

## SERMON VII.\*

### A STIMULUS TO DUTY.

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HEB. x. 25.

*And so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

THE text is an argument to press us to four duties, set down in the foregoing verses. First, to “draw near with a true heart.” &c. Nearness to God is a Christian’s happiness; but distance from him, the misery of the lost, who are to be “banished from the presence of the Lord.” It is good being near to God, both as it respects state and duty; but our care in drawing near to God must be, to see it is with “a true heart;” for God cannot endure a false one. We should also see that we draw near to him in “faith;” for faith unites the soul to God, and the “full assurance of faith” renders it comfortable. It must also be, with “hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience;” for God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. And it must be, with “bodies washed with pure water;” not only with the water of baptism, but a holy conversation. Thus we must study to approach God, because he will approach us ere long to judgment. The second duty is expressed in these words, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering,” ver. 23. Here we are exhorted to be sure and “hold fast” our faith; by no means to make “shipwreck of faith and a good conscience.” We must also maintain “the profession of our faith.” We must not think of keeping religion to ourselves, but own Christ in an evil day and amongst an evil generation, or he will disown us. The third duty is contained in ver. 24; “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works;” let us not carp at one another, but provoke to love, to love God and each other, and to maintain good works. Let each one strive to go before another in these commendable duties, to quicken one another, “and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.” The fourth duty is, “not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together,” ver. 25. That is, not scattering one sheep from another, for then you will be the sooner destroyed; but joining together in the work and worship of God, “and so much the more” earnestly and sincerely as ye

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see, by the signs of providence, we are drawing near to the day of Christ.

*Doctrine.* That the due sight and sense of the approaching of the day of the Lord, should be a spur to quicken us to our duty.

In the consideration of this truth we shall,

I. Show what that day is which is here spoken of. There are four remarkable days mentioned in scripture, and of which we should take notice.

1. The day of grace. It is called a day by way of eminence, and may be considered either as to the rising or setting of the gospel sun.

(1.) As it respects the rising of the gospel sun. When persons have been in ignorance and darkness, and the sun of the gospel appears, it is time for men to bestir themselves; "It is now high time to awake out of sleep; the night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light," Rom. xiii. 11, 12. You have had a day of light and gospel grace; for shame! get you out of the bed of sloth and security, and set yourselves to the work of God in good earnest; "Let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober; for they that sleep, sleep in the night," 1 Thess. v. 6, 7. It is very unbecoming persons professing the name of God to be secure and sinful; "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent," Acts xvii. 30. Betake yourselves to work while the day of grace continues, lest you miss the benefit of it, which will be a dreadful loss. Hast thou been twenty, or thirty years, under the means of grace and no better for it? God may justly let thee alone in darkness, and never suffer the light of conviction to dart on thee any more; and then, how sad will thy case be!

(2.) Consider the day of grace in reference to the setting of the gospel sun. How ought we to be quickened to our duty at such a time! There are as great signs of a gospel eclipse now as ever. Good ministers die, others are in danger of banishment and imprisonment, and perhaps you may never have a call at your door any more; then so much the more as you see this day approaching you should be quickened to your duty; "Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you," John xii. 35. Little do you know how soon the sun of the gospel may set, and God may snatch his ordinances from you, take the kingdom of God from you, and give it to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. The gospel does not tarry long in one place, and if it leave you, it will leave you in worse darkness than ever. Do you think that if a man come to a town or market,

and the men of the place will neither buy any of his precious wares, nor let him alone, but throw stones at him—do you think, he will stay amongst them? So if we will ill-treat God's ministers, persecute those ambassadors of peace, and are generally unprofitable under ordinances, is God likely to continue with us? Will he not pack up and be gone? It is said of Christ concerning Jerusalem, "When he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 41, 42. God is threatening to depart from us, then so much the more be quickened to your duty, "As ye see the day approaching." The scriptures mention,

2. A day of vengeance. If the day of gospel light and grace be not improved, it will be followed by a day of vengeance. If "the acceptable year of the Lord" be not regarded, it will be followed by the "day of vengeance of our God," Isa. lxi. 2. When Christ was foretelling the punishment about to be brought on the Jews, for rejecting the gospel, he says, "These be the days of vengeance." "Thus saith the Lord God unto the land of Israel, an end, the end is come upon the four corners of the land; now is the end come upon thee, and I will send mine anger upon thee," Ezek. vii. 2, 3. A day of trouble is coming upon us, after what manner it will be I cannot tell; but the nearer it approaches, the more should we be quickened in our duties. "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken: give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness; but if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride," Jer. xiii. 15—17. How often have ministers warned people to return to God and confess their sins, but they say, "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement." One thinks to save himself by his riches, and another by turning, but God saith, "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place; and your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand, when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it," Isa. xxviii. 17, 18. The only way is to get into your chambers, draw near to God, "and so much the more as ye see the day approaching." Those who trust and fear the Lord, will be safe under his protection, and there only, when the storm cometh. The scriptures tell us,

3. Of the day of death. This will be either the best or

worst day we ever had; "The day of one's death is better," says Solomon, "than the day of one's birth." It is so to the pious man; for then he takes leave of all sins, sorrows, and temptations, and that for ever. He then enters into the presence of God to enjoy him and all good perpetually; but a graceless soul goes from misery to misery, from a state of sin, to a place of suffering for evermore. This day is hastening upon every wicked man, however he may brag and boast of his riches, "The Lord shall laugh at him, for he seeth that his day is coming." You have seen some of your acquaintance in your assemblies and markets one day, and on the next, laid on a bed of sickness, and soon in the grave. This should remind you of your own death which is approaching; every grey hair on your head, and every stitch of pain in your body, should put you in mind that your day is approaching. The apostle could say, "I die daily;" but alas! most men put far from them the evil day. Few have present apprehensions of death, or regard due preparations for it; yet die you must; and if even you were to live twenty or thirty years, but still be unprepared for death, you will be more unfit for it then, than now. "If a man die, shall he live again?" says Job. Will life come again after death to mend matters? The Jewish Rabbi said to the man that asked him when he should repent, "Why, the day before you die." You know not but you may die to-morrow, therefore repentance should be the work of this day; for if you be found in your sins you are sure to perish; therefore "so much the more as you see the day" of death approaching, be concerned to be prepared for it, and consider every day of your life is a day taken from it.

4. The scriptures remind us of the day of judgment. This day approaches and draws near. The day hastens wherein Antichrist shall be destroyed, the Jews called, and the fulness of the Gentiles brought in; and we know not how soon the day of judgment will succeed. The heavens will then flame over us, the graves be opened, and Christ come with the sound of a trumpet, in great power and glory to judge the world: this day will come, for "he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness," but it is unknown to any except God. It is called the last day, the great and notable day, &c. the day of Christ. Such a day is coming in which all your thoughts, words, and actions will be examined, and you must give an account before God; therefore, as this day approaches, be careful that things are in readiness, and consider when death comes, then your particular judgment will take place; your soul will then go to God that gave it, to receive a sentence of absolution or condemnation. Let us,



II. Show what those duties are, to which our attention is called by these approaching days.

1. Be sure that you have evidence of your conversion to God. Union to Christ, and faith in him, will alone stand when the days we have mentioned approach. No privileges nor gifts will avail us in the great day of judgment; if we have wrought miracles in the name of Christ, but are not converted to him, he will say to us, "I never knew you; depart from me ye that work iniquity." The day is coming that will discover what you are; you will carry nothing but grace or guilt with you out of this world. If we should then be found out of Christ, not all the angels in heaven, and saints on earth can save us; for God hath said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," Matt. xviii. 3. The scriptures inform us, that Christ will come in "flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus," 2 Thess. i. 8. "Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless," 2 Pet. iii. 14. Think not to climb up to heaven by any other way than the way of holiness. Plead with God for converting grace, and say, "Lord, turn me and I shall be turned; let me not be condemned with cursers and swearers, and profane sinners. Christ will not plead the cause of that man who has not retained him as an advocate. See then that you are Christians indeed, for to appear before the tribunal of God without a work of grace in the heart will be very terrible.

2. As the great day of judgment approaches, endeavour to obtain assurance of a real change of heart. How dare you go with uncertainties before the tribunal of heaven? If you can rest satisfied when you have no solid evidence of a work of grace in the heart, I fear you have none. There is a degree of assurance to be had, such as the assurance of the understanding, the assurance of faith, the assurance of hope; be not content without this assurance. How comfortable will it be for the soul at Christ's coming to say, Lo! yonder is my Lord and Saviour, whom I love with all my heart, in whom I have hoped, trusted, and believed. The Psalmist could say, "Our God shall come;" so a gracious soul may say, my God is coming; but if you have no hope that God is your God, you have cause to fear. True sincerity hath safety, but assurance hath boldness in meeting the Lord.

3. As the day is approaching, be sincere in all your graces and actions. That day is coming which will declare what kind of work yours is; "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed

by fire," 1 Cor. iii. 13. It will then appear whether your faith be unfeigned, your love sincere, and all your graces of the right stamp. You cannot cheat God; for he "will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts," 1 Cor. iv. 5. Approve your hearts to God; for "a hypocrite cannot stand before him." Do all in sincerity; for what does it signify to have a name to live and be dead, to have lamps of profession, but want the oil of grace? As you love God and your own souls be sincere; pray with sincerity, confess your sins with sincerity, and repent of sin with sincerity; "and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

4. Mortify your lusts. It is equally dangerous to have a lust in our heart, as a lie in our right hand. If you allow any lust in your soul, Christ will send you to the place of torment. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth," Col. iii. 4, 5. Cut off right hand sins, and pluck out right eye lusts; for it is better to be welcomed by Christ into heaven maimed, or having one eye, than to be cast into hell having both hands and eyes. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 2, 3. Hence learn, you must be Puritans, if you would go to heaven: therefore be serious in the mortification of your sins, and hold no correspondence with any lusts, for they are Christ's enemies. If any of your souls be found embracing those lusts which wounded Christ, how sad will your case be!

5. As this day approaches, so much the more should you be careful to have your hearts withdrawn from the world. What an insignificant thing will this world appear, when Christ comes to judgment! Then all this world's goods, for which men have laboured so earnestly, will be consumed with fire. Strive to get above the world, for the higher you ascend towards God and Christ, the more will the world dwindle in your affection: "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Matt. xvi. 26. When the "Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; then he shall reward every man according to his works;" not according to his silver and gold. O sirs! "The time is short; it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this

world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away," 1 Cor. vii. 29—31. If you be Christians, then live as such, and say as Paul, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world:" the world cares nothing for me, nor I for it.

6. Endeavour to be valiant in your actings for God, in the way of duty, notwithstanding the difficulties you may meet with. Thus St. Paul exclaims, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy."—"I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus," Acts xx. 24, and xxi. 13. O blessed, heroic spirit! The apostle James says, "Be ye also patient, establish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh," James v. 8. Be resolute in the work of God, and fear not men; they are not to be masters of your conscience now, because they are not to be your judges hereafter. God's will must be your rule, act in reverence to him in all you do, and seeing the Lord is coming, "by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality," Rom. ii. 7.

7. As the day approaches wherein the Lord will come to judge the world, meet him by the actings of faith and love. Faith beholds him that is invisible, sees Christ coming in the clouds to judgment, and excites love to him; "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," 1 Pet. i. 8. Labour to live more by faith in Christ, and "to love his appearing."—"The just shall live by faith," and can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12.

8. As the day of the Lord approaches, seek after progress in sanctification and grace. This was the desire of the apostle Paul, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead;" that is, I desire by any means, whether ordinances or providences, to possess so much holiness as I must have at the resurrection of the dead. I wish to grow every day better, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after;—I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark," Phil. iii. 11—14.

9. Be careful to improve your talents and prepare your accounts, and so much the more as the reckoning "day approaches." We all have our talents, and Christ saith, "Occupy

till I come." To one, he has given health and strength; to another, wealth and estate; to another, wit and knowledge; to another, ordinances and means of grace: these are to be improved for the good of our own souls and those of others. He will soon say, "Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward," Luke xvi. 2. How will you give your account of all the sermons you have heard, and the various talents you have enjoyed? It is said, "every one of us shall give account of himself to God," and "every man shall bear his own burden." Be serious therefore in making up your accounts. When at the Lord's supper remember, this ordinance shows the Lord will come, and that you should be prepared.

10 As the day approaches, so much the more do you stand upon your watch. "Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," Matt. xxiv. 42. "The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer," 1 Pet. iv. 7. Suppose the heavens were all on flame, the graves opening, the earth trembling, and Christ coming to judgment, would you not then fall a praying? Do it now then, before it be too late. Watch against the world, the flesh, and the devil, lest you be deceived and ruined by them.

11. Maintain christian communion one with another. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," through worldly business, fear of scorn, or contempt from men. You would not be thought Puritans, and through fear of persecution would be careless of these duties, but forsake them not whatever you may suffer here. Christ is coming and will repay; he will not let you lose any thing by what you are called to endure, especially when labouring to do good to men's souls.

Finally, Deny yourselves, and act faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Were you to do all that is required of you, you are but "unprofitable servants, and have done that which was your duty to do." All our righteousness is but as dung, and dross, and filthy rags; and our iniquities like the wind would take us away. We should say with Paul, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Phil. iii. 8, 9. I am conscious, saith a gracious soul, that I have missed it in every thing; that I must put on the garment of Christ's righteousness; for it must appear for me at the tribunal of God, or I cannot be justified. Let it be your prayer then, that Christ may be to you, "wisdom, and



righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." "If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" And again, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight, shall no man living be justified." We can be justified only by faith in Christ Jesus: therefore let us get out of ourselves and rely wholly upon Christ. It is true we must be judged according to our works; but are not accepted with God or saved for our works. When we have done all, we must deny ourselves, and act faith on our Lord Jesus Christ. If we have been quickened and enlarged in any duty, we must be thankful and bless God; though we must not trust in it, but in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## SERMON VIII.\*

### BELIEVERS SAFE AND COMFORTABLE.

JOB XIX. 25—27.

*I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.*

It was the desire of our loving neighbour and dear brother, Mr. Eaton, whose wearisome pilgrimage God hath graciously finished, that he might be buried amongst us, and that I would preach a sermon to the living: this his desire he expressed to me some years ago, but did not mention any particular portion of scripture which was in his thoughts as the subject of the sermon requested. I understand that he continued in this desire to his

\* This sermon was preached on the death of the Rev. Samuel Eaton, and is extracted from Dr. Rippon's Baptist Annual Register, vol. iv. page 559. Mr. Eaton was a Nonconformist Minister, ejected from Dukinfield, in Cheshire. "He was," says the Nonconformist Memorial, "a very holy man, a person of great learning and judgment, and an incomparable preacher." The following memorandum is prefixed to the sermon—"Denton, Jan. 22, 1694. Upon occasion of the death of Mr. Samuel Eaton, who died Jan. the 9th, and was buried Jan. the 12th; he desired this office of love from me, and appointed this text." The Nonconformist Memorial mentions Dukinfield as being in Lancashire, and Mr. Eaton as having died in 1664.