and not to be parted with without sorrow. We will, therefore, draw the portraiture of this good minister, by his interest and fidelity, not by his learning, or the arts and languages he is master of; and we will borrow it from the testimony of St. Paul's conscience here, in the preceding discourse concerning himself; in which he did not intend to magnify himself as some great one, but only to justify himself against his accusers, as one who had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

And here let me premise, (and yet, I hope, we are in this matter so manifest in your consciences, that I need not mention it,) that we abhor the thought of drawing into the character of a good minister, his being in every thing of our mind. Far be it, far be it from us, to monopolize Christianity, or the ministry, and confine either within the pale of our own particular opinion, in things that concern not the vitals and essentials of religion. We are not here seeking to advance the reputation of a party, nor appropriating the good characters to those of our own denomination; no, we take all occasions to protest against it, and while we walk according to what we have attained, endeavouring therein to approve ourselves to God in our integrity, we charitably believe that others do so too; and therefore we heartily love and honour good men, and good ministers, however, in the less weighty matters of the law, we differ from them in sentiment and apprehension, and practise accordingly; and we highly value all who cast out devils in Christ's name, though they follow not with us.^c We have a spiritual communion with them in faith, hope, and holy love, we pray for their success, we rejoice in their usefulness, we would be helpers together with them, endeavouring as we are able to promote the common interests of Christ's kingdom, and the common salvation^d of precious souls; we desire their lives, we lament their deaths; God forbid we should do otherwise, for without doubt, *the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and should be approved of us.*^e

Who then is that good minister, whose removal is to be thus lamented by us.

1. He is one, who having entirely devoted himself to the glory and honour of God, makes it his business to serve him. Thus St. Paul was among the Ephesians, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears.^f You call us your ministers, and we are very willing to be so called, for we are your servants for Jesus' sake;^g but we

* The Rev. Mr. Tallents, now in the 87th year of his age, and a constant preacher.

^a 1 Thess. iv. 13.

^b Eccl. vii. 2.

^c Lev. xxi. 1.

3 & 2

^d 1 Tim. v. 17.

^e Jude 3.

^f Acts xx. 19.

^g Luke ix. 49, 50.

^h Rom. xiv. 17, 18.

ⁱ 2 Cor. iv. 5.

rather look upon ourselves as ministers of God to you for good; Christ is our Master, and he is a good minister who seeks his master's favour, consults his master's interest, and makes it his business to do his master's will and work.

Nothing is more essentially necessary to the making a man a minister, than self-dedication to the glory of God; nor does any thing go further to denominate a man a good minister, than to act in pursuance of that self-dedication, by a diligent and serious attendance upon God in all instances of devotion, and a wise, faithful, and zealous activity for him, and for the interests of his kingdom; studying by all means possible to do good to the souls of men, and to advance religion in the power of it. He who thus waits on his Master, by *waiting on his ministry*,¹ *shall be honoured*.²

He is a good minister who seeks not his own glory, but his who sent him;³ who serves not his own belly, but the Lord Christ;⁴ who aims not at the applause of his fellow-servants, but at his Master's acceptance; for if we please men otherwise than for their edification, we are not the servants of Christ.⁵ He is a faithful friend of the bridegroom, who seeks the bridegroom's honour, and does all he can to engage people's affections for him, that he alone may be exalted. Let us be nothing, so that Christ may be *all in all*.

St. Paul was a great scholar, and a chief speaker; yet he reflects with more comfort and satisfaction upon the humility of mind, and the many tears, with which he had served the Lord, than upon the strength of his reasonings, and the eloquence of his discourses, with which he had served him. He is a good minister, and does good service to Christ and his church, who is humble and affectionate in the work of his ministry, though he do not excel in gifts. *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth*.⁶

2. He is one who faithfully preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus St. Paul, though born at Tarsus, a Gentile academy, bred up at the feet of Gamaliel, a Jewish rabbi, yet in his preaching set aside all his learning, and testified the gospel of the grace of God;⁷ pressed both upon Jews and Gentiles nothing else but repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.⁸ Gospel grace and gospel duty were the subjects he dwelt upon at all seasons, both publicly, and from house to house; of these he kept back nothing,⁹ with these he mingled nothing, ministering the gospel both pure and entire.

And he is indeed a good minister who makes the gospel his oracle, the gospel his touchstone, the gospel his treasury and storehouse, out of which he furnishes himself for every good word and work. Who dares not preach another gospel, nor corrupt this; knowing it is only a dispensation that is com-

mitted to him,¹⁰ for which he is accountable; who delights not in preaching any thing but the gospel, knowing nothing so entertaining, nothing so edifying, as that great summary of the gospel, *Jesus Christ, and him crucified*.¹¹

He is a good minister, who fills not your heads with airy notions, nor troubles your minds with matters of doubtful disputation, who affects not to gratify a vain fancy with fine speculations, or an itching ear with the enticing words of man's wisdom; but aims, by the plainness and simplicity of the gospel, to win your hearts to the faith and love of Jesus Christ. *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord*.¹²

3. He is one who cares much for the state of precious souls. Concerning this, St. Paul here appeals to the elders of Ephesus, that he ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.¹³ His care was extensive, he had an eye to every one under his charge, high and low, rich and poor, to those who were his grief, as well as to those who were his crown; it was constant, he never ceased night or day, but filled up all his time, both of business and conversation, with that which tended to their edification; and it was very affectionate, he warned with tears of love, and tenderness, and holy fear, lest they should come short, and miscarry at last. Thus zealous was blessed Paul, for the edification of the body of Christ, not seeking his own profit, or secular advantage, but the profit of many, and their spiritual advantage, that they might be saved;¹⁴ for upon that was his heart fixed.

And he is a good minister, who has a tender and compassionate love for the souls of men, trembles at the thought of their eternal ruin, and earnestly desires their eternal welfare; for the securing of which he would gladly spend and be spent;¹⁵ who studies to find out acceptable words, by them to teach the people knowledge;¹⁶ who, in his preaching and converse, aims and endeavours to make those with whom he has to do, some way or other wiser and better; who even *travails in birth again*, as it were with labouring pangs, to see Christ formed in them;¹⁷ the height of whose ambition is, to be some way instrumental for the conviction and conversion of sinners, and the building up of saints in holiness and comfort; humbly subscribing to St. Paul's protestation, *We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying*.¹⁸

4. He is one who, by the grace of God, lives in some measure above this present world. This was St. Paul's rejoicing here, even the testimony of his conscience, concerning the temper of his mind, *I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel*;¹⁹ he never desired to be as rich, and look as great as his

¹ Prov. xxvii. 18.

² Rom. xvi. 18.

³ Acts xx. 24.

⁴ Rom. xii. 7.

⁵ Gal. i. 10.

⁶ Acts xx. 21.

⁷ John viii. 50.

⁸ 1 Cor. viii. 1.

⁹ Acts xx. 20.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. ix. 17.

¹¹ 1 Cor. x. 33.

¹² Gal. iv. 19.

¹³ 1 Cor. ii. 2.

¹⁴ 2 Cor. xii. 15.

¹⁵ 2 Cor. xii. 19.

¹⁶ 2 Cor. iv. 5.

¹⁷ 1 Cor. xii. 9.

¹⁸ Acts xx. 33.

neighbour; he was perfectly dead to worldly greatness and gaiety. He had likewise the testimony of his friends, concerning the course of his life; they knew very well he was so far from aiming to get wealth, that he laboured in an honest calling to get bread, rather than be burthensome to them, to the prejudice of his ministry; *You yourselves know, that these hands have ministered to my necessities*, and not to mine only, but to *theirs that were with me.*^a In his whole conversation, he discovered a generous contempt of this world, as became one who was so well acquainted with another world, and the great and everlasting things of that world.

And he is a good minister, whose life is in this, as in other instances, of a piece with his doctrine. Whose eyes are not dazzled with the glittering lustre of gold and silver, nor his heart drawn, or held, by the magnetic virtue of this earth: who seeks not yours for himself, but you^o for Christ. Minds no high things, but heavenly things; no pleasure so much as that of doing his duty; no preferment in comparison with that of being accepted of God;^p no business in competition with the business of his ministry. Who having engaged and employed himself in the affairs of another life, entangles not himself in the affairs of this life. Whose conversation is in heaven,^q and in whose forehead, as well as his heart, *Holiness to the Lord* is engraven in legible and indelible characters. The apostles betimes taught gospel ministers the proper place for their worldly wealth, when they ordered the money that was brought them, to be laid not in their hands, much less in their bosoms, but at their feet.^r

You see now who, and what manner of men, those ministers are, whose removal is so great a loss, and to be so much lamented. God grant that we all, who are called by this worthy name of ministers of the gospel, may answer these characters. How far our deceased brother did so, some of you know very well, and need not that any man should testify.

II. I come in the next place to show you who they are, who are concerned to lament the removal of such ministers as these, and what cause they have to do so.

They were the elders of Ephesus, elders in office, not in age, who here wept sore for the departure of Paul from among them: and they may be considered, 1. As ministers; 2. As ministers just setting out in the work of the ministry; and, 3. As, at this time, and upon this occasion, the representatives of the people or church of Ephesus. And so,

1. We who are ministers, are taught to bewail the removal of our fathers and brethren from us, and that we shall see their faces no more in this world. Even Paul the aged speaks of the recovery of a young minister, Epaphroditus by name, from a dan-

gerous fit of sickness, as a very great mercy of God to himself, *lest (says he) I should have sorrow upon sorrow.*^s Though he had as little need of the help of others, as ever any minister had, yet the death of Epaphroditus would have been a very great affliction to him, and would have added as much as any thing to his sorrows. Elijah lays very much to heart the death of the prophets, and himself being left alone, though he was so well able to stand alone.^t

Let the priests, therefore, the Lord's ministers, weep on such sad occasions, between the porch and the altar,^u mingling their tears with their sacrifices, and their prayers with their tears, saying, *Spare thy people, O Lord.* When the harvest is plenteous, and the labourers, and the skilful, faithful labourers so few, our Master has appointed us to pray the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into the harvest;^v and are we not to lament it greatly, when some of the most industrious of the labourers are called out of the harvest, when they could so ill be spared?

Our hands are this day weak; and by such providences as these, they are much more weakened. God is contending with us; our glory is waxen thin; the death of every good minister, (and we have parted with a great many of late, in the midst of their usefulness,) is *as when a standard-bearer fainteth; and alas, the rest of the trees of our forest are so few, that a child may write them.*^w It is time for us, with the prophet Ezekiel, to fall down on our faces, under a deep sense of God's displeasure, and to cry as he did, with a loud voice, *Ah! Lord God, wilt thou make a full end of the remnant of Israel?*^x high time to cry, *Help, Lord, when the faithful, the faithful helpers, cease and fail.*^y

And by the sadness of our countenances upon such occasions as these, let our hearts be made better,^z and let us be quickened with more care and diligence to work the works of him who sent us, while it is day, because the night comes, and before it comes, *wherein no man can work.*^a Let us not only be true to our trust, but busy at our work, because we must shortly give account of our stewardship, and be no longer stewards. By such a providence as this, God speaks aloud to us, as he did to Moses, (Numb. xxvii. 13.) *Thou shalt be gathered to thy people, as Aaron thy brother was gathered. Whatsoever, therefore, our hand finds to do, let us do it with all our might; not counting life itself dear to us, not being too tender of it, so we may finish our course with joy.*^b

2. The sons of the prophets are, in a particular manner, taught by this instance to lament the removal of their master from their head. And it will be a good sign that they are genuine sons, and will be a good presage of their inheriting a child's

^a Acts xx. 34. ^o 2 Cor. xii. 14. ^p 2 Cor. v. 9. ^q Phil. iii. 20.
^r Acts iv. 37. ^s Phil. ii. 27. ^t 1 Kings. xix. 10. ^u Joel ii. 17.

^v Matt. ix. 38. ^w Isa. x. 18, 19. ^x Ezek. xi. 13. ^y Ps. xli. 1.
^z Eccl. vii. 3. ^a John ix. 4. ^b Acts xx. 24.

portion of their spirit, if with a filial affection, they cry out as Elisha did, *My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof*.^c When Elisha had, in those words, erected a monument to the honour of his departed tutor, immediately he took up his mantle, and did wonders with it.

Those who are setting out in the ministry, or setting their faces toward it, have great reason to lament the removal of the elder ministers, especially such an one as we are now particularly lamenting, whom God had eminently qualified for the committing of the treasure of the gospel to some of the earthen vessels of the rising generation, and the putting of the light into their hands; who did, not only as a minister, *generare filios—beget sons* to Christ by the gospel; but as a tutor, *generare patres—beget nurses* for those children, and fathers to bring others to Christ. We cannot express the greatness of the loss of such an one, which they, in a special manner, have reason to be sensible of, who sat down under his shadow.

When John Baptist was beheaded, it is said, *his disciples took up the body and buried it, and then went and told Jesus*.^d Let those do so who were brought up at the feet of this well instructed scribe. Go and tell Jesus that you are orphans, and take him for your guardian, with whom the fatherless find mercy, and who has promised not to leave his disciples orphans.^e Resolve, that from this time, more than ever, you will cry unto him as your Father, and the guide of your youth,^f and be assured he will never fail nor forsake those, who trust in the shadow of his wings.

3. The people that sat under the constant instruction and inspection of a good minister, ought to lament the removal of such an one from them. When our temporal comforts are removed from us, our relations, or friends, in whom we had sensible delight, or by whom we had secular advantage, our grief then has more need of a bridle than of a spur; but when those are taken from us by whom we had, and hoped for, benefit, to our souls only, then it is necessary something should be said to us, to make us sensible of our loss, and to stir us up to mourn for it; for this is an affliction, which, if not duly weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, we shall not be enough affected with; or at least the impressions of it are apt to wear off quickly, and are soon forgotten and lost.

Let me, therefore, show you briefly what reason you of this congregation have to lament the loss of a faithful shepherd, though, thanks be to that God, who graciously continues his aged servant among you, labouring in the word of doctrine, you are not as sheep having no shepherd. I have reason to think you are very sensible of the breach made upon

you; I desire you may be so upon right grounds, that you may sorrow after a godly sort; that you may not, like children, cry for you know not what, but may be able to give a rational answer to such a question, as that which Joseph put to his fellow-prisoners, *Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?*^g You may reply to that question with such questions as these:

(1.) Should we not grieve to part with a near relation, to whom we are joined in a close alliance? *Ah! my brother, or Ah! sister*; is mentioned as sufficient matter for lamentation, Jer. xxii. 18. And shall the bonds of kindred by blood and nature be stronger than those of kindred by the Spirit and grace? You have had fathers of your flesh, whom it may be you have followed to the grave, and you gave them this reverence, you lamented them; you would have reproached yourselves, as void of natural affection, if you had not done so; and will you not show this respect to your spiritual fathers, that thereby you may do honour to the Father of your spirits, and live.^h

Ministers are yours, you have an interest in them, an interest by promise; *Paul, and Apollas, and Cephas, are yours*, 1 Cor. iii. 22. (It was one of the last subjects your deceased minister preached upon among you; I hope you will not forget it; he told me of it when I visited him in his illness.) It follows, *or life, or death*, which may be understood particularly of the life and death of your ministers; their life is for your service, and their death too, if you make a due improvement of it, may be for your awakening and quickening, for whether they live or die, they are the Lord's,ⁱ and yours for his sake.

They are yours, for they are gifts which the exalted Redeemer gave unto men for the perfecting of the saints,^k which he gave unto you to be your guides, overseers, and rulers; not to have dominion over your faith, we do not in the least pretend to it, but to be the helpers of your joy,^l and nurses to the *new man* in its infancy, *till it comes to the perfect man*.

You see how nearly related your ministers are to you; they are appointed to be friends to your souls, and if, as you ought, you account them your best friends, it cannot but be a grief to you to part with them.

(2.) Should we not grieve to part with those who have loved us, and been kind to us? As we are bound in duty to lament the departure of our relations; so we are bound in gratitude to lament the departure of our benefactors; whom God by his grace has made blessings to us. Even the unthankful Israelites had so much sense of honour in them, as to mourn for Moses thirty days,^m in consideration of the great things God had done for them by his

^c 2 Kings ii. 12.

^d Matt. xiv. 12.

^e John xiv. 18. marg.

^f Jer. iii. 4.

^g Gen. xl. 7.

^h Heb. xii. 9.

ⁱ Rom. xiv. 8.

^k Eph. iv. 11, 12.

^l 2 Cor. i. 24.

^m Deut. xxxiv. 8.

hand; and shall we be less sensible of those invaluable benefits we enjoy by the mysteries of God, which ministers are the stewards of?

My brethren, we have nothing in ourselves to boast of, but a great deal to be ashamed of, yet, we hope, we can appeal to God as our record, how sincerely we long after you all in the *bowels* of Jesus Christ; how dearly we love you, how earnestly we desire your spiritual welfare, how jealous we are over you with a godly jealousy; and as far as you have perceived this Spirit to be working in your ministers toward you, that must certainly be a grief to you, to have them taken from you. Do you lie so near their hearts, and shall not their departures be laid near yours?

There is something of a generous gratitude in these sorrows we are now calling for, such as well becomes those, who ask in sincerity, *What shall we render?* and would be found, as they are able, rendering according to the benefit done to them. Thus the memory of the just should be precious to us, especially theirs, who, by the grace of God, turned many to righteousness; thus should their names be preserved, and embalmed in tears. If for a good man,^a a useful man, some would find in their hearts to die, to obtain a reprieve for them; shall not all find in their hearts to mourn, when they are past reprieve? Especially, since it is mentioned as a piece of gross stupidity, and a sad presage of approaching ruin to a people, when the righteous perish, and none consider it, or lay it to heart.^b

(3.) Should we not grieve to part with those, who can very ill be spared, and that we shall certainly find the loss of? We shall see ourselves engaged to this, by a sense of interest, as well as duty and gratitude. The death of a good minister is a loss, a loss to you, and as such is to be lamented; a loss which, it may be, you are not so sensible of now, as you will be hereafter, when you will know that a prophet *hath been* among you;^c *hath been, but now is not*; when you will wish to see some of those days of the Son of man, which you have seen, and may not.

Alas, says the true mourner, if we be bereaved of our ministers, we are *indeed* bereaved; we shall find more and more the want of their preaching and praying, their instructions of us, their intercessions for us, their prudent counsels, their faithful reproofs, their directing and encouraging examples; we may have another minister, but not such another; or such another, but not such another *to us*; it is well if the gap be not too great to be filled up. *Our soul desireth the first ripe fruits,*^d but where are they.

It is a public loss, a loss to the town and country, to the land and nation; and public spirits cannot but bewail public losses. How ill can the church of God spare any of its good ministers! They are the

chariots and horsemen^e of the land; strip us of these, and we are naked and defenceless. They are our treasure: rob us of these, and we are impoverished. They are the burning and shining lights: put out these, and we walk in darkness. They are our glory and joy: take away these, and our pleasant things are departed, our songs are made to cease, our honour laid in the dust, and the crown fallen from the head, *Woe unto us; for we have sinned.*^f

It is true, our God has the residue of the Spirit, nor is he tied to particular instruments; he can raise up a seed to serve him, as well qualified as those who went before; *instead of the fathers*, when he pleases, *shall be the children,*^g and will be so, if their spirit descend and rest upon us; *with God all things are possible*: but, alas, we have not this hopeful prospect to give you; we who are risen up, come too far short of those who are gone, and going off, into whose labours we are entered, to be able to excuse you from deep lamentations of the death of your elder ministers, and from sighing out your Ichabod, *Where is the glory?*^h

Is it nothing to you, then, all ye who pass by, is it nothing to you, that the gold is thus become dirt, and the most fine gold changed;ⁱ that we have reason to fear such an alteration in the house of our God among us, as was in the temple of Jerusalem in Rehoboam's time, when the shields of gold were carried away, and shields of brass were provided instead of them.^j God look upon us, and prevent the fatal consequences of such a change as this! How far God may carry on his work by prerogative of power, even when he has removed such workmen, I cannot say; but this I am sure of, their removal is a very threatening omen, which we are all concerned to have awful apprehensions of.

It were now easy to draw a great many inferences from this melancholy subject; to reprove those who lay not to heart such sad dispensations, and much more those who rejoice in the extinguishing of our lights, because they love darkness rather; to encourage ministers to diligence and fidelity in their work, that they may finish their course with honour, as well as joy; to quicken and engage you all to a careful improvement of the labours of your faithful ministers, while they are continued with you, that you may not have tears for your own hardness and unprofitableness, to mix with your tears for their removal; to inquire whether you have made a due improvement of the former afflictions of this kind you have been under, in the death both of good ministers, and good Christians, who have shone as lights among you, holding forth the word of life.

But it is time I apply myself more particularly to the sad occasion of our being together here this even-

^a Phil. i. 8. ^b Rom. v. 7. ^c Isa. lvii. 1.
^d Ezek. xxxiii. 33. ^e Mic. vii. 1. ^f 2 Kings ii. 12.

^g Lam. v. 16. ^h Ps. xlv. 16. ⁱ 1 Sam. iv. 21.
^j Lam. iv. 1. ^k 2 Chron. xii. 9, 10.

ing. Though it is not a Paul, it is not an apostle, we have now parted with, and are now lamenting; we compare not our fir-trees with the cedars of Lebanon; yet it is one who, I believe, was manifest in the consciences of many of you, to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, and one who had obtained mercy of the Lord to be found both skilful and faithful in that great work.

The earthen vessel, now a broken vessel, we have lodged in the dust, with the expectation of its being raised shortly a vessel of honour; and now, what improvements shall we make of this sad providence, and how shall we pay some part of that debt of respect we owe to the surviving name and memory?

Were this a proper place and time for me to express my own sorrow on account of this breach made upon us, I could not find out better words, nor more apposite and expressive to do it in, than those of David, when he lamented the fall of one, who had been dear to him as his own soul; *I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan, very pleasant hast thou been unto me.*^a If while I live I forget him, I must lie under the imputation of forgetting my own friend, and my father's friend.^a A friend, with whom I have had an intimate acquaintance about seven or eight and twenty years, with whom I have many a time taken sweet counsel, and by whose conversation and correspondence, I either have been edified, or might have been; having always found him, not only well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven,^b but ready to distribute, and willing to communicate.^b Such was the pleasantness of his life, and the distress by his death must be proportionable; *Lover and friend hast thou put far from me; c and my acquaintance into darkness.* In our lives we were not much divided, either in time or place; how far, and how long, we may be so in our deaths, he only knows in whose hands our breath and times are. God, by his grace, make me ready and willing to go after him!

But we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying;^d that is my design, that is my desire; and I hope, by the blessing of God, it will be some way, edifying to you, if, 1. I give you some short account of his character; 2. If I make some remarks upon his removal; and, 3. If I then briefly direct you to some of the work of this day in its day.

1. If I would expatiate upon his character, I have a very wide field before me, and am really sensible there is a justice owing to so good, so great a name. I confess I am not fond of making every friend I love and honour a *nonsuch*; it must be left to him, to whom all hearts are open, to put that into any man's character, that there is none like him in the earth;^e yet, I think, that this is not to be deposited as common dust, nor his monument to be inscribed

with common characters; and yet, as an advocate for his honour, shall only make that very reasonable demand, *Give him of the fruit of his hands, and let his own works praise him in the gates.*^f

But aiming, as I said, at your edification, two things I shall suggest, which I think have a direct tendency that way, and may turn to a good account.

(1.) Let that be observed concerning him, which will furnish us with matter for praise and thanksgiving to God. And a great deal of reason we have to give thanks, not only in general, for all the saints and servants of God, who are departed this life in the *faith and fear of his holy name*; to the general assembly of whom, we are come in faith, hope, and love; but in a particular manner for those who have been in their day the lights of the church, and justly accounted fathers in it; for who is their Father? who but the Father of lights and spirits, *the Lord God of the holy prophets?*^g

What we call the endowments of nature, a great genius, a solid judgment, a clear head, a strong memory, a quick fancy, a ready utterance, and the like, are all gifts from above; from his hand who formeth the Spirit of man within him. *The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord has made even both of them.*^h All souls are his, even the greatest, the largest souls are so.

What we ascribe to industry, and close application of mind, attainments in knowledge, and a great compass of learning, God must have the praise of; for he it is that giveth men power to get this wealth, and it is not got by their might, and the power of their hands.ⁱ He it is that giveth the tongue of the learned, and who, in order to that, openeth the ear to hear as the learned.^j He it is that lighteth the candles; and it is with a borrowed light that the church's stars shine, with a light reflected from the Sun of righteousness, that great light of the world.

It is to God, therefore, that we should give the praise of all those excellent gifts and graces, which we have observed in our deceased brother. Bless the Lord, who raised him out of a remote and obscure part of the kingdom, as a root out of a dry ground, to be so eminently serviceable to the interests of Christ's kingdom in his day, qualified him for service, called him to it, and signally owned him in it. Let us glorify the God of Israel, who has given such power unto men, and put such treasures into earthen vessels.

(2.) Let that be observed concerning him, which is proper for our imitation. What you have heard from him, and seen in him, that was virtuous and praiseworthy, transcribe it into your own hearts and lives, speak and do in like manner, and the God of peace shall be with you.^k Those who were exemplary while they lived, should be made use of as

^y 2 Sam. i. 26. ^a Prov. xxvii. 10. ^a Matt. xlii. 52.
^b 1 Tim. vi. 18. ^c Ps. lxxxviii. 18. ^d 2 Cor. xii. 19. ^e Job i. 8.

^f Prov. xxxi. 31. ^g 1 Sam. x. 12. ^h Prov. xx. 12.
ⁱ Deut. viii. 17, 18. ^j Isa. i. 4. ^k Phil. iv. 8.

examples when they are dead. It is required in general, that we be followers of all those, who are now through faith and patience inheriting the promises.^a But particularly, that we follow the faith and holiness of those who have been by office our guides in the good ways of the Lord, considering the end of their conversation;^b yet with this necessary proviso and limitation, that we follow them as they followed Christ,^c and blessed Paul himself, that great example, was to be followed no further.

Here let all who know him observe for themselves, and preach to themselves; his children, his pupils, his familiar friends and acquaintance, let them recollect what they have taken notice of in him, that was fit to be imitated, and improve it for their own direction, caution, and quickening. I shall only mention two or three things, wherein I would, for my part, propose him to myself for a pattern, and endeavour to imitate him.

Marcus Antonius the Emperor, that great teacher and example of virtue, begins his celebrated book *τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ*—concerning himself, that is, his diary, with an account of the particular good lessons, or rules of conversation, which he learned from his parents, tutors, and others, whom he names with respect, who were the guides and companions of his youth. Were I to draw up such an account, I should be unjust to him, if I should leave him out of it, in whom I have thought these things, among others, well worthy imitation:

[1.] That he was a good husband of precious time; and that is a piece of good husbandry, which I am sure is good divinity. I have always known him to be an indefatigable student, and one who took so much pleasure in his work, both as a scholar, and as a minister, that one might see he accounted it not only its own wages, but its own recreation.

Even till his Lord came he gave a constant attendance to reading, exhortation, and doctrine, not neglecting the gift that was in him, but continually meditating upon these things, giving himself wholly to them; so that his profiting (even in his early days) appeared unto all men.^d His Lord having intrusted him with five talents, he continually occupied the same, and traded with them, till, by the grace of God, he had made them five talents more. When he was sometimes urged to abate of the constancy and intenseness of his studies, in consideration of his health, he would say, "You must excuse me, I have but a little time to be working in, and I must be busy." *And seest thou a man thus diligent in his business, he shall stand before kings, and not before mean men.*

It was often observed concerning him, how uneasy he would be, when forced and kept from his studies by that conversation which was only entertaining,

and not edifying, and with what pleasure, as soon as possibly he could, he would retire from it to his work; that he might fill up time with something that would turn to a good account, according as the duty of every day required. This is in a happy sense *living fast*.

[2.] That he was ready and mighty in the Scriptures, and made them above any thing his meditation. His large acquaintance with other learning, did not at all abate his value and pursuit of Scripture learning, to which all his other studies were made subservient. As he lived a Scripture religion, so he preached a Scripture divinity. Scripture language was his eloquence, like that of Apollos, who was an eloquent man, because mighty in the Scriptures;^e Scripture reasons were his arguments, like the same Apollos, who mightily convinced the Jews, showing what he taught by the Scriptures.^f

Thus he came to be such an excellent expositor as you know he was; opening the Scripture by itself, comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and speaking the things of God, as they ought to be spoken, in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches.^g

Thus he was furnished with milk for babes, and pasture for the lambs of the flock, witness his great dexterity in explaining the catechism; and with strong meat also for strong men, witness his solid and substantial discourses, in which he set before you the great things of God with admirable clearness, and in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit, and with power.

Thus he adhered to the good old way, and testified the pure gospel of the grace of God, which exalts the Lord Jesus alone, as all in all, for strength as well as righteousness, and teaches us to cast every crown at his feet; taking all occasions to witness against those notions, which set up man's sufficiency in competition with Christ.

[3.] That he was a faithful and wise reprovcr of sin, and bold in bearing his testimony against it. Though you know, he was very courteous and obliging in all his behaviour, and not willing to make any man angry or sad, yet when there was a just occasion, he would admonish and rebuke with all authority, and yet with meekness and long-suffering.

Here he set his face as flint, and clad himself with zeal as with a cloak; as one who knew very well whose cause he pleaded, when he pleaded against sin; and how faithful and kind the wounds of a friend are, while the kisses of an enemy are deceitful; and as one, who believed there was a truth in Solomon's observation, which amounts to a divine promise, Prov. xxviii. 23. *He that rebuketh a man for his faults with wisdom and tenderness, though for the present he may incur his displeasure for his*

^a Heb. vi. 12. ^b Heb. xiii. 7. ^c 1 Cor. xi. 1. ^d 1 Tim. iv. 13—15.

^e Acts xviii. 24.

^f Acts xviii. 26.

^g 1 Cor. ii. 13.

plain dealing, yet *afterwards he shall find more favour*, and be looked upon as a better friend, *than he that flattereth with his tongue*.

[4.] That he was a man of true catholic charity; though no man was clearer in his own judgment, better understood the grounds on which he went, nor was better able to give an account of the hope that was in him with meekness and fear, yet he maintained an extensive charity for those from whom he differed, and a temper of mind toward them that was truly Christian, and became a follower of the Prince of peace, and a servant of the God of love.

As he wrote, he thought and lived: MODERATION was his VIRTUE, it was STILL his virtue; and it is not long since he took an effectual course to let it be known unto all men, as if he had foreseen that the Lord was at hand. And this is a virtue which has, and will have, its praise, with all those who know how to distinguish between the weighty and uncontested matters of the law and gospel,¹ *judgment, mercy, and the love of God*, and the matters of doubtful disputation,² such as the distinction of meats and days. This is the virtue, by which the unity of the Spirit is kept in the bond of peace; notwithstanding a diversity of opinion, and practice accordingly. The triumphs of this virtue over bigotry on all sides, will contribute abundantly to the peace of Zion's walls, and the prosperity of her palaces.

2. We are next to consider the end of his conversation,³ *ἔξοδον*—the *issue*, or *outlet*, of it. Having seen how he went on in the world, we are now to inquire how he went out of the world. Others had more of his life than you of this place had; but God sent him hither about six or seven years ago, to finish his testimony first, and then to finish his course among you; so that it is but a little time that you have had to improve by his life; God, by his grace, enable you to improve so much the more by his death: and a very improvable providence it is. It is a cloud mostly black and dark, yet not without its bright side.

(1.) We are here presented with a very melancholy and afflictive scene, which we ought to have very awful, serious thoughts of; something there is more than ordinary in this house of mourning, which the living should lay to heart.

To see a man so well qualified with gifts and graces for the service of Christ and his church, as he was; so well furnished, by the blessing of God upon the many years' hard studies of an uncommon head, with all sorts of useful knowledge; so inquisitive after more knowledge; and withal so communicative of what he did know. To see such a man thus taken away, in the midst of his serviceableness to his generation, when he had but little exceeded the fiftieth

year of his life; though his strong constitution of body, and prudent management of himself, gave encouragement to hope, that though these treasures were in an earthen vessel, yet there were goods laid up for many years; and though his zeal and unwearied industry promised us a great deal more of public service, and that he should long be a blessing to his generation, yet to have the number of such months cut off in the midst, such a tongue silenced, such a hand withered, such a head laid in the dust, and at such a time as this, when it could so ill be spared: *What shall we say to these things?* What construction can we make of such a providence as this? We must have recourse to our first principles, abide by them, and resolve to hold them fast, and not let them go, how difficult soever it may be to reconcile some particular events to them. However it be, we are sure that God is neither unwise, nor unjust, nor unkind: he is not only an absolute Sovereign, who may do what he will; but a religious Ruler, who does no wrong to any of his creatures; a tender father, who designs no hurt to any of his children. However it be, yet the Lord Jesus takes care of his church, secures its interests, and the glory of his own name; which, whatever becomes of us, will endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. Under the threatenings of providence, we must fly to the promises of the word, and cast anchor there; God knows what he is doing, though we do not; and we are sure dwells in perfect light, though as to us he makes darkness his pavilion. *Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters*; such as cannot be fathomed, cannot be tracked; but we are confident of this very thing, that thou art *righteous in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works*.

Were we not certain that the soul is immortal, and that there is another life after this, we should be tempted to expostulate with our Maker, as the psalmist does, *Lord, wherefore hast thou made all men, especially such men as these, in vain?* So long in the making, so admirably well made; and yet so suddenly unmade, and so little use in comparison made of them? Such a living temple reared, and yet the people of thy holiness to possess it such a little while? Many continued who are the burthens of the earth, under which it groans, as sadly weary of them; and yet those removed who were the blessings of it, after which it groans, as sadly wanting them? We now are at a loss, and cannot expound such dispensations as these; but the resurrection of the just, and the glories of the future state, will solve the problem, and clear up this seeming paradox; *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter*; when the mystery of God shall be finished. How those lights still shine to the praise of the Sun of Righteousness, which we count extinguished; and how these ser-

¹ Matt. xxiii. 23.

² Rom. xiv. 1.

³ Heb. xiii. 7.

vants of Christ still serve him in his temple, the period of whose usefulness we are here lamenting, we cannot tell, nor how much to their advantage, the time that is lost on earth may be made up in heaven. Yet still, on us it looks black, and is a very sad presage; the Lord's voice by it cries in the city, cries in the country. God grant we may understand what it says, and may return a good answer, that our God may not proceed in his controversy.

(2.) Yet even in this afflictive providence, the grace of God presents us with something very encouraging and reviving to us; and that is, the great comfort and joy with which our deceased brother finished his course; which I ought to take notice of, to the glory of God, and for your instruction. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man, though it be not always rapture and ecstasy, yet it is peace: the effect of righteousness will be quietness and assurance for ever.*

I came short of being a witness of his translation, but those who were about him when he was taken up, saw with what a wonderful serenity and composure of mind he performed his dying work; that work which is to be done but once, and therefore had need be well done. He had often prayed for grace to finish well, and it appeared that his prayer was answered, and that the grace of God in him was not in vain; so cheerfully did he look the king of terrors in the face and bid his message welcome. Though he had as much reason as most men have, upon all accounts, to desire life, yet it appeared that to depart, and to be with Christ, was to him much more desirable.

The strong pain of the stone, (that *flagellum studiorum*—*scourge of the student*, as it has been called,) with which he was frequently exercised, he bore not with the senselessness and stupidity of a stoic, but with the humble patience and submissiveness of a Christian, who had learned of his master to take up his cross. And when upon the continuance of a threatening and fatal symptom, he received the sentence of death within himself, with what ease did he take leave of the world, as one well pleased to think of being no more in it.

His solemn farewell to his children and pupils, the good counsels he gave them, the blessing with which he blessed them in the name of the Lord, and the testimony he bore with his dying lips to the good ways of God wherein he had walked, I hope they will never forget; and that particularly, they and we will ever remember and practise what he said, after many other good counsels, should be the last and great thing he would recommend to them, and that was, humility; "It is" (said he) "one of the brightest ornaments of a young minister to be humble."

The words of God which he had made his songs in the house of his pilgrimage, were his delightful

entertainment when his tabernacle was in taking down. How pleasantly did he triumph then, in the words of blessed Paul, *I know whom I have believed, and he is able to keep what I have committed unto him against that day*, 2 Tim. i. 12.

When he was asked in his illness, whether he would have some of his friends sent for to keep him company, he answered, "My fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and he that is not satisfied with that company, does not deserve it."

Another time, being asked would he not be glad to see his brother from Warrington, for whom he had an entire affection, he replied, "I know no man after the flesh; my elder Brother is in heaven, who is the first-born among many brethren." Thus he seemed to be taken up with heaven, before he was taken up to heaven.

Coming to himself again once after a fit, in which those about him thought him departing, he asked, "Have I not finished yet? I thought I should have finished now." Thus did he, with the sucking child, play upon the hole of the asp, and, with the weaned child, put his hand upon the cockatrice's den; knowing, that death itself cannot hurt or destroy in all the holy mountain, Isa. xi. 8, 9.

Overhearing his dear and affectionate yoke-fellow bemoaning herself, and saying, "*O this is a sad day!*" being the Lord's day, and some few hours before he died; he replied, with some show of resentment, "A sad day do you call it? No, it is not a sad day, I thank God; it is a comfortable day to me." And it was observed that he departed with a smiling countenance.

As he found himself drawing near to his end, he was ever and anon lifting up his heart to God, in such devout and pious breathings as these: "Blessed be God for Jesus Christ. How long, Lord, holy and true? Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." And not long before he departed, "Now let the blessed angels come and do their office."

Thus, my brethren, thus he finished his course; this was the end of his conversation. In such a heavenly temper as this he removed to the world of spirits, as one who was already acquainted with that world, and longed to be better acquainted with it. Blessed be God, who thus crowned his own work in him, and brought forth the top-stone of that blessed building with shoutings, and let us cry, *Grace, grace to it.*

Let this help to confirm our faith in the gospel of Christ, and to assure us that its original and tendency is divine and heavenly. That we see it furnishes the professors of it with effectual supports, and real solid joys, then when they most need them, and when all other comforts fail, and are insufficient.

The everlasting covenant, and particularly the promise of eternal life, you see is a fountain of living waters, which will refresh and make glad the heart, when all those things which the world offers us to be depended upon, and delighted in, will be dried up as the brooks in summer. I beseech you, sirs, build upon a foundation which will hold firm, when this deluge comes; treasure up comforts which will stand you in stead in a dying hour, and which will indeed make the clods of the valley sweet to you, *sit tibi terra levis—the very earth itself light to you.*

Let this encourage us in our Christian race and warfare, that those who have fought this good fight with courage and constancy, have had the comforts of it in their last extremities; and having run their race with patience, have finished their course with joy. Christ's faithful soldiers die not only in the bed of honour, but in the bed of peace and rest. Let us hereby be quickened to make our calling and election sure, for so we shall have, not only an entrance, but an abundant entrance, ministered unto us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

3. I shall now close with a word of exhortation to you, my friends, who are here lamenting the loss of your faithful minister, that you may be sowing in your tears, doing your duty now you are bewailing your affliction. We will take it for granted that, like those Ephesian elders, you sorrow most of all because you shall see his face no more in this world; from that consideration, therefore, what I have now to say to you by way of counsel and direction shall take rise.

(1.) Now you shall see his face no more, thank God that ever you did see his face. When Job's comforts were taken away, he blessed God who gave them. Own yourselves indebted to the divine favour, for the setting up of such a burning and shining light here in your candlestick. There is a particular providence displayed in the removal and settlements of ministers. Be thankful for that providence which sent him hither, and that grace which, I trust, made him a blessing to you. Be thankful for what you have seen, and heard, and tasted of the word of life in his ministry, and that you have had reason to say, that God was with him of a truth.

Thank God for all the good ministers, whose faces you have seen to your comfort, and who were, in their day, the helpers of your faith and joy. Remember your guides, the guides of your youth, which have spoken to you the word of God; and remember to give God thanks for them, and for the good they were instrumental of to your souls. We do not desire you to build or garnish the sepulchres of the prophets, but here set up your Ebenezer to the honour of him who raised them up to you, saying, *Hitherto the Lord hath helped us*; helped us with good ministers, having never left himself without witness, nor

you without helps for your souls, and directors of your way in this wilderness. Thanks be to God, we never knew the meaning of a famine of the word, the heavenly manna; though it has been often despised, yet has never been withheld.

Thank God for those whose faces we yet see, for the remnant that is left of the messengers of the Lord, and that when so many are removed into graves, the rest are not removed into corners. Though your pulpit be in mourning, thanks be to God, it is not empty. You of this place have particular reason to be thankful for the lengthening out of the days of your aged minister, and for the fruit he still brings forth in his old age. I pray God that your profiting, in proportion to that and other your advantages, may appear unto all men.

(2.) In the hiding of his face, take notice of the hiding of God's face, and look upon it as a token of his displeasure. Hear it as the Lord's controversy, and inquire diligently, and beg of him to show you wherefore he contendeth with you. It is not seven years since God removed one faithful good minister by death, (Mr. Brian,) who had long laboured among you in the word and doctrine; and now another taken away from the midst of you. Is not this an indication of God's anger? and ought not you to humble yourselves under his mighty hand? Let our brethren, the whole house of Israel, bewail the burning, which the Lord has kindled; and by serious repentance help to quench the flame.

It was certainly in displeasure to the people, that God silenced Ezekiel, and told him, he should no more be to them a reprove, Ezek. iii. 26. and you are now under such a rebuke. Now is a time for you to look into your own hearts, and to inquire what you have done to provoke God thus to break you with breach upon breach. Lay not the blame on others, but each of you take it to yourselves, and give your consciences leave to deal faithfully with you. It is sin that separates between you and God, between you and your ministers. Find out the sin that has done you this mischief, and mourn for that. Weep not so much for them who are gone, but rather weep for yourselves, and for your own sin and folly, which have forfeited the advantages you have lost. Ask seriously, have not I been a careless, trifling hearer of the word? Has not my heart gone after my covetousness, when I have come before God as his people come, and sitten before him as his people sit? Has not the word been unprofitable to me, not being mixed with faith? Has not my conversation been disagreeable to my profession, and my practice contrary to what I have heard, and been taught? Have not I left my first love, and is not that the reason wherefore the candles are thus removed, and thereby the candlestick itself threatened? How long has God come seeking fruit, but has found none, or next none? And therefore, though he has not

yet cut down the barren tree, he has in displeasure removed one of the dressers of it.

O let this providence awaken you to repentance, for your little proficiency under the means of grace ; and set yourselves to mortify those lusts and corruptions, which have been the hinderances of your profiting ; and have made your hearts like the highway, or the rock, or the thorny ground, under the seed of the word. It is said, that when David lamented Saul and Jonathan, he took care to *teach the children of Judah the use of the bow*, 2 Sam. i. 18. Which may be understood of the military bow ; those great men being slain by the archers of the Philistines, 1 Sam. xxxi. 3. He endeavoured to make the men of Judah more expert archers, that they might revenge the death of their princes upon the Philistines. Let us meditate such a holy revenge this day, and resolve by the grace of God to be the death of our sins ; finding them to be the death of our friends, particularly of our ministers.

(3.) Now you must see his face no more, recollect what you have heard from him, and seen in him, for your edification. Now this faithful witness has finished his testimony, will you set yourselves to sum up the evidence, and do it faithfully. Review what you have seen, and give what you have heard a rehearing, to better purpose than before. Call to mind the subjects he has preached upon among you, the good truths he has taught you, and treasure them up, that they may be ready to you upon all occasions. The people who attended the ministry of John Baptist, after he was dead, remembered what they had heard from him, and improved it for the assistance of their faith in Jesus Christ ; *All that John said of this man was true*.

Remember, I beseech you, what you have received and heard, and hold fast, continuing in the things which you have learned. His last sermon, particularly, I hope you will never forget ; when in the midst of his illness, God granted him such a reviving (which proved a lightening, as you call it, before death) that he thought himself able to preach. His love to his work and to your souls brought him hither. If it were to his own injury, as perhaps it was, let it be so much the more to your profit ; live that life which he then taught you ; get to be experimentally acquainted with that great mystery of godliness, which he then endeavoured to lead you into, from Rom. i. 17. *The just shall live by faith*. Live by faith now, and you shall live by sight for ever. Look back upon the years of his ministry with you, and the words you have heard from him which quickened you, never forget them. Now he must break the bread of life to you no more, *gather up the fragments which remain, that nothing may be lost*.

(4.) Now you must see his face no more in this world, seriously consider, how you will look him in the face in the great day. Believe it, sirs, that day

will come, and we shall as sure see it as we see this : it concerns us to inquire whether we shall see it to our comfort, or to our confusion ; whether it will be to us a day of trembling, or a day of triumph. It is certain, when our Lord Jesus shall come in the glory of his Father, he will be attended by the ten thousands of his saints. Enoch foresaw this, and foretold it. Among those holy myriads, no doubt, we shall meet our faithful ministers ; and if we shall know any of our relations in this day, as I see no reason to think but that we shall, sure we shall take particular notice of those, who were sent to us as ambassadors for Christ, ministering the gospel of the grace of God. Nay, they will then be to give account of the souls committed to them, and of the success of their negotiation ; the servant who was sent to invite to the marriage, came and showed his Lord all the slights that were put upon him ; and by the word which you now hear, you will then be judged, according as our testimony is or is not believed.

Think then, with what shame and confusion those will see the faces of their ministers in that day, who lived and died in an unsanctified, unregenerate state, whom Christ, by his ministers, long and often invited to light and life, but they refused, and persisted in their refusal, loving death and darkness rather, and so will their doom be. Their ministers then will be called to appear as evidence against them, and dreadful to the condemned sinners will such a testimony as this be. Lord, *we called them, but they refused ; we stretched out our hands, but no man regarded*. We laid before them the terrors of the Lord, showed them his wrath revealed from heaven against their ungodliness and unrighteousness, but it prevailed not to startle and awaken them. We gave them warning, told them many a time what would be the end of their evil way, but they would not take the warning ; we have delivered our own souls, but we could not deliver theirs. We invited them to Christ, and to the marriage supper of the Lamb ; we told them often of the glories of redeeming love, the riches of gospel grace, the consolations of the new covenant, the pleasures of serious godliness, and the joys at God's right hand for evermore ; but we could not win upon them, to give up themselves unto the Lord. *We have piped unto them, but they have not danced ; we have mourned unto them, but they have not lamented*. How will this aggravate the misery of those that perish, and bring oil to their flames !

But I hope better things of you, my brethren, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak ; the labour of your ministers among you, I trust, has not been in vain, and shall not be so. The apostle expresses, with a holy triumph, the prospect he had of meeting his friends with comfort in that day ; for what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing, which

we have our eye much upon in our present services and sufferings, *are not even ye*, not so much now in this imperfect state, but *in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming*? O let us live so, that our ministers may thus give up their account of us with joy, for that will be profitable and comfortable for us. Then how sorrowful soever our parting with them is at death, our meeting with them again at the resurrection will be joyful; and under our present griefs, we may comfort ourselves and one another with the hopes and expectations of it.

Lastly, Now you must see his face no more, look more by faith upon the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. All flesh, you see, is as grass, and all the glory of man; the greatest eminency of gifts and usefulness, is as the flower of grass, sullied, withered, and laid in the dust; but the glory of the Lord in the word endures for ever, and is liable to no decay.

Our deceased brother, when near his death, hearing one who stood by say, "Alas! what shall we do if he be taken from us?" answered, "Be not concerned at that, *The Lord liveth*." Trust therefore in the living God, and in him secure to yourselves living comforts. You change your ministers, but you do not change your Master. The law made them priests who had infirmity, who, therefore, could not continue by reason of death, and the gospel does the same; but the Lord Jesus has an unchangeable priesthood, for he is consecrated for evermore. The

blessed Spirit is given to abide with us for ever, and in him our Lord is, and will be, with his church always, even unto the end of the world. When you have another minister, you shall not have another gospel, nor another Saviour, but still the same treasure, only in another earthen vessel. Let not your religion then die with your minister, not your faith, and love, and holy zeal be buried in his grave; for you are built not upon the apostles and prophets themselves, but upon their foundation, Jesus Christ himself, the everlasting foundation, and the chief corner-stone.

Keep your eye, therefore, upon the Lord Jesus, and set your hearts on him; rejoice in him always, and rely upon him, and that joy shall never be turned into sorrow, nor will that hope ever make you ashamed. Our candles are soon extinguished, and at the longest burn out of themselves, but the Sun of righteousness shines perpetually. Walk, therefore, *in the light of the Lord*. Cisterns are dried up, but the fountain of life is ever full,—ever flowing. You see the end of your minister's conversation, but *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*; and *of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end*. To him I commend you all, and to the word of his grace; as blessed Paul did, Acts xx. 32. his mourning friends here; knowing very well, that that grace is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.