

THE VANITY OF THE CREATURE.

THE VANITY OF THE CREATURE.

NOTE.

'The Vanity of the Creature' forms No. 18 of the Sermons in the Saint's Cordials of 1629. It is not contained in the editions of 1637, 1658. The separate title-page will be found below.² G.

* THE

VANITIE OF
THE CREATURE.

In One SERMON.

WHEREIN IS SET FORTH,

{ *The decaying condition of all naturall parts, and worldly
comforts.*
*Together with the meanes how to attaine an estate super-
naturall, to live with God in Christ.*
Shewing who are the truly wise men in the world.
*With sundry helps and directions to stirre up in Christi-
ans a longing desire after their best home, &c.*

[The ornament here, described in Vol. IV. page 60. So in all the Sermons from the Saint's Cordials in this volume.—G.]

VPRIGHTNES HATH BOLDNES.'

L O N D O N,

Printed in the yeare 1629.

THE VANITY OF THE CREATURE.

And Barzillai said to the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old, &c.—
2 SAMUEL XIX. 34-38.

I HAVE read, beloved, a large text. In the handling of it, we will do as the traveller doth that is belated; we will cast how we may post the next way to an end. The oration, you see, is very plain. We shall not need to spend much time in explicating the terms.

The words are part of a conference, you see; a passage between king David and Barzillai of Rogelim, in the county of Gilead. This Barzillai had been wondrous kind to David in the time of his distress. David being now restored from danger, remembers the kindness of his old friend, and, in way of requital, tenders him this offer, that in case he would go with him to the court of Jerusalem, he should be very welcome thither, and he should have such entertainment as the court would afford. This invitation* of the king foregoes† our text.

The old man Barzillai is now upon his answer in the words read, who doth,

1. First, *very modestly and mannerly put off the king's motion to him.*

2. *And then next he tenders and prefers a suit of his own.* For the king's motion, that he should turn courtier, Barzillai puts off very finely, as you may see in the text. He gives sundry reasons for his so doing.

1. The first is, *because that he was no fit man for the court.*

First, He was smitten in age, and therefore, in case he should go up, he could but only salute it; for, saith he, 'how many are the days of my years?' My years are brought to days; my days may quickly be numbered. I should die by that time I were warm there, and therefore what should I do at the court? Secondly, put the case he did draw breath there a while, that was all; for, saith he, 'Am I able now to discern between good and evil?' There is nothing that offers itself to my eye, to my ear, to my taste, to any of my senses, that will give me any great content, and therefore there is no great reason why I should be drawn thither. This is his first reason, from the unfitness of the thing.

* That is, 'invitation.'—G.

† That is, 'goes before,' = precedes, used as also 'fore-think,' and the like, by contemporaries.—G.

Second, Afterward he proceeds to other reasons in the text, that is first thus much: if he should live there, *it must be to do the king some service, at the least to yield him some contentment.* But so it was that he was under age's command, and was able for neither. He was neither fit for work nor fit for play. He found no great contentment in himself, and he could yield little to others, and therefore why should he be a burden to the king's court?

Third, The third reason is this, *that he had done what he had done for the king, but in duty.* It was his duty to do what he did, and it was but a little. All that he could do for the king was only to bring him a mile or two on his way; and why should the king trouble his thoughts about a recompence for this, saith he? Thus he puts off the king's motion; he craves leave that he may forbear the court, and be excused thence.

Fourth, This done, he comes in the next place, because he would give no offence, to tender a suit of his own, and that is double.

1. In regard of himself.

2. And then in regard of his son Chimham.

For himself he craves leave to go back again to his own dwelling; and here he doth finely set his petition by the king's motion.

1. He desires the king's leave, that he would give him leave to go home and die.

2. And next, that the king would be pleased so far to gratify him, that he may die in his own dwelling, where his habitation was.

Fain he would die as the hare doth in her own form, and as other creatures willingly do in their own nests. Then, in the next place, he adds another reason why he would be dismissed; because he would die where his father and his mother were buried. There he was bred, there he was born, there he drew his first breath, and there he would gladly resign himself again, and his breath, and be laid and gathered in mercy to his fathers. This is his suit for himself.

In the behalf of his son, he tenders him to the king's grace, as if he should say, Your motion is very gracious, far beyond my desert, and such as I should be very happy in the enjoying of, in case age did not hinder me. For proof whereof, I leave my son as a pledge and pawn.* This staff of my age, this stay of my comfort, I commend him to your grace; deal with him as shall seem best in your eyes. And thus Barzillai he hath commended his suit to the king.

Now this being thus delivered, it is further amplified and set forth from the effect that this wrought in the king.

1. First, King David he accepts of his excuse. He gives him to understand, if he will go, he shall be kindly welcome; if he stay behind, there is no offence shall be taken, but further, the king will be ready in any other kind to gratify him as occasion shall serve.

2. And next for his son, the king accepts of him, and promiseth to do for him that which should seem good in the eyes of his father.

These be the parts of this conference, and the effects of it; so that in sum you see here is a dialogue,

A conference between David and Barzillai.

We are now upon Barzillai's answer, which is set forth,

1. From the parts.

2. From the effects of it, as before we inferred.

Now from all these generals, sundry particular instructions might be

* That is, 'security.'—G.

raised. But I perceive the time hath prevented me; therefore we will briefly handle a point or two, and so for this time cease.

1. First of all, in the first place, we see that *Barzillai hath no mind to the court*; and he draws his argument and his reason from his state and from his age. 'How many,' saith the original, 'are the days of my years?' (a.) The motion* was very gracious on the king's part, and such as man's nature is ready enough to entertain. Naturally, we desire honour and preferment; at least an old man might take some contentment in the dainties and delicacies of a court. Further than this, let a man be never so religious, in David's court a man might find much contentment, and might take much comfort and solace in the presence and company of such a prince. Notwithstanding all this, saith old Barzillai, my days are almost spent, my glass is almost run, and therefore what should I talk of a court? I will go home and die.

Doct. 1. In him we learn thus much, *how that no company, no comforts, no motions in the earth, should put off thoughts of death when death begins to creep upon us.* I say wheresoever we live, what offers soever are made us, whatsoever the motion be, for ease, for profit, for promotion, for any outward contentments, we must not lay down, we must not lay aside the thoughts of our mortality. No dream must put us out of these thoughts while we travel in this main roadway of all flesh. We must never be so busy in discourse, in contrivements,† as to forget our way, to forget which way we are going, but still our thoughts must be homewards; that as we deal with other journeys here upon earth; for these momentary homes that we have here, wheresoever we be, in company that we like wondrous well, where our entertainment is full of kindness, where our welcome is of the best, and all content is given; yet notwithstanding, thoughts eftsoons‡ will offer themselves of home, night will come, and it will grow late, I must home for all this, and leave all this company. So, my brethren, should it be concerning our long homes, which is that surest dwelling; wheresoever we be, howsoever for the present we be tempted or taken up, still, still our eye must be home; we must remember our latter end, remember whither we are going. This Barzillai teacheth us in his practice. A motion is made for the court. Tush! court me no courts, saith Barzillai; I am an aged man; I have one foot in the grave; let me go home and die. Here is an offer made him of comfort and contentment. No; I will go home and lie by my fathers. Death possesseth his thoughts; he minds nothing else now but dying. This Barzillai did, and thus the apostle would have us do in 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. Our time, saith he, it is abbreviated. Now our time is nothing in comparison of that it was in the time of the patriarchs. A great part of our time is already run out, and there is but a little of it left behind. Our time being thus short, saith the apostle, 'Let him that is married, be as if he were not married; let him that weeps, be as if he wept not; let him that rejoiceth, be as if he did not rejoice; he that is in the world, as if he were not in the world.' Let us so carry ourselves, that we may be very indifferent towards all matters in this life. Let us so order the matter, that no occasion of grief, of sorrow, of comfort, of joy, of company, of one thing or another, public or private, may divert our thoughts, and turn them aside from thinking upon death. This is that which David and others press in sundry psalms.§ He calls upon rich and poor, upon high and low, one and another, in the 82d Psalm. He calls

* That is, 'proposal.'—G.

† That is, 'immediately.'—G.

‡ That is, 'contrivances.'—G.

§ In margin, 'Psalms xlix. and lxxxii.'—G.

upon judges and magistrates, though they be in place gods, yet in nature men, and must die as men. This is that which Solomon presseth too. But what needs particulars? We will not trouble you with particular instances of Scripture, much less with instances of other stories. Every man almost knows what some heathen princes have done this way. They had some to call upon them in their beds, some at their boards, to remember them that they were mortal, that they must die, to mind them of this in the midst of their greatest security, and in the midst of all their jollity (*b*). And indeed there is great reason why it should be thus, why it is good still to hold on the thoughts of our mortality and of our death, whatsoever occasion be offered.

1. It is needful for the preventing of evil.

2. And it is useful for the obtaining of good.

Reason 1. These evils will be hereby prevented. (1.) The constant thoughts of death and mortality will tie us to our good behaviour, that we shall not offer any injustice, any hard measure, to any man. Whereas let death be once out of the sight of the thoughts of a man, he grows wild, he grows unruly, he grows masterless. You see in the parable of the servant,* when he thought his master was gone afar off, that he would not come a great while, that his reckoning, his account would not be soon, it would not be sudden, he lays about him like a Nimrod, he smites and beats his fellow-servants, he makes no conscience of his dealing to his poor brethren. Whereas, on the other side, when Job presented to himself the thoughts of death and mortality, how that there was a Lord and a Judge that would call him to an account for all, he dares not lift up his hand, he dares not lift up his tongue, against any underling or inferior. †

(2.) Again, as this will prevent injustice towards men, so it will prevent impenitency towards God. The heart of man secures itself like the harlot, Prov. vii. 10, *et seq.* When she conceives her husband is gone afar off, and hath taken a great journey, she is secure. So the heart, the impenitent heart of man, when a man puts far from him the thoughts of death, and will not conceive that the Judge stands at the door, then he doth obstinate ‡ himself in sinful courses, and doth what he can to stiffen himself against all the admonitions and rebukes of God's mouth.

(3.) Further, this is another evil that is prevented; the thoughts of mortality will prevent dotage, as it were, about these worldly things. The world will grow upon us and bewitch us, if we suffer the thoughts of death to fall once. If we do not see death stand at the end of all our earthly profits, of all our worldly pleasures and advantages, we shall be even almost mad after them, and we shall be too too glad of them when we have them, and too too much surfeit upon them; whereas, on the other side, the thoughts of this, that we must shortly leave them, and depart hence, this will cool our appetite to earthly things, it will make us have them as if we had them not, as you heard from the apostle.

(4.) Yea, these thoughts of our mortality in all estates and conditions, it is that which will prevent the danger of death. It will take away the sting of it, it will take away the terror of it. Death is a most terrible thing in its own nature you know, and the heathen could speak [so of] it. Death is most terrible, especially to him that doth not die in his thoughts daily. Whenas a man in his meditations doth daily present death to himself, and

* Mat. xxv. 15, *et seq.*—G.

† Job xxxi. 13.—G.

‡ That is, 'hardens,' = grows stubborn.—G.

looks upon it, then death is like the prevented* basilisk, death hath lost the sting. It can do us no hurt; it proves like the brazen serpent looked upon. The beholding of that death puts an end to all other miseries, to all other maladies, to all other deaths whatsoever, so that there is much good gotten, at the least there is much evil prevented, in case we do constantly entertain in us thoughts of mortality and of death, as Barzillai did.

Reason 2. Secondly, As this thought of mortality is profitable for us in that respect, in preventing evil, so in a second regard proposed, that it doth even *help us to much goodness.* Thoughts of mortality, what will they do?

(1.) First, They will make a man painful† in his place, to dwell upon his own vocation, upon his own business; as Paul saith, 'Knowing the terror of the Lord, we exhort and admonish,' 2 Cor. v. 11. We being apostles, we do the duty of apostles. Upon this ground Barzillai, remembering his mortality, that he must shortly go hence, he betakes himself home, that death might find him in his own place.

(2.) Again, the thoughts of mortality, as they will make a man painful † in his place, so they will make him *profitable consequently to men*; as the apostle Peter speaks, 2 Peter i. 13, he stirs up himself to put the people of God in remembrance of those things they had learned, because he considered that 'shortly he was to lay down his tabernacle,' to make an end of his life.

(3.) And further, the thoughts of death and mortality, they will make a man *patient in the midst of all the hard measure that is offered to him*; in the midst of all preserves us, as the apostles speak, both James and Paul, that we shall be patient: 'Let your patience be known unto all men, because the Lord is at hand, because the time is short, because the Judge stands at the door,' &c., Philip. iv. 5, James v. 10. This is that which will make one quiet in all provocations; this is that will comfort him in all discouragements: I shall shortly be sent for, I shall be called from hence; then I shall be righted where I am wronged, I shall be cleared where I am accused, I shall have rest where I have trouble, all shall be well, and therefore why should I not be quiet?

(4.) Yea, this thought of mortality is that that will make one *prepare for death.* A man that resolves he must die, he goes about to set his house in order, to set his heart in order, to set all in order, and prepare now for that guest that is so near approaching.

So that whether we look to the evils that are prevented, or to the good things that are obtained and acquired, it will be a profitable course for every man to be of Barzillai's mind, to set aside all motions, and all solicitations, all other respects, and to take to himself thoughts of death and mortality. We will stand no longer in proving and clearing this plain point unto you, we will be as brief as we may in applying it, and that with all plainness.

Use 1. First, then, is this our duty? *Here we must shame and blame ourselves that we forget our home, and that we remember no better our latter end.* This is a matter of humbling to us, that we do not remember that which should be always in our thoughts. The end of a man's days should be at the end of all his thoughts. Still, as the goal is in the eye of the runner, as

* Alluding to the idea that if a man see a basilisk before it sees him, it cannot injure him, but dies.—ED.

† That is, 'painstaking.'—G.

the white* is in the eye of the archer, so still a man's latter end should be in the eye of him whilst he is running his race and his course here in this world.

A man should be still bound for home, as it were, as you see all creatures be. Let a stone be removed from home, from the centre, let it be put out of its place, it will never be quiet till it be home again. Let a bird be far from the nest, and it grows towards night, she will home even upon the wings of the wind. Let every poor beast, and every creature, though the entertainment be but slender at home, yet if you let it slip loose it will home as fast as it can. Everything tends to its place; there is its safety, there is its rest, there it is preserved, there it is quiet. Now, sith it is so with every creature, why should it not be so with us? Why should not we be for our home? This, my brethren, is not our home, here is not our rest. That is our home where our chief friends be, where our Father God is, where our husband Christ is, where our chief kindred and acquaintance be, all the prophets, and apostles, and martyrs of God departed are, that is our home, and thither should we go.

Again, that is our home where our chief work, where our chief business lies. And where is chiefly a Christian's business but in heaven? His conversation must be there, his affection is there. He himself while he is on earth must be out of the earth, and raise himself from earth to heaven every day.

More than this, that is our home where our rest and peace is. Here we have no abiding city; there is our home, as our Saviour speaks, our mansion.† We have no abiding place till we come to heaven. While we are here, we are tossed to and fro from place to place; but when we are there, there we rest. We rest from our labours, we rest from sin, we rest from corruption, from all fears, from all tears, from all griefs, from all temptations; that is our home. Why do we not go home, then, my brethren? Why are we like a silly child, that when his father sends him forth, and bids him hie him home again, every flower that he meets with in the field, every sign he sees in the street, every companion that meets him in the way, stops him, and hinders him from repairing to his father? So it is with us for the most part; every trifle, every profit, every bauble, every matter of pleasure, every delight, is enough to divert and turn aside our thoughts from death, from home, from heaven, from our God, and we are taken up, and lose ourselves I know not where. This shews that either we conceive not heaven as our home, and earth as a pilgrimage and tabernacle, or else it shews we are too, too childish, like children in this behalf.

Use 2. But, secondly, here is another word of instruction for us, and that is thus much, *that every one of us now should labour after the example of this good man*, even to remember his latter end, to remember whither he is going, to remember his home.

Quest. What need this? will some say; how is it possible for a man to forget this point?

Ans. 1. Yes, my beloved, it is very possible. It is a very easy matter to speak of death, but it is an hard matter to think of it, and to think of it seriously, for a man to take it home to his own thoughts. It is a very difficult thing for a man to apprehend privations,‡ those things that are so far from eternity and being. It is the hardest thing in the world

* That is, 'mark' in the centre of the 'butt.'—G. † That is, 'negatives.'—G.

‡ John xiv. 2 —G.

to do this in the greatest privation of all, in matter of death. A man is utterly unwilling, utterly unable. This argues he hath no mind to see death, nor no will to salute it.

Ans. 2. Besides, many men, upon many occasions, will labour to turn aside a man's thoughts this way. Hence it is, that though we say we are mortal, yet we scarce believe ourselves to be mortal; but we carry immortal hopes and immortal conceits in mortal breasts. Hence it comes to pass, that though we look into the graves of others, yet we little think that ourselves shall shortly be closed in the grave. Though we see others fall at our right hand and at our left, yet we hardly believe that those eyes of ours must shortly be closed up and stopped, and all our members must be forsaken, and left lifeless as a carcase. These things are far from our thoughts, and therefore it is needful for us to press this oft and oft upon our thoughts, namely, that we are mortal, and that we must away.

Obj. Why, will some man say, how can a man choose but think so, when he hath so many instances of mortality every day before his eyes? He sees rich and poor, young and old, one and another die, and therefore he cannot conceive but that he must die too.

Ans. But yet all this will not do, except a man be assisted by the divine Spirit. This Moses intimates, Ps. xc. 12. They fell in the wilderness by hundreds, nay, by thousands, and yet saith Moses, 'Lord teach us to number our days, &c., and give us wisdom to apply our hearts unto wisdom;' and to that sense and effect Moses prays. Moses, though he had instances enow of mortality, notwithstanding that he was an excellent man himself, and had to do with the best people that were then in the world, yet he sees reason to pray to God that God would teach them their mortality, and that God would make them wise, and that they might know how to number their days, and to remember their own estate. If Moses saw reason to put up this petition to God, certainly there is great need for us to do it. We had need pray Moses' prayer, and we had need to practise Moses' practice too.

(1.) First, *let us labour to take the sum of our life*, what it is in the gross, as he saith in that psalm, 'Our days are threescore years and ten, it may be one may come to fourscore;' he may arrive to such a number, or thereabouts; this is the life of man, Ps. xc. 10. And then,

(2.) Secondly, in the next place, *let us consider how much of this time is run out already*, how that the fourth part, or the third part, or the half of our days is already expired and [run out]. Let us do in this case as an apprentice doth reckon how many years he was bound for, how many he hath served already, and what is behind. Let us do as a traveller would do: So many miles I must go this day, so many are measured already, the remainder must be passed before night. So let us do in this apprenticeship, in this journey of death. Account what it is, how much of it is spent, how the time slides away in an insensible manner, [how] it steals away.

(3.) Nay, let us in the third place consider *how others fall on every hand before us*. Present this to thy own thoughts, and say, There dwelt such a gentleman the other day, now he is dead; there dwelt such a woman, such a neighbour of late, she is now departed; not long since there dwelt so many in that family, and there are few now left. Thus let us reckon, consider how death seizeth upon other men, and then reflect upon thyself. Who knows whose turn may be next?

(4.) Yea, let us in the last place consider, *how death steals on us too by*

degrees, how it takes possession of us. It is with us as it is with an house. There falls down a window, and then comes down a piece of a wall, and then a door, &c. ; so it is with a man, death seizeth upon his feet, and then upon his hands. Let us take notice how death steals on us, and say, Death is already in mine eye, I begin to be dim-sighted : death is already in mine ear, I begin to be thick of hearing ; death is in my limbs and joints, they begin to be lazy, and stiff, and cold, I begin to feel the symptoms of death upon me already. Let us look oft upon ourselves to this purpose, take notice how nature begins to wither and decay. Let the whiteness of our hairs, the weakness of our joints, the wrinkles in our faces, be so many witnesses against us, as he speaks in that place in Job xvi. 8. Thus we must do, my brethren, to come to settle this in our thoughts, that we are mortal, and when we have once persuaded ourselves of this, then let us make preparation for death. Oh think of it by thyself alone, think what it is to die, think what is concluded* in that short word, think what is thy preparation to it, think what business is about it, think what treads on the heels of it when thou art gone. 'It is appointed to men to die once, and after that comes the judgment,' Heb. ix. 27. Consider, I say, by thyself, what it is to die, consider with other folk, with other people. Be ready to speak of it, as Barzillai doth, to mind thyself and others of mortality : and more than this, make preparation, set thy house in order, set thy heart in order.

Preparation to death. For thy house, for thy persons, goods, or children, look thou set them in order.

First, For thy persons, dispose of thy children as Barzillai doth here. Dispose of thy family, of thy kindred, place them in callings, dispose of them for thy habitation. As Isaac and Jehoshaphat, and others in Scripture, give them good instructions, leave them precepts that shall stick by them when thou art dead and gone.

Second, For thy goods, dispose of them ; what is evil gotten restore, what is well gotten dispose to pious and merciful uses, to thy family, to those that may challenge right in thee. And it is good to set these things in order before such time as death cometh. Oh, my brethren, it is a miserable madness among the sons of men. They defer these weighty and important businesses to the last hour. When the powers of nature are shaken, when their wits and memories fail, when their speech and understanding leaves them, then, then they go about the most important business of all others. Do this in time ; have thy will ready about thee, dispose of thy family, of thy estate, whilst thou art in memory and understanding.

Third, As thy house must be disposed of, so much more thy heart must be disposed of. 'Repent of thy sins, pluck out the sting of death, which is sin ; 'the sting of death is sin.' Death cannot hurt where there is repentance of sin. Sin unrepented will bring a sting in the time of death. It will fill the heart with sorrow, and the soul with amazement, and the conscience with terror. Pull out the sting, and then thou shalt triumph over death, and over the grave, and say, 'O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?' 1 Cor. xv. 55. O hell, where is thy triumph ? O Satan, where is thy malice and power ? Nothing is able to do thee harm.

Fourth, In the next place, labour to take possession of heaven now. Make entrance into it while thou art here, by getting the life of Christ, and the life of faith in thee, by getting the saving graces of the Spirit in thee. If these things be in thee and be not unfruitful, then thou shalt have entrance,

* That is, 'shut up,' = included.—G.

as Peter speaks, 'into the inheritance and kingdom,' 2 Pet. i. 11. This then is somewhat, that we should have said more largely, if we had had more time and fitness to have spoken to the first point; and therefore we will but name to you some other particulars that we should have spoken to.

In the next place, you see his second reason why he would not be a courtier, is, that now his natural parts, his outward senses begin to fail, that he found his sight to decay, that he could not discern colours; his taste wasted, he could not distinguish between sweet and sour; his ears were not serviceable; now the mirth, and music, and melody of the court was nothing to him. Herein then we see in the next place how it fares with us.

Doct. 2. That natural parts and powers will decay with age. Age will decay and wear out our nature. All parts, and powers, and faculties whatsoever they be, time and age will wear out. The clothing both of the body and of the mind, age wears out the clothing of the body, and the garment of the mind, as it were. The mind and the soul is clothed with flesh. This body of ours, our flesh, is clothed with other raiment. Time wears out the one as well as the other. The heaven and the earth, which are more durable than man, yea, than a generation of men, as Solomon saith: Eccles. i. 4, 'Man dieth, a generation of men pass away, but the earth stands,' and much more the heavens continue; yet the heavens and the earth, they are as a garment, they wax old and are soon changed, as the Holy Ghost tells us, Isa. l. 9, much more the sons of men. Yea, the water by drops wastes the stones, nay, a rock of stones, nay, a mountain of stones, as it is in Job xiv. 19, and therefore it will consume in time flesh and blood. To stand to prove this is needless; I will give you some instances for the enlightening of the point, and so end.

1. First, Isaac, when he was an old man, when he waxed old, his sight was thick and dim, as in Gen. xxvii. 1. David in 2 Kings i., when he was stricken in age, when he was passed on in years, then saith the text, David's natural heat began to decay, and they were fain to apply means to help him; so Solomon in Eccles. xii. 1, a place known, tells us that evil days will come, and cloud will follow upon cloud, and then the keepers of the house, the hands, will wax feeble; the pillars of the house, the legs and thighs, will wax faint and weak; those that look out at the windows, the eyes, will be dark and duskish; then all the daughters of music, the ears, they will begin to wax thick too and heavy, and so of the rest, as we see there (c). We cannot stand on particulars.

Obj. If any man object, and say, How can this be, sith the soul of a man is no material thing, and it is the soul that sees, and the soul that hears, and not the body; and, therefore, why should the seeing, and hearing, and these senses decay?

Ans. The answer is very easy. The soul doth these things, but it useth the body as an instrument and organ, and so it must work according to the nature of the instrument. Let a man be never so good a horseman, and never so cunning in the way, he must travel as his horse will give him leave. So in this case, let the soul be never so active and full of life, it must perform its actions as the organ and instrument, the members of the body are disposed. Now the body is frail and mortal in a double regard.

First, In regard of the curse and sentence of God passed upon man, 'In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die the death,' Gen. iii. 3.

Secondly, In regard of the matter whereof man's body is compounded and made. If you make an house of weak and rotten timber, it will decay;

if you make a coat of that which is not very sound and durable, it will not last. Man's body is made of such matter, of such metal, of such timber, of such stuff, it will not hold out; therefore in time it wastes and rots in pieces.

Use 1. For the use of this, thus much in brief. Sith these bodies, the natural faculties and powers, will decay and wear out in time, *let us improve them while we have them*; let us make use of them, as we do of other instruments while they are fit for use. Memory will decay, therefore let us labour to treasure up good things in our memories, lay up things worthy to come into a treasury, and not bad things. That is Solomon's use that he makes: 'Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth,' saith he, Eccles. xii. 1. Long before the evil days come, and before the decay of thy natural powers, employ thyself well, redeem the time. So say I to you; use memory whiles it lasteth, use wit whiles it lasteth, for the truth: 'Do nothing against the truth,' as Paul speaks of himself, 2 Cor. xiii. 8; so for thine eyes, let them be casements to let in fresh air, and not to let in corruption; use thy ears for wholesome instructions; use thy feet for good purposes, to follow the ways to the house of God; use thy hands, employ them in profitable business while you can work. This providence* men have for their outward estate, and for the body. When we are young we provide for age, we provide somewhat to keep us when we are old. Let us do somewhat for our spiritual estate. You that have young and fresh wits, fresh memories, and eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet, all the parts of your bodies and powers of your souls, ready to do service, improve your time, lay hold on the opportunity. Now is the time of reading, now is the time of learning, now is the time of gathering, now is the time of your harvest; provide for winter; there will evil days come, cloud will follow cloud, as Solomon speaks.

Use 2. Secondly, here is another point of instruction: since this is so, that the natural powers and faculties will fail, *let us therefore strive to get more than this which is natural*. Since this will away, let us provide some more durable substance. You know when an old suit fails, we think of getting a new suit of apparel; when the old lease is expired, we think where to get another habitation; we begin to take a new state, and a new lease. As we do thus in matters of this life, so we should do much more for matters of the soul. When we see the natural life will not hold out, and that it cannot continue long, oh, labour, labour, my brethren, for a better life, for another life, a life that is heavenly, a life that is supernatural; get the life of God in you, and then you shall never die. To this end, get the fountain of life, Christ, to be yours, receive him into your understandings by knowledge, into your hearts by love and affection; receive him, and clasp him, and take him to yourselves by faith, and he that believes in him shall never die; yea, though he die, he shall live; he shall live in death, and shall outlive death, as Christ tells us in that place of the Gospel, John xv. 26. And when you have this fountain of life, that Christ lives in you, that you live not your own life, that you live not the life of Adam, the life of nature,

First, *Labour to act to this life*. Life is made up of many actions, so is the life of God too.

Secondly, If we live the life of Christ, and act it when he puts life into us, we shall *labour to mortify the lusts of the flesh, and of the old man*. So much corruption, so much death; so far as sin lives, so far the man dies.

* That is, 'forethought,' = care.—G.

Thirdly, *Labour to exercise and to stir up those graces of the Spirit that Christ hath bestowed on us*; and so much as faith lives, and as patience lives, and as charity lives, and the graces of God's Spirit live in us, so much we live, and live that life that shall never be determined* and take end. That is another thing briefly.

Yet we add one thing more.

Use 3. In the third place, so this may serve to shew who is the wisest man in the world, who makes the wisest choice; for wisdom is most seen in comparative actions. When things are compared together, and a choice is made of things that excel each other, lay the comparison. Who is the wisest man? Some men are for outward things; no man is admired of them but for his natural parts. We look who hath the finest hand, who hath the finest eye, who hath the finest wit, and the best memory for natural regards. This man regards this man, and commends this. This man applauds a child, chooseth a wife, respects men for these things, and for these only. But now spiritual things, heavenly endowments, these things commend a man; they make the man in truth, they are the whole man, as in Eccles. xii. 13. You know that Christ saith, when he comes to determine the question between two sisters, 'Martha, Martha, Mary hath chosen the better part,' Luke x. 42. And why the better part? She hath chosen that which 'shall not be taken from her.' So he makes the best choice then, that prefers those things that are most durable, those things that will last, those things that death cannot kill, those things that sickness cannot make sick, those things that weakness cannot weaken, that no outward thing can deprive us of, those supernatural, spiritual, heavenly graces. A wise man prefers these before all natural parts whatsoever. That is the second thing.

Doct. 3. There is a third thing that we should have spoken to, and that is this, *that not only natural parts, but natural comforts and delights, wear away.*

So Barzillai tells us, he takes no comfort in that he sees, in that he tasted, in that he heard. All matter of delights in nature were taken from him. So that natural delights and comforts they wear out, that as it is said of Sarah, 'it was not with her after the former manner;' so we may say of all natural delights and comforts, in time it will be with the eye, it will be with the ear, it will be with the taste, that nature will be so, that it will not be with them after the manner of the eye, after the manner of the taste, after the manner of the ear; they shall be as if a man had no eyes, as if he had no taste, as if he had no hearing at all. This we might shew in many instances, but this shall suffice, because we would pass to the grounds; and the reason it is clear.

Reason 1. First, All natural objects from whence natural delights and contentments arise, they fail in time.

Reason 2. Secondly, The natural senses and means whereby men apprehend these, they wax dim, and slow, and heavy, and so they perform their actions and their functions with tediousness, because they do it not with alacrity, therefore it is not done with delight.

Reason 3. Further, again, because these very things in themselves in time will work a satiety of all natural delights, a man shall be filled with them, not only with the world, but with the lusts of the world. The desire of earthly things will vanish too, 1 John ii. 16, 17. So the eye is never satisfied with seeing, or the ear with hearing; these things cannot quiet the appetite, they cannot fill the mouth of the desire, these things cannot give con-

* That is, 'terminated'.—G,

tentment. All natural things are so short and finite, that in time they wear out, that a man shall be dulled and tired with them.

Use. The use we should make of this should have been thus much : first of all it serves to teach us this lesson, *that therefore we should not rest, we should not lean too much upon natural comforts and delights*, trust not to natural cheerfulness, to natural courage, as if these would bear us through all perils, and dangers, and fears, and as if these would carry us through all griefs and heart-breakings. No ; nature is a little finite thing ; it hath its latitude and its extent as a bow hath, which, drawn beyond the compass, breaks in pieces ; or as an instrument, the string of an instrument, strain it to an higher pitch, it snaps asunder ; so it is with nature too, draw it beyond the pitch, it breaks. You cannot lay much upon the back of nature, but it crusheth it, and breaks it, it falls asunder ; and therefore rest not too much in natural parts, for wit and cheerfulness, all these shall fail in time.

Obj. Ay, but nature is propped up with art.

Ans. It may be so for a time, but that is patchery. It may be for a time. If natural delights fail, much more will artificial ; if true fire cannot warm a man, and give him relief, painted fire cannot do it. But so it is that natural and artificial things fail in time. Let a man's eye be made of glass in spectacles, and that which is made of flesh as the natural eye, both the natural and artificial eyes, both turn to dust at length. Let a man have a leg, a crutch of wood, or a leg of flesh, as the natural leg, yet both come to dust and ashes in time. All natural and artificial things decay at the last.

Obj. Ay, but carnal delights will help a man.

Ans. Least of all : if wine will not comfort a man, poison will not. Now all carnal pleasures and delights are poison. Where shall we go then for comfort and delight ? Yet above all the creatures, there be joys I confess to be had, that will drink up all tears, all sorrows ; there be comforts to be had, that will carry a man over all discouragements and grievances ; there be everlasting joys, unutterable comforts, inconceivable hopes, and peace of conscience, that will carry a man through sickness, and through pain, and through poverty and shame, through death and all, and will never give him over ; a peace that will be with a man in his bed, that will run with him when he flies before the enemy ; a peace that will follow him to his grave, and beyond the grave ; a peace that will live with him when he dies, that will follow him to the throne and tribunal of Christ, and will set a crown of glory and grace upon him at the last. These joys and comforts be to be had. Oh make out for them, my brethren ; seek the joys that are spiritual, seek the comforts of the Scriptures, rejoice in this, 'that your names are written in heaven,' Luke x. 20 ; rejoice in this, 'that God is your Father ; rejoice that Christ dwells in you ; rejoice that heaven is yours, that Christ is yours, that God is yours, that the promises and the covenant is yours ; and these be the joys that no man can take from you, that nothing can take from you. These will make you rejoice in sorrow, these will make you live in death. As I said before, labour for these that may carry you over all troubles, and miseries, and terrors whatsoever. That is another point. There are divers others I was thinking to have said something to, for I intended no more but only to give you some general heads, some words of instruction in general out of this large text ; but I know not how the time hath overslipped us in speaking this little that we have ; and therefore we will go no further at this time.

NOTES.

(a) P. 37. "How many," saith the Original, "are the days of my years?" So commonly in the margin of our English Bible, 'How many days are the years of my life?' Cf. Ps. xc. 12.

(b) P. 38. 'The heathen had some to call upon them,' &c. Cf. Note z, Vol. II. p. 435.

(c) P. 43. 'Keepers of the house,' &c. It is interesting to compare this incidental exposition of a difficult figurative passage, with modern interpretations, *e. g.*, Wardlaw, Macdonald (of America), Moses Stuart, and Ginsburg. Sibbes differs somewhat.

G.