

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE FUNERAL OF

THAT

HOLY, PAINFUL, AND FRUITFUL MINISTER OF CHRIST,

MR. HENRY STUBBS ;

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A S E R M O N,

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ACTS xx. 24.

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.

THIS hour being designed to such a commemoration of our deceased friend, Mr. Stubbs, as is laudably used at such men's funerals, I have chosen words of this text, which the heart and life of this holy man did so constantly express, that, doubtless, the same Spirit suggested them to blessed Paul and him. They are the profession of a full devotedness to God, in his christian and ministerial work, notwithstanding all expected difficulties and oppositions, which he resolved with unmoved patience to undergo to the joyful finishing of his course.

The witness of the Holy Ghost, with his own experience, did teach him to expect bonds and afflictions at Jerusalem, it being the ordinary entertainment which every where did abide him; but how much worse might come he knew not, but was resolutely prepared for all. The joyful finishing of his course was so desirable to him, that no suffering, though it were the loss of life itself, did seem too dear or hard a means for its accomplishment.

Here is then, first, the great and desirable prize for which nothing could be too dear. Secondly, The cheerful resolution of the apostle to go on, and part with life itself to attain it.

The first, though the words have no great difficulty, yet, as to the matter, may need to some a brief explication, viz :

1. What is meant by his "course."
2. What by his "ministry and testifying the gospel of the grace of God."
3. How this was "received of the Lord Jesus."
4. What is meant by the "finishing of his course."
5. How it was to be done "with joy."
6. Why he was not moved by foreseen sufferings, nor accounted his "life dear" to attain this end.

And for brevity, I shall now observe this method, to add the instructions and other applications, to each part of the text as I explain it.

First, the word translated "course," signifieth a race to be swiftly run : and a threefold race is here included. 1. The race of human life, which is short and uncertain ; we are not born for nothing ; nor doth God give us life, and time, and maintenance, to live in idleness, or to serve the flesh. The sun stands not still whether we sleep or wake ; our breath, our pulse are still in motion, our glass is running. And oh ! how quickly shall we see and hear, that time on earth shall be to us no more. This course will be certainly and quickly finished ; but whether "with joy," it concerns us timely to foresee. For the review of time, of precious time, and the work of time, will be no contemptible part of our everlasting work.

Secondly, the "course" (or race) of Christianity, is the necessary improvement of our time. This is not a play, nor an idle, brutish, or a jesting life. It is a great work for a self-destroying, undone sinner, to believe in a Saviour, and such a Saviour, and wholly to trust his merits, sacrifice, counsel, conduct, his powerful operations, and effectual intercessions for all our present and our future hopes. It was not a dream of war that we were listed for in our baptism under the Captain of our salvation. The resisting of temptations, the quenching of the devil's fiery darts, the denial of ourselves and forsaking friends, reputation, estate, and liberty, and life, for the sake of Christ, and renouncing the flesh, the world, and the devil, for the hopes of a promised, unseen glory, is a real work. To believe in Christ and his promise of heaven, to the forsaking of all worldly hopes, is a serious business. To love God above all, and our neighbour as ourselves, and to do as we would be done by, how easily soever mentioned and pro-

fessed, are works not unworthy to be ascribed to the Spirit of the living God, and to the grace of the Almighty. He that well finisheth the christian course, shall certainly receive the crown of righteousness; and though none of these works do in the least participate in the office of the justifying sacrifice, merits, or grace of Jesus Christ, yet shall we be judged according to them; and we must live to Christ, if we will live with Christ.

Thirdly, the apostolical, ministerial course was also to be finished with joy. His call was wonderful, his office honourable, his gifts powerful, his sufferings great, his labours greater; his successes by miracles in themselves miraculous: yet all this would not have saved himself, if he had not faithfully finished his course. To begin hopefully is more common than to end happily. The sun of persecution withereth much fruit that seemed flourishing: Judas's end did more difference him from the rest of the apostles, than his beginning.

His ministry was considerable as common to all the clergy, or as apostolical. To preach the word as he commanded Timothy, to be instant in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering, and doctrine, to rule well, and labour in the word and doctrine, to take heed to ourselves and unto doctrine, and continue therein, that we may save ourselves and them that hear us; to take heed to ourselves and all the flock, to hold back nothing profitable to them, but to teach them publicly, and from house to house, day and night with tears, (Acts xx.,) in meekness, instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, at any time, will give them repentance; all this is not a dream or play.

And to go over much of the world, from nation to nation, by sea and land, to preach this gospel to strangers of various languages, through all difficulties and sufferings, to confirm all by miracles, to leave this sacred doctrine infallibly in records to the church, as a rule to the end of the world, to teach men to observe all things Christ had commanded them, as well as to disciple nations, and baptize them, and to settle the orders and government of the churches according to the will of Christ, this was the extraordinary part of his ministry.

Thirdly, this ministry was received of the Lord Jesus, by an extraordinary call, a voice from heaven, and an inspiration of others that were ministerially to send him, and the special inspiration of his own soul, for apostolical qualifications. But do

not ordinary ministers also receive their office from the Lord Jesus? Yes; and though the way of their reception differ, their obligation to finish their course is divine, as well as Paul's. Christ called Paul by himself, and by inspired prophets; and he calleth us by his qualifying grace, and by his stated law, (as the king maketh mayors and bailiffs of corporations by his charters,) wherein the ordainers and electors orderly determine of the recipient persons, and the ordainers ministerially invest them; but the office, power, and obligation is directly from the law of Christ. And if any breach or interruption should be made in human ordination and tradition, the law still standeth to direct men in the choice and investiture, and to confer authority, and to oblige, as well as the Holy Ghost, to give men the necessaries thereto.

Therefore, as we receive our office from Christ, we must use it for Christ, and not for carnal self, nor as the servants of men; and we must use it according to the laws of Christ, whose laws soever shall gainsay them.

Fourthly, the finishing of Paul's course, is the bringing his work of Christianity and ministry to the desired joyful end. 1. To the end of duration; not to be weary of well-doing, nor, having put his hand to Christ's plough, to look back and repent, nor forsake the warfare in which he was engaged. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved; and in due time we shall reap if we faint not." 2. To the end of intention: 1. To do his own appointed work, that his grace being exercised and increased, he may be acceptable to God, and fit with joy to meet the Lord. 2. To call and save sinners, and to build up saints, and to gather churches unto Christ, and edify them, and leave to all ages his doctrine and example, a certain word and powerful motive. 3. To glorify Christ and God the Father in all this; not to sit warm in a reverend habit, for men to honour for the sake of the office and bare name of an apostle.

But to "testify the gospel of the grace of God," to declare the truth of it, the necessity of it, the privileges, and the honour, the great love of God, revealed by the Son of his love to sinners, and the great and manifold benefits given them in Christ, the hope of glory set before them, and the just and reasonable means and conditions of obtaining it. Thus did he, as immediately sent, and thus must we, as sent by Christ's appointed order in his law, testify the gospel of the grace of God.

Fifthly, concerning Paul's "finishing his course with joy," we must consider, 1. What joy it is that is here meant. 2. How much of this joy each faithful minister may expect. 3. And whence and on what account he may expect it.

First. The joy here meant, which Paul expected, is, 1. The joy which the nature of the work affordeth; divine, certain, great, and holy truth is pleasant to him that understandeth it, believeth it, and is exercised in the serious meditation of it. It is sweet to read, and think, and speak of the essential love of God; and of his unspeakable grace in Christ, of his free reconciliation, justification, adoption, and salvation of those that were his enemies; of the wonderful mysteries, and methods of God's love in our redemption and salvation; of the heavenly glory which we and all the elect of God shall enjoy for ever. What sweeter food or business for our minds, than such things as these.

Secondly. The success of our work is an addition to our joy. The success of it on our own souls, while they increase in holiness, and are raised to the greater knowledge of God, and greater love to him, and communion with him; and our success on others while they are brought home to God and saved. If it be pleasant to a successful physician to save men's lives, it must be more so to a successful minister of Christ, to further men's regeneration, and to save men's souls. To add more to the number of them that love the Lord Jesus, that are his members, that are enemies to sin, examples of holiness, that pray for the world, and that shall live in glory; is not this a joyful work? There is joy among the angels in heaven for every sinner that repenteth. (Luke xv. 10.) Christ rejoiceth in it, and all good men that know it rejoice in it, and shall not the minister of it then rejoice? "I rejoiced greatly," saith St. John, and "I have no greater joy." (3 John 3, 4.) "Ye are our joy and crown of rejoicing." (1 Thess. ii. 19.)

Thirdly. The honour of Christ, and the pleasing of God in our labours, and their success, is the top of all our joy. (2 Cor. v. 9; Heb. xii. 28; Eph. v. 10; Heb. xiii. 21, and xi. 5.) For to please God, and to be perfectly pleased in him, is our heavenly felicity itself.

Fourthly. It is our joy to foresee the blessed end, the everlasting, glorious reward. To live in the belief and hope of this, and to taste the love of God in Christ, which is the first-

fruits. All this is the joy in which we may hope to finish our course.

II. How much of this joy may we here expect ?

Answ. 1. So much as shall satisfy us that in our dedication of ourselves to God, we made a wise and happy choice, which we need not to repent of ; though we might easily have chosen a way more likely for wealth and pleasure to the flesh, and in which we should not have kindled the indignation of so many against us ; nor have brought on ourselves so much envy and malice, so much slanders and reproaches, to name no worse, yet experience tells us, that God taught us to choose the most pleasant life, as our deceased brother and I have truly oft told one another, that we have found it. Even when we are sorrowful, we are always rejoicing. (2 Cor. vi. 10.) When we are falsely reported of, our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, we have had our conversation in the world. (2 Cor. i. 12.) Paul and Silas could sing with their backs sore with scourging, and their feet fast in the stocks ; (Acts xvi. ;) and the apostles rejoiced that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach and abuse for Christ. (Acts v. 41.) Never yet did difficulty, or suffering, much tempt me to repent that I had not chosen another calling ; much less to repent of the christian choice ; for, saith Peter, " Whither shall we go ? Lord, thou hast the words of eternal life." (John vi. 68.)

Secondly. We may expect so much joy as shall make the duties of Christianity and ministry easy and delightful to us, (Psalm i. 2,) and make us say, that, " A day in his courts is better than a thousand, and to be a door-keeper in his house, than to dwell in the tents or palaces of wickedness." And that it is good for us to draw near to God. And if at any time our diseased appetites shall lose their pleasure, we are yet sure that we have chosen the only wholesome and delicious food ; and God hath physic that can recover our appetites.

Thirdly. We may expect so much joy as shall keep us from thirsting again for the world, or longing for the forbidden pleasures of sin, and shall make even the house of mourning and godly sorrow pleasanter to us than mirth and feasting is to the ungodly, and never desire to partake of their delights.

Fourthly. We may expect so much joy as shall make all our sufferings very tolerable, especially those that are for truth and

righteousness. (Matt. v. 10—12.) Believers took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and accepted not offered deliverance; (Heb. xi.) as seeing him that is invisible, and expecting a better and more enduring substance. And that which is not joyous, but grievous at the present, will bring forth the quiet fruit of righteousness. (Heb. xii.)

Fifthly. We may expect so much joy as shall encourage us to hold out to the end, and never to forsake Christ and a holy life, as weary or as hoping for better.

Sixthly. We may expect so much joy, as shall be some foretaste of the heavenly joy, and some reward here of all our labours. Yea, some may be filled with joy and peace in believing, and have unspeakable glorious joy. (Rom. xv. 13; 1 Pet. i. 7, 8.)

Seventhly. We may expect so much as shall convince the ungodly, that we live a more comfortable life than they. Paul and Silas singing in the stocks, it is like, had some part in the conviction of the gaoler.

III. Whence, and on what accounts may we expect this joy?

Answ. This may be gathered from what is said before. 1. From the love and acceptance of the Father. 2. From the grace of the Son. 3. From the communion of the Holy Spirit. And, therefore, 1. From the goodness of our work before mentioned. 2. From the truth of the promises of God. 3. From the communion of saints. 4. From the continued protection, and other mercies, of God. 5. And from the certain hopes of glory; all which I must now but thus only name.

There is another kind of joy, which too many seek in this sacred office, thereby corrupting and profaning it; and the best things corrupted become the worst, and such men most pernicious to mankind, and these rotten pillars the greatest betrayers and enemies to the church; I mean such as Gregory Nazianzene sadly describeth in his time, even at the first general council at Constantinople; and such as Isidore Pelusiota in his Epistles to Zosimus, and some such others freely reprehendeth; and such as Gildas describeth in this land; and such as Salvian rebuketh; and such as, the canons of abundance of councils tell us, swarmed heretofore.

First. Had there not been prelates and priests, that had placed their joy in dominion over their brethren, and getting into exalted thrones, in being rich and idle, and bowed to even by princes, and mastering kings and kingdoms by cursing them

from Christ; making themselves as the soul, and princes as the body; themselves as the sun, and princes as the moon and stars, abusing *Tibi dabo claves*, and “the disciple is not above his master,” to the mastering of kings and states, as their sheep and disciples; a great part of the church history had been unwritten, or otherwise written than it is.

Secondly. Yea, far be it from any minister of Christ to expect their joy from human applause, and the multitude of followers or disciples; to be accounted a learned or a holy man, an excellent preacher, and so to have the respect and love of many.

A good name and love are not to be despised when they follow fidelity as its shadow; and as they signify the good of those that profit by the word. The Galatians would once have even pulled out their eyes for Paul; but, alas! what is the thought and breath of man, that is hastening to the dust, and to the impartial Judge? How small a matter should it be to us to be judged of many, that are so near the final judgment; and what a terrible sentence is it to the hypocrites! “Verily they have their reward.” (Matt. vi. 2.) Oh! poor and miserable reward? And yet what age hath not seen that verified, “Of your own selves shall men arise, that shall speak perverse things to draw away disciples after them.” (Acts xx. 30; Rom. xvi. 17.) Such still have been as have caused divisions and offences, contrary to apostolical doctrine, not serving the Lord Jesus, but their own bellies, being ever fleshly, worldly men, and, by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the simple. And men that have had the form of godliness, (or the lifeless image,) but deny the power of it by wicked lives, are those from whom we must turn away.

Thirdly. Yea, and far be it from any faithful minister, or Christian, to take up his joy from a conceit that he hath commutatively merited of God, by the excellency of his faith or labours. Alas! who is sufficient for these things? And what have we that we have not received? Or who hath given to God that it may be repaid him? Or what faithful minister of Christ did ever come out of the pulpit, or from his private duty, without grief and shame that his faith and love, his skill and zeal, have been so vastly unsuitable to such great and excellent things that he was about? And yet the conscience of simplicity and godly sincerity, and God’s forgiveness, assistance, and acceptance, may set our joy above that shame and grief.

Fourthly. And now it is easy to see the reason why Paul

accounted not his life dear, nor was moved by the foresight of any sufferings, so he might but finish his course with joy.

For, first, He well knew that the end would pay for all, and no man shall ever lose by God, nor shall the most abundant labour be in vain. (1 Cor. xv. 48.) Is there any repentance in heaven for their labours or sufferings for Christ on earth? Do they think that God is in their debt? "Faith ever reckoneth that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. viii. 18.) "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, which are temporal; but at the unseen things, which are eternal." (2 Cor. iv. 16—18.)

Secondly. And Paul well knew that he and all the world were in the hands of God, and that he served such a Master as could easily preserve him as far as he saw meet, from all his enemies and sufferings. And that sufferings chosen for us by God, are better than if we had the kingdoms of the world by the gift of Satan. (Matt. iv.) Balak's words to Balaam, methinks, were words of honour and joy, "the Lord hath kept thee from honour." Oh! who would not be ambitious of being so kept from honour? The poverty and shame that is by and for God, is better than the preferment and honour of men; and the reproach of Christ is greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And if God see it best, he knoweth how to save the righteous from trouble, and if not, to give them suffering strength, and joy.

And it is a wonder of Providence how God preserveth their names and honour, that despise honour and life for him, so that even they that killed the present prophets and just men, yet build the sepulchres of those that were killed by their fathers, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' (Matt. xxiii. 27, 28.) The wonder of that foreigner in Henry VIII.'s days, *Deus bone quomodo hic vivunt gentes*, that saw men killed for being protestants, and for being papists, was not so contradictory a subject as the papists' usage of the saints, a stupendous instance of man's madness and Satan's methods, that at the same time can rack, and burn, and murder saints, and yet honour the relics, names, and memories of the dead

that were before them. That while they zealously cast away men's lives and treasure, to recover the holy land where saints had lived, at the same time murdered those by thousands that did most nearly imitate them; and to this day kill the living saints, under the name of schismatics or heretics, (for not obeying the king of Rome before God,) and keep holy days for the dead, and reverence their shrines and relics. What contempt did poor St. Martin undergo from his neighbour bishops, as suspected of Priscilleanism, and as an unlearned hypocrite, that was for liberty for heretics, so that he separated from their synods and communion, and yet what a name hath he left behind him even in that church whose prelates thus despised him.

Thirdly. Moreover, Paul had now tried both the ways, of being against Christ, and being for him, and was so fully convinced by experience and revelation of the evil of the one and the goodness of the other, that he had great reason to be resolved and unmoved, as knowing that no suffering can make the servants of Christ as miserable as his enemies, nor any preferment or prosperity make any one of the worldlings as happy as the poorest saint. Because he had rather be Lazarus than Dives hereafter, and had rather stand on the right hand of Christ than on the left, therefore he accordingly made his choice. For he well knew how bad a bargain it would prove to win all the world and lose his soul, and to lay up a treasure on earth, so as also to treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and to prepare for such an even-song as Luke xii. 20, "Thou fool! this night shall they require thy soul; and then whose are the things that thou hast provided?"

Alas! what gain is it to save an estate a little while, that at death must certainly be forsaken. To save a life this year, this month, this day, that may be gone on sadder terms the next, and certainly will, ere long, be gone. Are not the bishop of Winchester, and London, Gardiner, and Bonner, now dead, as well as the martyrs whom they burnt? Are not Alexander the Third, and Innocent the Third, and Fourth, and such other persecuting Popes, now dead, as well as all the godly Christians whom they murdered? Alas! what a nothing is time, and how little difference between to-day and to-morrow, this year, and next! That which hath been, that which is, and that which will be! Shall a man part with his God, and his everlasting hopes, that he may be able to say in hell, 'I was once a lord, a man of

honour ; I had once full provision for the flesh ; I had pleasure in the way to the torment which I undergo ?'

In the expounding of these words of St. Paul, I have but given you the image, or rather the spirit, of Mr. Stubbs. Funeral praises, brought, by flatterers, into disgrace, will be here blamed by no wise man that knew the person, no more than in Nazianzene for his orations for Cyprian, Basil, and others, unless it be for the defect, which is unavoidable.

First. This faithful servant of Christ hath run his race ; what that was, and how he performed it, the county of Gloucester knoweth, and the city of Wells in Somersetshire knoweth, and this city, and this congregation partly know. And I will speak but little of him but what I know myself, and have by unquestionable testimony. His birth, parentage, and youthful life, I am not acquainted with. He was a minister of Christ about fifty years, dying at the age of seventy-three. His studies, and parts, and labours, lay not in the critical or controversial way, and as he was so happy as not to waste his time in contentious studies, so he was so humble and honest as not to trouble his auditory with such matters, nor to pretend to have studied what he had not, nor, like many proud ignorants, to boast or contend most where they know least. His soul was taken up with the great things of religion. His preaching was most on the baptismal covenant, on the articles of the creed, the Lord's prayer, and decalogue, and such necessary things which essentially constitute a Christian. I never heard him meddle with controversies in public, or in his private talks, but all, how to know God in Christ, and how to seek and serve him, and how to resist temptations and sin, and what a life we shall live with Christ for ever ; and how to live in love, righteousness, peace, and profitableness to one another, especially how to serve God entirely, and in what state we shall live with him for ever. He was the freest of most that ever I knew from that deceit of the serpent mentioned 2 Cor. xi. 3, who corrupteth men by drawing them from the simplicity which is in Christ. His breath, his life, his preaching, his prayers, his conference, his conversation, was christian simplicity and sincerity. Not as the world calleth simplicity, folly, but as it is contrary to hypocrisy, to a counterfeit zeal, to mere affectation, to a divided heart. He knew not how to dissemble nor wear a mask ; his face, his mouth, his whole conversation, laid bare his heart. While he passed by all quarrels and controversies, few quarrelled with him ; and he had

the happiness to take up head, heart, and time, with only great, sure, and necessary things.

II. Of all men that ever I knew, he seemed to me one of the most humble. His preaching, his discourse, his garb, and all his behaviour, spake pure humility, and were far from pride; never did I hear from him a word of ostentation, much less of envy at the precedence of others; he came to Christ as a teachable child, and preached as a learner, and I never heard that he strove with any. He had learned of Christ to be meek and lowly, and to make himself of no reputation, nor seek the honour that is of man. Oh! how far was he from striving to be above his brethren, or troubling the church by a proud, imperious, or turbulent spirit!

III. He was exceedingly peaceable in his principles and in his practice; never contending with opinionators, or those that cry down this and that error of their brethren, to get the reputation of being free from errors. He put not his finger into the fire of contention; nor ever, that I heard of, made himself of a sect or faction, nor preached for this party against that, except for Christ's party against the devil's. Nor did I ever hear him, in his private talk, backbite any; nor exercise the too common liberty against others, in carping at their infirmities, or making himself their judge. Had the church had no more unpeaceable pastors, we had not been in the sad condition that we are in, denying peace and concord, obstinately, to the servants of Christ, and militating, by forbidden arms, against one another. Long would it have been before he would have reviled, vexed, or hindered any true minister of Christ from preaching his gospel, or living in peace.

IV. He was an honourer of his superiors, and obedient to authority, as far as would stand with his obedience to God. I never heard that, publicly or privately, he spake a disloyal or irreverent word of the king, or others in authority. After he had here preached awhile in London, he had a preferment to a parish church in Gloucestershire, of eight pounds per annum maintenance, and it had had, many and many years, no minister; and by the connivance, or forbearance, of the reverend Bishop of Gloucester, he there preached, for some years past, in peace; of which I am past doubt that bishop hath no cause to repent. He used part of the Liturgy, not sticking at the censure of them that called this as their judgments led them. His judgment, his work, his age, and expe-

rience, set him above all factious inducements, and taught him to please God, whoever were displeased. And when, at last, he was driven away, I never heard him speak with any bitterness. He is now where God's praises are celebrated, and whence no holy soul shall ever be cast out.

V. His labour was such as beseemed one absolutely devoted to God: his preaching was very plain and familiar, fitted rather to country auditors than to curious ears; and he chose accordingly; but it was wholly for faith, love, and holiness. He was much in catechising, and very moving in his familiar exhortations, setting his whole heart upon the winning and edifying of souls, and longing for the success, as much as covetous merchants do for rich returns. He kept a private weekly meeting for the young people, to deal with them as a catechiser, by way of familiar questions; which was much of his labour wherever he came. And he much rejoiced in the young people's willingness, and his success. The greatest benefice cannot please one that worketh for the fleece, so much as he was pleased that his unwearied labour profited his flock. How thankful was he to God, and the bishop's connivance, for that short liberty to work. And to their honour I must say, that he praised not only the friendly peaceableness of the magistrates and gentry of the county, but also of his neighbour conformable ministers, that lived by him in love, and envied not his liberty.

This holy man so little cared for the hypocrite's reward, that no reproach of men did move him; nor did he count his great labour or life dear to him, that he might subserve him, that came to seek and save the lost. He took that for the joyful finishing of his course, from which Satan and many mistaken men would have discouraged him. As it was one of the greatest aggravations of Christ's sufferings, that he was crucified as a reputed sinner, even as a blasphemers, and an enemy to Cæsar, and a contemner of the law; so he knew that all things must be accounted dung that we may be found in Christ, and conform to him even in his sufferings. And if a Seneca could say, that no man more showeth himself to be a good man than he that will lose the reputation of being a good man, lest he should lose his goodness itself, and defile his conscience; no wonder if this holy man accounted not his fame too dear to preserve his conscience. And, indeed, his friends and physicians suppose that his labours hastened his death.

He came from the country to London, again to work, and,

after his journey, preaching almost every day, and some days twice, even after he began to be ill, no wonder if the fever and dysentery, that followed, despatched him. At first he fell down in the pulpit, but, on recovering, went on ; and so again, after, till he was disabled. Some will censure him for imprudence in such labours ; but they must consider what it is to be above the inordinate love of life, and to long for the good of souls. And withal, that which much emboldened him, was, that he was wont to go somewhat ill into the pulpit, and to come better out : but the heat of the season, seventy-and-three years of age, gave advantage to the messenger which God did send to end his labours, and all his sufferings.

Two things especially I commend to imitation. 1. That he was more in instructing and catechising children by familiar questions than almost any man that I have known ; which showed that he laboured not for applause. 2. He prayed as constantly as he preached, and no wonder, then, that his labours had much success. He omitted not his duty to God in his family, by the greatness of his public labours. And a man of prayer is a man of power with God.

For my part, I never saw him till his coming to live in London, I think not seven years ago, though I long heard of his successful preaching. But to show you how great his charity was, and what a loss I have myself, and how faulty I and others are in too much forgetting of our friends, I will tell you that he hath oft told me that (as I remember, above twenty years) he never went to God in prayer but he particularly remembered me. But his love has not tempted me to say a word of him which I verily believe not to be true. And I conclude it with this profession, that I scarce remember the man, that ever I knew, that served God with more absolute resignation and devotedness, in simplicity and godly sincerity, and not with fleshly wisdom, and lived like the primitive Christians, without any pride or worldly motives, or in whose case I had rather die. And, therefore, no wonder that he lived in peace of conscience, and died with Paul's words, " I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course. Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which God, the righteous Judge, shall give." Which both Paul and he might say without any injury to Christ, or grace, or free justification. Thus did he finish his course in eminent fidelity, and constant peace of conscience ; and what was wanting in fuller joy, is now made up.

Use 1. And what use should we make of all, but to imitate such examples, and not to be moved by any trials, nor count our lives dear that we may finish our course with joy, and the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify the gospel of the grace of God? Run the same race, and you may have the same joy and blessed end. Would you have more particular counsel how to finish your course with joy? I shall briefly give you some; the Lord cause you and me to follow it!

I. He that never began well, cannot finish well. Search the Scriptures, and advise with the wise; prove all things, and hold fast that which is good. Take heed that you take not evil for good, and good for evil: set out in the way of truth. If you are out of the way, the faster and the further you go, the more you have to repent of, and lament. Be honest and faithful in seeking truth, and God will forsake not you. But go not with Balaam's covetous heart, and pre-engaged purpose. Oh! fear a false heart, and false teachers, especially men that plainly persecute a worldly interest and design.

II. If God, Christ, grace, and glory, be not enough for you, and seem not a sufficient portion, unless you have also prosperity to the flesh, undertake not the ministry, nor profess Christianity: for, without self-denial, contempt of the world, taking up the cross, and forsaking all, you have but the delusory name and image of Christianity. Absolutely devote yourselves to God, and hope not for great matters in the world. Except nothing from him; suspect and fear the hypocrite's reserves; serve Christ and trust him; trust him with estate, and liberty, and life, and soul, and all; study your duty for your part, and cast your care on him for his part. Take no thought what ye shall eat or drink, but seek first God's kingdom and the righteousness thereof. You will never finish your course with joy, if you be not absolutely devoted to God.

III. Preach to yourselves first, before you preach to the people, and with greater zeal. O Lord, save thy church from worldly pastors, that study and learn the art of Christianity, and ministry; but never had the christian, divine nature, nor the vital principle which must difference them and their services from the dead. Do you love other men's souls more than your own? will a dead nurse give warm and vital milk? Nothing doth more to make you good preachers, than that which doth most to make you good Christians: I thank the Lord for the

method of his grace and providence, that cast me divers years into the care of my own soul, before I purposed to preach to others, and made me read over the most of all our honest English practical divines, to make me a Christian indeed, before I set myself to the artificial part. I repent not of this unusual method.

IV. Let your joyful part of religion be most of your meditations: the infinite goodness of God, who is love; the wonder of man's redemption; the freeness and fulness of the promise; and the certainty and glory of our future state. These are the chief part of our religion, and of chiefest use; which must resolve us, fix us, quicken us, and help us to live in thankfulness and joy.

V. Above all, labour to strengthen faith in Christ, his word, and the life to come, and to live in the constant exercise thereof. Faith is it that showeth us the matter and reason of our duty and our joy. And if believing meditation have too long intermissions, our joy will also intermit. And if affliction or weakness make our present state to be grievous to us, and keep us from much present joy, yet faith and hope can see that which is to come. Many of God's faithful servants labour in peace of conscience and in hope; who, through infirmities of the flesh, have no great joys: and yet may be well said to finish their course with joy, because everlasting joy is the end, which at the finishing of it they obtain.

VI. Stick not at labour or suffering: hearken not to the repining and seducing flesh. Think nothing too much or too dear; your work is good, and much better wages in itself than fleshly pleasure. Labour for God and souls, and keep out selfishness and carnal ends, and God will secure your reward. Labour faithfully, and trust God confidently; fulfil his commanding will, whoever countermand you; and then rest in his accepting, disposing, and rewarding will, whatever befall you in the world. His will is the only infallible rule; and his will is the only secure and felicitating rest. They that conscionably do his will, may comfortably say, "The will of the Lord be done;" as our brother in his sickness often did.

His will made us, his will hath maintained and preserved us, and multiplied mercies to us. By his will we live, and by his will we die, and in his will we hope to rest for ever. Mr. Stubbs is gone before; this will hath guided him, and this will hath received him. In the same good haud I am closely fol-

lowing him. Our separation is like to be very short ; and none of you will stay long behind : farewell, vain, vexatious world ! farewell, malignant, lying, cruel world ! Welcome life, light, and love, delightful, perfect, and eternal ! Let it be our care so to finish our course with joy, that we may hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.

Use 2. But methinks, I should not let you, that have been the hearers of Mr. Stubbs, and such as he, go without some notice what it is that this text and this providence of God do call you specially to consider. Which is, 1. Whether you have furthered the joy of your teacher's course. 2. Whether you take care that your own course may be finished with joy, and why it must be done, and how.

I. Do not think that you are not much concerned in the matter, whether your teachers live and die in joy ; neither say, when they are dead, it is too late to mind that which is past and gone. As much as it is past, your account is not past. You may hear of it again in another manner than now you do.

You are concerned in it, 1. For your own interest. 2. For their relation to you, and labours for you, in gratitude and humanity. 3. As you are obliged to the church of Christ, and regard its interest. And, 4. As you are men, and lovers of mankind.

I. What is their ministry but the seeking of your salvation ? And what is their joy, but their success (next God's acceptance of their labours). And if they miss of this, is it not you that will be the greatest sufferers ? If you fall out with your physician, or cast away, or cast up, the only physic that can cure you, is not death more to you, than the loss of his labour and physic to him ? Shall the physician mourn over his dying patient, and shall the patient think it nothing to him ? If the child prosper not, or die, the nurse's sorrow is a smaller matter than the child's death. Is your unconverted, unpardoned, miserable state, and your danger of damnation, more to us than to you ? Will your hell be no more painful than our compassion ? And when your worm never dieth, and your fire will be unquenchable, our compassion will cease, and we shall grieve for you no more.

The God that forbade Samuel to mourn any more for Saul, will cause us to approve of his righteous judgment, and to re-

joyce in the glorifying of his justice on you. Abraham did but upbraid Dives with his former sinful pleasures. Your teachers, yea, your own parents, will not mourn in heaven for all the torments that you undergo in hell, nor consent to ease you by a drop of water. (Luke xvi.)

O what a pitiful sight it is now to see a teacher or parent mourning over the misery of ignorant, careless, wilful sinners, and they themselves rejoicing, and despising compassion, and laughing at the brink of hell. I heard of a passionate wife that cut her own throat to anger her husband. And they tell us, that the Circumcellian Donatists, that separated from other Christians, in a practical zeal for their own bishop, did murder themselves to bring the odium upon their adversaries as persecutors.

But that poor sinners should merrily run towards hell, to anger their teachers, yea, that multitudes should do thus, what an instance is it of the madness of corrupted minds! One saith, 'I will never hear him more:' and another saith, 'Shall I be catechised like a boy?' and another saith, 'These preachers would make us mad, if we should believe and lay to heart what they say:' and another saith, 'Cannot one drink and be merry, and please his flesh, but he must be damned for it? Are none saved but puritans and precisians?' And who is it that will have the worst of this at last? God will not condemn us for your sins. If you will needs be miserable for ever, our desires and endeavours to have saved you shall not be lost at all to us. Oh! how dear will impenitent sinners pay for all the tears and groans which now they do constrain from their compassionate teachers!

That God who is love itself, and putteth love into parents for the education of their children, hath also put a tender love to souls, and especially to their own flocks, into every faithful minister of Christ; which maketh all their study, and labour, and sufferings, easy to them, or tolerable, at least, for the comfortable hope which they have of men's salvation. Oh! may we but serve the Saviour of the world, in the gathering of his chosen flock; and in bringing sinners from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, in making reconciled and adopted sons of those that were the enemies of God: and holiness, what a joy would it be to every true minister of Christ. Did a damned wretch cry, 'Send Lazarus to warn my brethren, that they come not to this place of torments?' And shall not we rejoice

if we cannot only keep sinners from those flames, but also help them to live in joy with Christ and holy spirits for ever? May we see souls in heaven for ever praising God, and know that this is the fruit of our labours and God's grace? Yea, may we here see holy persons living to God, and calling upon his name, and rejoicing in hope, and serving, and honouring him in a wicked world, and say, 'These are they that God hath given to Christ by our embassy; how much sweeter will this be to us, than fleshly pleasures; and will you not allow us the joy of your salvation? If so, judge yourselves whether the loss of Christ, and grace, and heaven, and happiness, and all hope, will be a smaller loss to you, than the loss of such comfort, in your hoped welfare, will be to us.

Oh! all you that are yet unconverted, fleshly, worldly persons, strangers to a holy, heavenly life, under the ministry of such holy men as I am speaking of, think in time, I beseech you, of these two particulars.

First. What a loss is it to lose the blessing and fruit of a holy ministry. God giveth not such to all the world. Many kingdoms of heathens and infidels have no such helps. Nay, most of the christian world have too little such; all ears are not so happy as to hear the joyful tidings, the sound instructions, the close convictions, the earnest exhortations which you have heard, and these not mixed with the poison of heresies. And will you lose, will you wilfully lose all this? What! have the best of physicians, and be yet unhealed? Have the best of teachers, that long, and labour, and pray for your salvation, and yet be ignorant unbelievers, or base neglecters of this great salvation? Will you, as Capernaum, be lift up to heaven in mercies, and cast down to hell by your contempt. O that you knew in time how great a loss it is to lose one counsel, one sermon, much more all the life and labours of one such a minister of Christ, that prayed, and studied, and laboured for your souls. Do you ever hope to be saved, or not? If not, despair is a beginning of hell. If yea, do you hope to be saved without preaching, or by it? If without it, what reason have you for such hopes, when God hath made this his ordinary means? Whatever hope they may have that can have no preaching, you can have none that might have had it, and would not; or that had it, and despised and disobeyed it. But if it be by preaching that you hope to be instructed, converted, and saved, what preaching is it? Do you look for better than such as you have lost; or is

smaller and weaker remedies like to cure you, that, to the last, despised greater?

Secondly. And remember that all this will aggravate your sin, and rise up in judgment against you to your condemnation. Do you think all these sermons, and prayers, and tears, shall never more be thought on? Yes. God, who sent his ministers, sets not so light by their labours as you do. He knoweth, and thy conscience shall one day consider, what importunate exhortations thou didst neglect. How, on such a day, on such a text, his minister earnestly pleaded with thy soul, and thou hadst nothing to say against the word, and yet thou wentest on and did not repent. Oh! for your soul's sake, put us not to come in against you as witnesses to your condemnation, instead of rejoicing in your sanctification and salvation.

Oh! put us not to shake off the dust of our feet against you! Turn not all our love and labours, to kindle a greater fire for your misery. Remember, that even the merciful Saviour of souls hath said that it shall be easier yet for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for such. Fire from heaven declared the wrath of God against Sodom and Gomorrah; and will you yet have a more dreadful fire? And what moveth you to all this! Do they persuade you to any thing dishonest, or to your hurt? Will you despise all our counsel, and go to hell rather than love God, and learn and do his holy will, and live in the delightful hopes of heaven, and in love, peace, and good works, towards one another? This is all that we persuade you to: and will it not torment your consciences for ever to remember that this was all that you fled from God for, and that you avoided more than sin and hell?

Secondly. I have told you that your own interest is more concerned in the success of our ministry, than our joy. I next tell you that it is inhuman ingratitude to deny us such a joy as this. Our relation and labours for you make it our due; shall children deny their parents the comfort of their love, when it is only their well-doing and happiness that they desire? As Christ and angels rejoice at a sinner's conversion, so do true ministers in their degree. And is it not base ingratitude to deny Christ; angels, and ministers, this joy, by refusing, obstinately, to be saved?

Thirdly. And why do you take on you to be Christians, and no more regard the interest of the church of Christ? Those are the church's enemies that will not give up themselves to

Christ, that would not have him to reign over them, and subdue their fleshly minds and lusts. (Luke xix. 27; Rom. viii. 6, 7, 13.) That hinder the success of the ministers of Christ that would build up his church. And what is our building but to bring home souls? Our office is not of man, but of Christ. He giveth us our commission, though man, deliver it us. He commandeth you to receive and obey his word which we deliver to you, and terribly threateneth those that will not. (Heb. xiii. 17; John xiii. 20; Matt. ix. 36, 37; Luke ix. 18, &c.) Is it not rebellion against him, then, to be refusers? Nay, what do you but as much as in you lieth to destroy the ministerial office, and to destroy the church of God. For if we are but to stand here and talk to you a while, and not to win your souls to God, this is but an image or carcass of the ministry, as to the success and end. As you mortify all God's ordinances, and turn them into a lifeless image, so you do the ministry to you; and make it to you but "as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal." Is it worth your tithes, or are we worthy of your reverence, merely to talk to you, and never to convert and save you?

O the blindness of the minds of the ungodly! If the seekers, or other heretics, do but cry down ministers and universities, you justly rise up against them as enemies to Christianity and the Church; and yet you yourselves destroy their ministry as to yourselves, and would have but the name, and garb, and image. He that would have the tenth part of all men's revenues to be settled to maintain physicians in the land, and yet would not have men to be healed by them, is more foolish, and a worse enemy to the country, than he that would have none at all.

Fourthly. And as you are lovers of mankind, you should not deny us so reasonable a joy as your own salvation, especially to such as, for the hope of this, renounce the pleasures and honours of the world. If you could do well enough without instructors, Christ would not have appointed them; and if there had been any better way for your salvation, for our parts, we could have found out work and callings that would better have served us for worldly ends; and we could live idle, and seek preferment, and flatter, and please you, and neglect your souls in this calling that we are in.

But, then, wo to us, as well as you! Oh! remember who hath said, "Obey them that have the rule over you, for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it

with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you," (Heb. xiii. 17.) He is not worthy to be called a man, that will deny any joy or good to his neighbour, which doth no hurt to himself or others? But, consider whether he be not herein worse than a devil, that will deny another the comfort of seeing him happy, and freely doing him the greatest good?

Do you not see, now, how much you are concerned, that you further our joyful finishing of our course? I beseech you, let conscience judge you, before God judge you. Speak as before God. Have you been turned by them from darkness to light; and from unbelief to a lively faith; and from a fleshly to a spiritual life; and from worldly love and hopes to the love of God, and the hope of endless joys in heaven? Are you at a point with the flattering world and fleshly lusts; and have you heartily taken God and heaven for your portion, and Christ for your Saviour, and the Holy Spirit for your sanctifier and comforter, and the word of God for your law and charter, and the servants of God for your pleasantest company, and the service and praises of God for your best and pleasantest work, and sin for your worst and greatest enemy? If this be so, bless God that made the word so effectual to you. But if it be not, you have wronged your teachers in robbing them of the joy which was their due. This is it that we studied, prayed, and preached for: this is it that we live and labour for. This was to have been the chief part of our reward from you. It is not your tithes and money, without this, that will satisfy any but an hireling.

Many old canons of the Church forbade ministers to receive any offerings or gifts from unbelievers and wicked men; as if they had said, 'Keep your money to yourselves, and think not to stop our mouths with gifts.' Give up yourselves to Christ, or you give us nothing. I tell you it is you that are our great afflictors, and you shall answer for it. It is much more to us to lose the joy of your salvations, than to lose our estates or liberties, or worldly honour and reputation: and you can never be saved if you will not be sanctified, nor happy if you will not be holy. O, yet look back and remember what counsel God sent you by his ministers, and what importunities they used with you; and if you have denied them yet their joy, O pity yourselves if you regard not them; and deny not yourselves still the present joy of a holy life, and the everlasting joy of heavenly glory, which yet you may attain.

II. And have not you also a course that should be finished with joy, as well as we? O sirs! time is precious, short, and hasty. This race is for all eternity, and is to be run but once. Heaven will be quickly won or lost for ever. Can any one hear and believe this who hath the heart of a man, and not be awakened presently to make haste? Dare you die in an unholy, unpardoned state? Dare you go out of the world more foolishly than the unjust steward out of his stewardship, before you have provided another habitation? Dare you appear before God without his Spirit and image, and without the wedding garment of sincere holiness, and so without a part in Christ? O sirs! no heart can now conceive what a dreadful appearing that will be. Alas, sirs! we are dying, we are all dying, one to-day and another to-morrow, and we are all quickly gone; and do you take no care whether you shall go next, when God bids you care, in a manner, for nothing else? Your course will soon be finished. Shall it be with joy, or the beginning of everlasting misery? Oh! resolve now, resolve this day, as you would speed for ever. God's grace must save you; but it lieth more on your present choice and resolution than careless sinners will well consider of.

Quest. But how should I finish my course with joy?

Answ. You may gather it from what is said already. Are you willing, if I tell you to do your part? Asking questions will not serve instead of work.

I. Will you see that you perish not through your own mere carelessness, and wilful neglect of what you can do for your soul? If you will not do what you can, what good will directions do you? If men will live as if they had not reason and self-love, and knew not that they must die, or care not what becomes of them for ever, what can one do for the safety of such men? As men cannot dispute, that agree not in some granted principles, so we cannot lead you to Christ by the gospel, if you agree not in some principles of humanity and self-preservation. A sottish carelessness is the undoing of the most.

II. Set yourselves to study the gospel of Christ, till you understand what salvation is, and what is the way to it, and know the nature of true religion: and then you will see in it so much truth, so much necessity, so much amiable beauty and fitness to make you wise, good, and happy, that it will win your hearts to love and pleasure in it.

III. Study thoroughly the true meaning of your baptismal

covenant, and solemnly, before God, consent to it with tongue and heart, and live as under the obligation of it all your days; and also live in the belief of all the promises of it, and expectations of all the benefits promised. The sum of all your religion for duty and comfort is comprised in your baptismal covenant. Though it be an error to be oft baptised, it is a hundred times worse error, never truly to understand, consent, and practise, after so solemn a vow and covenant.

IV. When you have given up yourselves to God, as your God and Father, your Saviour and your Sanctifier, remember that your great relations have engaged you in the greatest business, and the highest hopes in all the world. And, therefore, now live as fellow-citizens of the saints and the household of God, that have nobler converse, work, and hope, than worldly unbelievers. Remember, now, with whom and what you have to do, and that it is not a by and trifling business, but the best and greatest that you have undertaken.

V. Join with those that are for heaven, whose counsel and company may be your help; separate from no Christians by way of divisions, further than God commandeth you; and do not easily forsake the judgment of the generality of godly men: but make few your familiar friends, and those such as are most wise, and humble, and sincere, and cheerful in the belief and hopes of glory, and suitable to your use and converse.

VI. In all doubts and difficulties of religion, judge not hastily before you have thoroughly heard and tried. Prefer a suspended judgment, that stayeth till it have tried, before a rash and hasty judgment of what you know not, and may repent of.

VII. Carefully govern your fleshly appetites and sense, and avoid needless temptations, especially to sinful pleasure: for lust will conceive else, and bring forth sin; and sin being finished will bring forth death. You will find sin and comfort contrary.

VIII. Especially, fear the flatteries of the world, and hopes of a pleasant life to the flesh on earth, and an itch after riches, plenty, or preferment, and designs for the attaining them; love not the world, nor the things that are in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and pride of life, the portion of the wicked; for if any man love the world (for the flesh and itself) so far the love of the Father is not in him. (1 John ii. 15, 16.)

IX. Value precious time, and live not in idleness; spend time as you would hear of it at last, and as those that know what it is to have but one short life to determine where they

shall live for ever. Hear and abhor all pastimes and triflings that would rob you of your time.

X. Converse daily in heaven while you are on earth ; let faith still see it ; let hope still make after it, and let love desire it, and delightfully remember it. There is our Father, our Saviour, our Comforter, our friends, with whom we must live for ever. There let our hearts be as the place of all our hopes, and let the strain of your religion be as heavenly as you can ; let it consist in love, in unity and concord, in the joyful praises of Jehovah, and in a pure, holy life. This will raise you above the sinful love of this transitory life, and the fear of death, and give you the foretastes of heaven on earth, while you do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven. But it is the Spirit and grace of Christ which you must beg and seek, and on which you must obediently depend, for the performance of all this, and not upon your inconstant wills. Without Christ we can do nothing ; but by his strengthening us we can do all things necessary to our salvation ; and we are more than conquerors, even in our patient sufferings, through the Captain of our salvation, who hath conquered for us.

Thus we may finish our course with joy.