

THE  
**LAST WORK OF A BELIEVER;**

HIS  
PASSING PRAYER,  
RECOMMENDING  
HIS DEPARTING SPIRIT TO CHRIST,

TO BE  
*RECEIVED BY HIM.*

PREPARED FOR THE FUNERAL OF  
MARY THE WIDOW, FIRST OF FRANCIS CHARLTON, ESQ.,  
AND AFTER OF THOMAS HANMER, ESQ. ;  
AND PARTLY PREACHED AT ST. MARY MAGDALEN'S CHURCH, IN MILK-STREET,  
LONDON, AND NOW, AT THE DESIRE OF HER DAUGHTER  
BEFORE HER DEATH, REPRINTED.

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“ If any man serve me, let him follow me ; and where I am, there shall also my servant be. If any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”—JOHN xii. 26.



## TO THE READER.

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READER,

THE person whose death did occasion this discourse was one that about five years ago removed from her ancient habitation, at Appley, in Shropshire, to Kidderminster, where she lived under my pastoral care till I was come up to London; and before she had lived there a twelvemonth (for thither she removed) she died of the fever, then very common in the city. She lived among us an example of prudence, gravity, sobriety, righteousness, piety, charity, and self-denial, and was truly what I have described her to be, and much more; for I use not to flatter the living, much less the dead. And though I had personal acquaintance with her for no longer a time than I have mentioned, yet I think it worthy the mentioning, which I understand by comparing her last years with what is said of her former time, by those that were then nearest to her, and so were at her death, that whereas (as I have said) sudden passion was the sin that she was wont much to complain of, she had not contented herself with mere complainings, but so effectually resisted them, and applied God's remedies for the healing of her nature, that the success was very much observed by those about her, and the change and cure so great herein, as was a comfort to her nearest relations that had the benefit of her converse; which I mention as a thing that shows us, 1. That even the infirmities that are found in nature and temperature of body are curable so far as they fall under the dominion of a sanctified will. 2. That even in age, when such passions usually get ground, and infirmities of mind increase with infirmities of body, yet grace can effectually do its work. 3. That to attend God in his means, for the subduing of any corruption, is not in vain. 4. That as God hath promised growth of grace, and flourishing in old age, so in his way we may expect the fulfilling of his promise. 5. That as grace increaseth, infirmities and corruptions of the soul will vanish.

This makes me call to mind that she was once so much taken with a sermon which I preached at the funeral of a holy aged woman,\* and so sensibly oft recited the text itself as much affecting her—"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day," &c. (2 Cor. iv. 16, 17 :) that I am persuaded both the text itself, and the example opened (and well known) to her, did her much good.

Her work is done, her enemies are conquered, (except the remaining fruits of death upon a corrupting body, which the resurrection must conquer,) her danger, and temptations, and troubles, and fears, are at an end. She shall no more be discomfited with evil-tidings; nor no more partake with a militant church in the sorrows of her diseases or distresses. We are left within the reach of Satan's assaults and malice, and of the rage and violence which pride, and faction, and Cainish envy, and enmity to serious holiness, do ordinarily raise against Christ's followers in the world. We are left among the lying tongues of slanderous, malicious men, and dwell in a wilderness among scorpions; where the sons of Belial, like Nabal, are such that a man cannot speak to them. (1. Sam. xxv. 17.) The best of them is as a briar, the most upright sharper than a thorn hedge. (Mic. vii. 4.) "But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands; but the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear, and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." (2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7.) We are left among our weak, distempered, sinful, afflicted, lamenting friends; the sight of whose calamities, and participation of their sufferings, maketh us feel the strokes that fall upon so great a number, that we are never like to be free from pain. But she is entered into the land of peace, where pride and faction are shut out; where serpentine enmity, malice, and fury, never come; where there is no Cain to envy and destroy us; no Sodomites to rage against us, and in their blindness to assault our doors; no Ahithophels to plot our ruin; no Judas to betray us; no false witnesses to accuse us; no Tertullus to paint us out as pestilent fellows, and movers of sedition among the people; no Rehum, Shimshai, or

\* Good old Mrs. Doughty, sometime of Shrewsbury, who had long walked with God and longed to be with him, and was among us an excellent example of holiness, blamelessness, contempt of the world, constancy, patience, humility, and (which makes it strange) a great and constant desire to die, though she was still complaining of doubtings, and weakness of assurance.

their society, to persuade the rulers that the servants of the God of heaven are hurtful unto kings, and against their interest and honour; (Ezra iv. 9, 12, 13, 14, 22; and v. 11;) no rabble to cry "Away with them, it is not fit that they should live;" no Demas that will forsake us for the love of present things; no such contentious, censorious friends as Job's to afflict us, by adding to our afflictions; no cursed Ham to dishonour parents; no ambitious, rebellious Absalom to molest us, or to lament; no sinful, scandalous, or impatient friends to be our grief: and, which is more than all, no earthly, sinful inclinations in ourselves; no passions or infirmities; no languishings of soul; no deadness, dulness, hard-heartedness or weakness of grace; no backwardness to God, or estrangedness from him, nor fears or doubtings of his love, nor frowns of his displeasure. None of these do enter into that serene and holy region, nor ever interrupt the joy of saints.

The great work is yet upon our hands, to fight out the good fight, to finish our course, to run with patience the remainder of the race that is before us; and as we must look to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, as our great exemplar, so must we look to his saints and martyrs as our encouraging examples under him. Put the case you were now dying, (and oh, how near is it, and how sure!) what would you need most, if the day were come? That is it that you need most now. Look after it speedily while you have time. Look after it seriously, if you have the hearts of men, and sin have not turned you into idiots or blocks. What a disgrace is it to mankind, to hear men commonly at death cry out, 'Oh! for a little more time.' And 'Oh! for the opportunities of grace again.' And 'Oh! how shall I enter upon eternity thus unprepared?' as if they had never heard or known that they must die till now. Had you not a life's time to put these questions? And should you not long ago have got them satisfactorily resolved? And justly doth God give over some to that greater shame of human nature, as not to be called to their wits, even by the approach of death itself; but as they contemned everlasting life in their health, God justly leaveth them to be so sottish as to venture presumptuously with unrenewed souls upon death, and the conceit that they are of the right church, or party, or opinion; or that the priest hath absolved them, doth pass with them for the necessary preparation; and well were it for them if these would pass them currently into heaven. But, oh, what heart can

now conceive how terrible it is for a new departed soul to find itself remedilessly disappointed, and to be shut up in flames and desperation, before they would believe that they were in danger of it.

Reader, I beseech thee, as ever thou believest that thou must shortly die, retire from the crowd and noise of worldly vanity and vexation. Oh, bethink thee, how little a while thou must be here, and have use for honour, and favour, and wealth; and what it is for a soul to pass into heaven or hell, and to dwell among angels or devils for ever; and how men should live, and watch, and pray, that are near to such a change as this. Should I care what men call me (by tongue or pen)? Should I care whether I live at liberty or in prison, when I am ready to die, and have matters of infinite moment before me to take me up? Honour or dishonour, liberty or prison, are words of no sound or signification, scarce to be heard or taken notice of, to one of us that are just passing to God, and to everlasting life. The Lord have mercy upon the distracted world! How strangely doth the devil befool them in the daylight, and make them needlessly trouble themselves about many things, when one thing is needful; and heaven is talked of, (and that but heartlessly and seldom,) while fleshly provision only is the prize, the pleasure, the business of their lives. Some are diverted from their serious preparation for death by the beastly avocations of lust, and gaudiness, and meats, and drinks, and childish sports; and some by the businesses of ambition and covetousness, contriving how to feather their nests, and exercise their wills over others in the world! And some that will seem to be doing the work, are diverted as dangerously as others, by contending about formalities and ceremonies, and destroying charity and peace; rending the church, and strengthening factions, and carrying on interests hypocritically under the name of religion, till the zeal that St. James describeth, (James iii. 13, 14, &c.) having consumed all that was like to the zeal of love and holiness in themselves, proceed to consume the servants and interest of Christ about them, and to bite and devour, till their Lord come and find them in a day that they looked not for him, smiting their fellow-servants, and eating and drinking with the drunken, and cut them asunder, and appoint them their portion with the hypocrites, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matt. xxiv. 49—51.)

Oh, study, and preach, and hear, and pray, and live, and use

your brethren that differ from you in some opinions, as you would do if you were going to receive your doom, and as will then be most acceptable to your Lord ! The guilt of sensuality, worldliness, ambition, of uncharitableness, cruelty, and injustice, of losing time, and betraying your souls by negligence, or perfidiousness, and wilful sin, will lie heavier upon a departing soul, than now, in the drunkenness of prosperity, you can think. Christ will never receive such souls in their extremity, unless upon repentance, by faith in his blood, they are washed from this pollution. It is unspeakably terrible to die, without a confidence that Christ will receive us ; and little knows the graceless world what sincerity and simplicity in holiness is necessary to the soundness of such a confidence.

Let those that know not that they must die, or know of no life hereafter, hold on their chase of a feather, till they find what they lost their lives, and souls, and labour for. But if thou be a Christian, remember what is thy work : thou wilt not need the favour of man, nor worldly wealth, to prevail with Christ to receive thy spirit. Oh, learn thy last work before thou art put upon the doing of it ! The world of spirits, to which we are passing, doth better know than this world of fleshly, darkened sinners, the great difference between the death of a heavenly believer and of an earthly sensualist. Believe it, it is a thing possible to get that apprehension of the love of Christ, that confidence of his receiving us, and such familiar, pleasant thoughts of our entertainment by him, as shall much overcome the fears of death, and make it a welcome day to us when we shall be admitted into the celestial society : and the difference between one man's death and another's dependeth on the difference between heart and heart, life and life, preparation and unpreparedness.

If you ask me, ' How may so happy a preparation be made ? I have told you in this following discourse, and more fully elsewhere formerly. I shall add now these few directions following.

1. Follow the flattering world no further ; come off from all expectation of felicity below ; enjoy nothing under the sun, but only use it in order to your enjoyment of the real, sure delight ; take heed of being too much pleased in the creature. Have you houses, and lands, and offices, and honours, and friends, that are very pleasing to you ? Take heed, for that is the killing snare ! Shut your eyes, and wink them all into nothing ; and cast by your contrivances, and cares, and fears, and remember you have another work to do.

2. Live in communion with a suffering Christ: study well the whole life and nature of his sufferings, and the reason of them, and think how desirable it is to be conformed to him. Thus, look to Jesus, that for the joy that was set before him, despised the shame, and endured the cross, and the contradiction of sinners against himself. Dwell upon this example, that the image of a humbled, suffering Christ being deeply imprinted on thy mind, may draw thy heart into a more just relish of a mortified state. Sure he is no good Christian that thinks it not better to live as Christ did, (in holy poverty and sufferings in the world,) than as Croesus, or Cæsar, or any such worldling and self-pleaser lived. Die daily by following Jesus with your cross, and when you have a while suffered with him, he will make you perfect, and receive your spirits, and you shall reign with him: it wonderfully prepareth for a comfortable death to live in the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ. He is most likely to die quietly, patiently, and joyfully, that can first be poor, be neglected, be scorned, be wronged, be slandered, be imprisoned, quietly, patiently, and joyfully. If you were but at Jerusalem, you would, with some love and pleasure, go up Mount Olivet, and think ‘Christ went this very way.’ You would love to see the place where he was born, the way which he went when he carried his cross, the holy grave where he was buried, (where there is a temple which pilgrims use to visit, from whence they use to bring the mark as a pleasing badge of honour,) but how much more of Christ is there in our suffering for his cause and truth, and in following him in a mortified, self-denying life, than in following him in the path that he hath trodden upon earth? His enemies saw his cross, his grave; his mother, his person. This did not heal their sinful souls, and make them happy; but the cross that he calleth us to bear is a life of suffering for righteousness’ sake; in which he commandeth us to rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, because our reward is great in heaven, though all manner of evil be spoken of us falsely by men on earth. (Matt. v. 11, 12.) This is called a being partakers of Christ’s sufferings, in which we are commanded to rejoice, “that, when his glory shall be revealed, we may be glad also with exceeding joy.” (1 Peter iv. 13.) And as “the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation aboundeth by Christ.” (2 Cor. i. 5.) Till we come up to a life of willing mortification, and pleased, contented suffering with Christ, we are in the lower form of his school, and, as children, shall tremble

at that which should not cause our terror; and, through misapprehensions of the case of a departing soul, shall be afraid of that which should be our joy. I am not such an enemy to the esteem of relics, but if one could show me the very stocks that Paul and Silas sat in when they sung psalms in their imprisonment, (Acts. xvi.) I could be contented to be put (for the like cause) into the same stocks, with a special willingness and pleasure, how much more should we be willing to be conformed to our suffering Lord in a spirit and life of true mortification?

3. Hold communion also with his suffering members: desire not to dwell in the tents of wickedness, nor to be planted among them that flourish for time, that they may be destroyed for ever. (Psalm xcii. 6, 7.) I had rather have Bradford's heart and faggot than Bonner's bishopric. It was holy Stephen, and not those that stoned him, that saw heaven opened, and the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of God, (Acts vii. 56,) and that could joyfully say, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He liveth not by faith (though he may be a hanger-on that keepeth up some profession for fear of being damned) who chooseth not rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, and esteemeth not the very reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of the world, as having respect to the recompense of reward. (Heb. xi. 25, 26.)

4. Live as if heaven were open to your sight, and then doat upon the delights of worldlings if you can. Then love a life of fleshly ease and honour, better than to be with Christ, if you can. But of this I have spoken at large in other writings.

Christian, make it the study and business of thy life to learn to do thy last work well, that work which must be done but once; that so death, which transmits unholy souls into utter darkness and despair, may deliver thy spirit into thy Redeemer's hands, to be received to his glory, according to that blessed promise, John xii. 26. And while I am in the flesh beg the same mercy for

Thy brother and companion in tribulation,  
And in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ,  
RICHARD BAXTER.

London, Jan. 31, 1661.

## A BELIEVER'S LAST WORK.

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ACTS vii. 59.

*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

THE birth of nature, and the new birth of grace, in their measure resemble the death of saints, which is the birth of glory. It is a bitter-sweet day, a day that is mixed of sorrow and joy, when nature must quit its familiar guest, and yield to any of these changes. Our natural birth is not without the throes, and pain, and groanings of the mother, though it transmit the child into a more large, and lightsome, and desirable habitation. Our spiritual birth is not without its humbling and heart-piercing sorrows; and when we are brought out of darkness into the marvellous light, we leave our old companions in displeasure, whom we forsake, and our flesh repining at the loss of its sensual delights. And our passage into glory is not without those pangs and fears which must needs be the attendants of a pained body, ready to be dissolved, and a soul that is going through so strait a door into a strange, though a most blessed place; and it leaveth our lamenting friends behind, that feel their loss, and would longer have enjoyed our company, and see not (though they believe) the glory of the departed soul. And this is our case that are brought hither this day, by an act of Providence sad to us, though joyous to our departed friend; by a voice that hath called her into glory, and called us into this mourning plight: even us that rejoice in the thoughts of her felicity, and are not so cruel as to wish her again into this corruptible flesh, and calamitous world, from the glorious presence of the Lord; and yet should have kept her longer from it, for our own and others' sakes, if our wisdom had been fit to rule, or our wills to be fulfilled, or if our prayers must have been answered, according to the measure of our failing apprehensions, or precipitant desires. But folly must submit to the

incomprehensible wisdom, and the desire of the creature must stoop to the will of the Creator. The interest of Christ must be preferred when he calleth for his own, and our temporary interest must give place : flesh must be silent and not contend, and dust must not dare to question God ; he knoweth best when his fruit is ripe, and though he will allow our moderate sorrows, he will not so much damnify his saints as to detain them with us from their joyful rest till we are content to let them go.

Thus also did blessed Stephen depart from glory to glory ; from a distant sight of the glory of God, and of Jesus standing at his right hand, into the immediate presence and fruition of that glory. But yet he must pass the narrow port ; enraged malice must stone him till he die, and he must undergo the pains of martyrdom before he reach to the glory which he had seen. And when he was arrived in safety, he leaveth his brethren scattered in the storm, and devout men make great lamentation at his burial. (Acts viii. 2.) Though it is probable by the ordinary acceptation of the word *ἄνδρες ἐύλαβεῖς*, that they were not professed Christians, but devout proselytes, (such as Cornelius and the Æthiopian eunuch were,) that buried and thus lamented Stephen, as knowing him to be an excellent person, cruelly murdered by the raging Jews, yet their example, in a case not culpable, but commendable, may be imitated by believers, upon condition that, with our sense of the excellency of the persons, and of our loss by their removal, we exceed them that had but a darker revelation in our joyful sense of the felicity of the translated souls.

The occasion of the death of this holy man was partly that he surpassed others, as being full of faith, and of the Holy Ghost ; and partly that he plainly rebuked the blind and furious persecuting zeal of the Jews, and bore a most resolute testimony of Christ. It is an ill time when men must suffer because they are good, and deserve not suffering, but reward ; and they are an unhappy people that have no more grace or wit but to fight against heaven, and set themselves under the strokes of God's severest justice, by persecuting them that are dear to Christ, and faithfully perform their duty. It is no strange thing for the zeal and interest of a faction to make men mad ; so mad as implacably to rage against the offspring of heaven, and to hate men because they are faithful to their great Master, and because they are against their faction ; so mad as to think that

the interest of their cause requireth them to destroy the best with the greatest malice, because they stand most in their way; and to forget that Christ, the revenger of his elect, doth take all as done to him that is done to them; so mad as to forget all the terrible threatenings of God, and terrible instances of his avenging justice against the enemies of his servants, whom he taketh as his own, and to ruin their own reputations by seeking to defame the upright, whose names God is engaged to honour, and whose righteousness shall shine forth as the sun, when foolish malignity hath done its worst. When Christ had pleaded his cause effectually with Saul, that was one of the persecutors of Stephen, he maketh him confess that he was *περισσῶς ἐμμανόβμενος*, exceedingly, excessively, or beyond measure mad against the Christians.

But this blessed protomartyr, in despite of malice, doth safely and joyfully pass through all their rage to heaven. By killing him they make him more than conqueror, and send him to receive his crown. And he shuts up all the action of his life in imitation of his suffering Lord with a twofold request to heaven, the one for himself that his spirit may be received, the other for his persecutors, that this sin may not be laid to their charge; (Acts vii. 59, 60;) for so you may find Christ did before him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," and, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (Luke xxiii. 34, 46.) Only Christ directeth his prayer immediately to the Father, and Stephen to Christ, as being one that had a mediator, when Christ had none, as needing none, and being now bearing witness, by his suffering, to Christ, and therefore it was seasonable to direct his prayer to him, but especially because it was an act of mediation that he petitioneth for, and therefore directeth his petition to the mediator.

This first request of this dying saint, which I have chosen to handle, as suitable and seasonable for our instruction at this time, in a few words containeth not a few exceeding useful, wholesome truths.

As, I. It is here plainly intimated that Jesus Christ is exalted in glory, in that he hath power to receive departed souls.

II. That Christ is to be prayed to, and that it is not our duty to direct all our prayers only to the Father. Especially those things that belong to the office of the mediator, as interceding for us in the heavens, must be requested of the mediator. And those things which belong to the Father to give for the sake of

the mediator, must be asked of the Father for his sake. I cannot now stay to tell you in particular what belongeth to the one, and what unto the other.

III. That man hath a spirit as well as a body; of which more anon.

IV. That this spirit dieth not with the body (unless you will call a mere separation a dying.)

V. That Christ doth receive the spirits of his saints when they are separated from the body.

VI. That a dying Christian may confidently and comfortably commend his spirit to Christ, to be received of him.

VII. That prayer in general, and this prayer in special, 'That Christ will receive our departing souls,' is a most suitable conclusion of all the actions of a Christian's life.

The first and second of these doctrines, offered us by this text, I shall pass by.

The third is not questioned by any that knoweth himself to be a man: but that we may understand it, and the rest, we must consider what the word "spirit" doth here signify. By "spirit," here can be meant nothing but the rational soul, which is the principal constitutive part of the man. For though the word do sometimes signify the wind or breath, and sometimes the moral and intellectual qualifications, and have divers other senses, I need not stay to prove that it is not here so taken. Stephen prayeth not to Christ to receive his breath, his graces, or the Holy Ghost, but to receive his rational, immortal soul.

It is not only the soul, but God himself, that is called "a Spirit:" and though the name be fetched from lower things, that is because that we have no adequate positive conception of God or spirits, so we can have no adequate proper names for them, but must take up with borrowed names, as answerable to our notions.

Sometimes the word spirit (as Heb. iv. 12, &c.) is distinguished from the soul; and then it either signifieth the superior faculties in the same soul, or the same soul as elevated by grace.

Do you ask, 'What is the soul?' You may also ask, 'What a man is?' And it is pity that a man should not know what a man is. It is our intellectual nature, containing also the sensitive and vegetative. The principal or first act, by which we live, and feel, and understand, and freely will. The acts tell you what the faculties or powers are, and so what the soul is. If you know what intellection, or reason and free-will are, you

may know what it is to have a spiritual nature, essentially containing the power of reasoning and willing. It is thy soul by which thou art thinking and asking what a soul is; and as he that reasoneth to prove that man hath no reason, doth prove that he hath reason by reasoning against it; so he that reasoneth to prove that he hath no soul, doth thereby prove that he hath a reasonable (though abused) soul.

Yet there are some so blind as to question whether they have souls, because they see them not; whereas if they could see them with eyes of flesh they were no souls, for spirits are invisible. They see not the air or wind, and yet they know that air or wind there is. They see not God or angels, and yet they are fools indeed if they doubt whether there be a God and angels. If they see not their eyes, yet they know that they have eyes, because with those eyes they see other things. And if they know not directly and intuitively that they have rational souls, they might know it by their knowing other things, which without such souls cannot be known. It is just with God that those that live as carnally, and brutishly, and negligently, as if they had no souls to use or care for, should at last be given up to question whether they have souls, or no.

O woful fall! depraved nature! O miserable men, that have so far departed from God, as to deny both themselves and God! or to question whether God be God, and man be man. Return to God, and thou wilt come to thyself. Forget not, man, thy noble nature, thy chiefest part: think not that thou art only shell, because thou seest not through the shell. It is souls that converse by the bodies while they are in flesh. It is thy soul that I am speaking to, and thy soul that understandeth me. When thy soul is gone I will speak to thee no more. It is thy soul that is the workmanship of God by an immediate or special way of fabrication. "The souls which I have made." (Isa. lvii. 16.) "He breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul." (Gen. ii. 7.) It is thy soul that is said to be made after God's image; in that thou art ennobled with a capacious understanding and free-will; and it is thy soul that is the immediate subject of his moral image, even spiritual wisdom, righteousness, and holiness. God hath not hands, and feet, and other members, as thy body hath. How noble a nature is that which is capable of knowing not only all things in the world, (in its measure), but God himself, and the things of the world that is to come; and capable of loving and enjoying God, and of

seeking and serving him in order to that enjoyment ! Christ thought not basely of a soul that redeemed souls at such a price, when he made his soul an offering for sin. (Isa. liii. 10.) Were it not for our immortal souls would God ever honour us with such relations to him as to be his children ? (For he is first the Father of spirits, (Heb. xii. 9,) and then the Father of saints.) Should we be called the spouse and the members of Christ ? would he be at so much cost upon us ? should angels attend us as ministering spirits, if we had not spirits fit to minister to God ? Would the Spirit of God himself dwell in us, and quicken, and beautify us with his grace ? should a world of creatures (whose corporeal substance seems as excellent as ours) attend and serve us, if we were but an ingenious sort of brutes, and had not rational, immortal souls ? Should such store of mercies be provided for us ? should ministers be provided to preach, and pray, and labour for us, if we had not souls to save or lose ? “ They watch for your souls as they that must give account.” (Heb. xiii. 17.) Why should they preach in season and out of season, and suffer so much to perform their work, but that they know that “ He that winneth souls is wise,” (Prov. xi. 30,) and that “ He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, doth save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins.” (Jam. v. 20.) The devil himself may tell you the worth of souls when he compasseth the earth, (Job i. 7,) and goeth about night and day to deceive them, and devour them, (1 Peter v. 8,) and yet can he make you believe that they are so worthless as to be abused to the basest drudgery, to be poisoned with sin and sensuality, to be ventured for a thing of nought ?

Oh ! sirs, have you such immortal souls, and will you sell them for a lust, for a beastly pleasure, for liberty to glut your flesh, or for the price that Judas sold his Lord for ? Is thy soul no more worth than honour, or wealth, or foolish mirth ? Is thy soul so base as not to be worth the care and labour of a holy life ? Is the world worth all thy care and labour, and shall less be called too much ado, when it is for thy precious soul ? Alas ! one would think by the careless, fleshly lives of many, that they remember not that they have souls. Have they not need, in the depth of their security, in the height of their ambition, and in the heat of fleshly lusts, to have a monitor to call to them, ‘ Remember that thou art a man, and that thou hast a soul to save or lose ?’ What thinkest thou of thy negligence and carnal life, when thou readest that so holy a man as Paul must keep under

his body, and bring it into subjection, lest he should be a cast-away after all his labours. (1 Cor. ix. 25—27.) Oh, live not as if the flesh were the man, and its pleasure your felicity, but live as those that have spirits to take care of.

Doct. IV. The spirit of man doth survive the body; it dieth not with it. It is not annihilated; it is not resolved into the essence of some common element of souls, where it loseth its specific form and name. It was still the spirit of Stephen that was received by Christ: it sleepeth not. To confute the dream of those that talk of the sleeping of souls, or any lethargic, unintelligent, or inactive state, of so excellent, capacious, and active a nature, were but to dispute with sleeping men. When we say it is immortal, we mean not that it, or any creature, hath in itself a self-supporting or self-preserving sufficiency; or that they are necessary beings, and not contingent; or primitive beings, and not derived from another by creation. We know that all the world would turn to nothing in a moment if God did but withdraw his preserving and upholding influence, and but suspend that will that doth continue them. He need not exert any positive will or act for their destruction or annihilation. Though *ejusdem est annihilare, cujus est creare*; none can annihilate but God; yet it is by a positive, efficient act of will that he createth: and by a mere cessation of the act of his preserving will he can annihilate. I mean not by any change in him, but by willing the continuance of the creature but till such a period; but yet he that will perpetuate the spirit of man, hath given it a nature (as he hath done the angels) fit to be perpetuated. A nature not guilty of composition and elementary materiality, which might subject it to corruption. So that as there is an aptitude in iron, or silver, or gold, to continue longer than grass, or flowers, or flesh; and a reason of its duration may be given *a natura rei*, from that aptitude in subordination to the will of God; so there is such an aptitude in the nature of the soul to be immortal, which God maketh use of to the accomplishment of his will for its actual perpetuity.

The heathenish Socinians, that deny the immortality of the soul, (yea, worse than heathenish, for most heathens do maintain it,) must deny it to Christ himself, as well as to his members; for he used the like recommendation of his soul to his Father when he was on the cross, as Stephen doth here to him. If "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," be words that prove not the

surviving of the spirit of Stephen; then, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," will not prove the surviving of the Spirit of Christ. And, then, what do these infidels make of Christ, who also deny his Deity; and, consequently, make him nothing but a corpse, when his body was in the grave? How then did he make good his promise to the penitent malefactor? "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." But he that said "Because I live, ye shall live also," (John xiv. 19,) did live in the Spirit, while he was put to death in the flesh; (1 Peter iii. 18;) and receiveth the spirits of his servants unto life eternal, while their flesh is rotting in the grave. This very text is so clear for this, if there were no other, it might end the controversy with all that believe the holy Scriptures.

I confess there is a sleep of souls, a metaphorical sleep in sin and in security, or else the drowsy opinions of these infidels had never found entertainment in the world; a sleep so deep that the voice of God, in the threatenings of his word, and the alarm of his judgments, and the thunder of his warnings by his most serious ministers, prevail not to awaken the most: so dead a sleep possesseth the most of the ungodly world, that they can quietly sin in the sight of God, at the entrance upon eternity, at the doors of hell, and the calls of God do not awaken them: so dead a sleep, that Scripture justly calls them dead: (Eph. ii. 1, 5;) and ministers may well call them dead, for alas, it is not our voice that can awake them; they are as dead to us: we draw back the curtains to let in the light, and show them that judgment is at hand, and use those true but terrible arguments from wrath and hell, which we are afraid should too much frighten many tender hearers, and yet they sleep on; and our loudest calls, our tears, and our entreaties, cannot awaken them. We cry to them in the name of the Lord, "Awake, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. v. 14.) This moral sleep and death of souls, which is the forerunner of everlasting death in misery, we cannot deny. But after death even this sleep shall cease; and God will awaken them with his vengeance, that would not be awaked by his grace. Then, sinner, sleep under the thoughts of sin and God's displeasure if thou canst. There is no sleeping soul in hell; there are none that are past feeling. The mortal stroke that layeth thy flesh to sleep in the dust, lets out a guilty soul into a world where there is no sleeping; where there is a light irresistible, and a terror and torment, that will keep them

waking. If God bid thee awake by the flames of justice, he will have no nay. The first sight and feeling which will surprise thee when thou hast left this flesh, will awake thee to eternity, and do more than we could do in time, and convince thee that there is no sleeping state for separated souls.

Doct. V. Christ doth receive the spirits of his saints when they leave the flesh.

Here we shall first tell you what Christ's receiving of the spirit is. The word signifieth, to take it as acceptable to himself; and it comprehendeth these particulars.

1. That Christ will not leave the new-departed soul to the will of Satan, its malicious enemy. How ready is he to receive us to perdition, if Christ refuse us, and receive us not to salvation. He that now seeketh as a roaring lion night and day, as our adversary, to devour us by deceit, will then seek to devour us by execution. How glad was he when God gave him leave but to touch the goods, and children, and body of Job. And how much more would it please his enmity to have power to torment our souls? But the soul that fled to the arms of Christ by faith in the day of trial, shall then find itself in the arms of Christ, in the moment of its entrance upon eternity. O, Christian, whether thou now feel it to thy comfort or not, thou shalt then feel it to the ravishing of thy soul, that thou didst not fly to Christ in vain, nor trust him in vain to be thy Saviour. Satan shall be for ever disappointed of his desired prey. Long wast thou combating with him; frequently and strongly wast thou tempted by him. Thou oft thoughtest it was a doubtful question, who should win the day, and whether ever thou shouldest hold out and be saved: but when thou passest from the flesh, in thy last extremity, in the end of thy greatest and most shaking fears, when Satan is ready, if he might, to carry thy soul to hell; then, even then, shalt thou find that thou hast won the day. And yet not thou, but Christ is he that hath been victorious for thee, even as when thou livedst the life of faith, it was not thou, but Christ, lived in thee. (Gal. ii. 20.) Thou mayest fear at thy departure, and leave the flesh with terror, and imagine that Satan will presently devour thee; but the experience of a moment will end thy fears, and thou shalt triumph against thy conquered foe. He that saved thee from the dominion of a tempting devil, will certainly save thee from him when he would torment thee. Here he would have us that he may sift us, and get advantage on our

weakness ; but Christ prayeth for us, and strengtheneth us, that our faith may not fail. (Luke xxii. 31.) And he that saveth us from the sin, will save us from the punishment, and from Satan's fury, as he did from his fraud.

2. Christ's receiving us, doth include his favourable entertainment and welcoming the departed soul. Poor soul, thou wast never so welcome to thy dearest friend, nor into the arms of a father, a husband, or a wife, as thou shalt be then into the presence and embracements of thy Lord. Thou hearest, and readest, and partly believest, now how he loveth us, even as his spouse and members, as his flesh and bone. (Eph. vi.) But then thou shalt feel how he loveth thee in particular. If the angels of God have joy at thy conversion, what joy will there be in heaven at thy entrance into that salvation. And sure those angels will bid thee welcome, and concur with Christ in that triumphant joy. If a returning prodigal find himself in the arms of his father's love, and welcomed home with his kisses, and his robe and feast, what welcome then may a cleaused conquered soul expect when it cometh into the presence of glorious love, and is purposely to be received with such demonstrations of love, as may be fitted to magnify the love of God, which exceedeth all the love of man, as omnipotency doth exceed our impotency, and therefore will exceed it in the effects. Though thou hast questioned here in the dark, whether thou wert welcome to Christ when thou camest to him in prayer, or when thou camest to his holy table, yet then doubt of thy welcome if thou canst.

O had we but one moment's sense of the delights of the embraced soul that is newly received by Christ into his kingdom, it would make us think we were in heaven already, and transport us more than the disciples that saw the transfiguration of Christ ; and make us say, in comparing this with all the glory of the world, " Master, it is good for us to be here ;" but in consideration of the full, to say, ' It is better to be there ;' but it must not be : earth must not be so happy as to have a moment's sense of the unconceivable pleasures of the received soul ; that is the reward and crown, and therefore not fit for us here in our conflict.

But low things may, by dark resemblance, a little help us to conceive of something that is like them in a low degree. How would you receive your son, or husband, the next day after some bloody fight, where he had escaped with the victory ? Or your

child, or friend, that arrived safely after a long and a dangerous voyage? Would you not run and meet him, and with joy embrace him, if he had been many years absent, and were now come home? I tell thee, poor soul, thy Saviour hath a larger heart, and another kind of love than thou, and other reasons of greater force to move him to bid thee welcome into his presence.

3. Christ's receiving the departed soul includeth the state of blessedness into which he doth receive it. If you ask what that is, I answer it is unto himself, to be with him where he is, and that in general is full of comfort, if there were no more, for we know that Christ is in no ill place; he is glorified at the "right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb. i. 3.) And that the souls of the righteous, and at last their bodies, are received to himself, he often telleth us: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be." (John xii. 26.) "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 2, 3.) And, in the mean time, when we once are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord, (2 Cor. v. 8,) and that is in "the building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (Verse 1.) Paul, therefore, desired "to depart, and to be with Christ" as being far better; (Phil. i. 23;) and Christ promised the converted thief, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke xxiii. 43.) And our state after the resurrection hath the same description, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. iv. 17.) And what it shall be he declareth himself, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." (John xvii. 24.) The soul of Lazarus (Luke xvi.) was received into Abraham's bosom, where he is said to be comforted. The heavens receive Christ, (Acts iii. 21,) and therefore the heavens receive the spirits that go to him, even the spirits of the just made perfect; (Heb. xii. 23;) that is, that are crowned with Christ in glory, and freed from the imperfections and evils of this life. And so that is plain, though some would pervert it, that "whether we wake or sleep, we may live together with him." (1 Thess. v. 10.) Not whether we wake to righteousness, or sleep in sin, for such sleepers live not with him; nor whether we wake by solicitude, or sleep in security; nor whether we naturally wake or sleep

only, but whether we live, or die, and so our bodies sleep in death, yet we live together with him. In a word, Christ will receive us into a participation of his joy and glory; into a joy as great as our nature shall be capable of, and more than we can now desire, and that the largest heart on earth can justly conceive of or comprehend. And because all this tells you but to the ear, stay yet but a little while, and experimental sight and feeling shall tell you what this receiving is, even when we receive the kingdom that cannot be moved, (Heb. xii. 28,) and when we receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. (1 Peter i. 9.)

Doct. VI. A dying Christian may confidently and comfortably commend his spirit to Christ, to be received by him.

Though he have formerly been a grievous sinner, though at the present he be frail and faulty, though he be weak in faith, and love, and duty, though his body by sickness be become unfit to serve his soul, and as to present sensibility, activity, or joy, he seem to be past the best, or to be nothing, though the tempter would aggravate his sins, and weakness, and dulness to his discouragement, yet he may, he must, with confidence recommend his spirit to Christ to be received by him.

O learn his doctrine, Christians, that you may use it in the hour of your last distress. The hour is near; the distress will be the greatest that ever you were in. As well as we seem now while we are hearing this, our turn is nigh. The midwife is not so necessary to the life of the child that receiveth it into the world, as Christ's receiving will be then to our everlasting life. To say over heartlessly these words, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," will be no more than a dead-hearted hypocrite may do. Such formal lip-service in life or at death doth profit nothing to salvation; now make such necessary preparation, that at death you may have well-grounded confidence that Jesus Christ will receive your spirits.

1. And first, let me bring this to the carnal, unprepared sinner.

Poor sinner, what thoughts hast thou of thy dying hour, and of thy departing soul! I wonder at thee what thoughts thou hast of them, that thou canst sin so boldly, and live so carelessly, and talk or hear of the life to come so senselessly as thou dost! Thou mightest well think I wronged thee, if I took thee to be such a brute as not to know that thou must die. Thy soul that brought thy body hither, that causeth it now to

hear and understand, that carrieth it up and down the world, must very shortly be required of thee, and must seek another habitation. What thoughts hast thou of thy departing soul? Will Christ receive it? Hast thou made sure of that? Or hast thou made it thy principal care and business to make sure! Oh, what doth intoxicate the brains of sensual, worldly men, that they drown themselves in the cares of this life, and ride and run for transitory riches, and live upon the smoke of honour and applause, and never soberly and seriously bethink them whether Christ will receive their departed souls! That they can fill their minds with other thoughts, and fill their mouths with other talk, and consume their time in other inconsiderable employments, and take no more care, and spend no more thoughts, and words, and time about the entertainment of their departing souls! When they are even ready to be gone, and stand, as it were, on tiptoe; when fevers, and consumptions, and many hundred diseases are all abroad so busily distributing their summonses, and when the gates of death have so many passengers crowding in, and souls are making such haste away, will you not consider what shall become of yours? Will you say that you hope well, and you must venture? If God had appointed you nothing to do to prepare for your safe passage and entertainment with Christ, you might then take up with such an answer; but it is a mad adventure to leave all undone that is necessary to your salvation, and then to say, you 'must put it to the venture.' If you die in an unrenewed and unjustified state, it is past all venture, for it is certain that Christ will not receive you. You may talk of hoping, but it is not a matter to be hoped for. Hope that God will make good every word of his promise, and spare not; but there is no more hope that Christ will receive the souls of any but of his members, than there is that he will prove a liar. He never promised to save any others, and that is not all, but he hath declared and professed frequently that he will not. And you are no believers if you will not believe him; and if you believe him, you must believe that the unbelievers, the unregenerate, the unholy, and the workèrs of iniquity, shall not be received into the kingdom of heaven, for he hath professed it. (John iii. 3, 36; Heb. xii. 14; Matt. vii. 23.)

If Christ would receive the souls of all, your venture then had reason for it; or if he had left it as a thing that depended only on his unrevealed will, and not on any preparations of our own, we might then have quit ourselves of the care, and cast

it all on him, as being his part, and none of ours. But it is not so, I hope I need not tell you that it is not so. Believe it, the question must be now resolved, and resolved by yourselves, whether Christ shall receive your departed souls, or cast them off as firebrands for hell. He hath made the law, and set down the terms already to which he will unalterably stand, and which we must trust to. It is now that you must labour to be accepted of him, "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Cor. v. 9, 10.) Oh, sirs, this is the reason of our importunity with you. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men," saith the apostle in the next words. (Verse 11.) We know that the sentence will be just, and that it is now in your own hands what judgment then shall pass upon you. And if just now your souls were passing hence, before you went from the place you sit in, would you think any care could be too great to make sure that they should go to happiness. O that you would consider how much it is your own work, and how much it resteth on yourselves what Christ shall then do with you! Then you will cry to him for mercy, 'O cast not away a miserable soul! Lord, receive me into thy kingdom!' But now he must entreat you to be saved, and to be the people that he may then receive, and you will not hear him. And if you will not hear him when he calleth on you, and beseecheth you to repent and to prepare, as sure as Christ is Christ, he will not hear you when you cry and call for mercy too late in your extremity. Read Prov. i., and you will see this is true. It is you that are to be entreated that Christ may receive you, for the unwillingness and backwardness is on your part. You are now poisoning your souls by sin, and when we cannot entreat you either to forbear, or to take the vomit of repentance, yet, when you are gasping and dying of your own wilful self-murder, you will then cry to Christ, and think he must receive you upon terms inconsistent with his justice, holiness, and truth. But flatter not yourselves, it will not be. This is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation. Refuse it now, and it is lost for ever. O sirs, if this were the hour, and you were presently to be received or refused, would you blame me to cry and call to you with all the fervour of my soul, if I knew that it were in your own choice whether you would go to heaven or hell? Why now it is in your choice. Life and death are

set before you. Christ will receive you if you will but come within the capacity of his acceptance. If you will not, there will then be no remedy. It is a doleful thing to observe how Satan doth bewitch poor sinners. That when time is gone, and the door of mercy is shut against them, they would think no cries too loud for mercy, and no importunity too great. For Christ telleth us, that then they will cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us." (Matt. xxv. 10, 11.) And yet now, when the door stands open, no arguments, no earnestness, no tears, can entreat them to enter in; then there is not the most senseless sinner of you all but would cry more strongly than Esau for the blessing, when his tears could find no place for repentance. (Heb. xii. 16, 17.) 'Lord, receive a miserable soul! O whither shall I go if thou receive me not! I must else be tormented in those scorching flames.' And yet now you will sell your birthright for one morsel; for a little of Judas's or Gehazi's gain, for the applause of worms, for the pleasing of your flesh that is turning to corruption, for the delights of gluttony, drunkenness, sports, or lust. There is not a man of you but would then pray more earnestly than those that you now deride for earnest praying, as if they whined, and were ridiculous. And yet now you will neither be serious in prayer, nor hear Christ or his messengers, when he maketh it his earnest request to you to come in to him that you may have life. (John v. 40.) Then you will knock when the door is shut, and cry, 'Lord, open to a miserable sinner,' and yet now you will not open unto him, when by his word and Spirit, his mercies and afflictions, he standeth at the door of your stubborn hearts, and calleth on you to repent and turn to God; now our entreaties cannot so much as bring you on your knees, or bring you to one hour's serious thoughts about the state of those souls that are so near their doom. Oh, sirs, for your souls' sake, lay by your obstinacy. Pity those souls that then you will beg of Christ to pity. Do not you damn them by your sloth and sin in the day of your visitation, and then cry in vain to Christ to save them when it is too late. Yet the door of grace is open, but how speedily will it be shut. One stroke of an apoplexy, a consumption, a fever, can quickly shut it, and then you may tear your hearts with crying, "Lord, open to us," and all in vain. O did you but see departed souls, as you see the corpse that is left behind! Did you see how they are treated at their removal from the flesh! How some are taken and others left; how some are welcomed to Christ, and others are ab-

horred, and turned over to the tormenter, and thrust out with implacable indignation and disdain, (Luke xiii. 28 ; Prov. i. 24, 26, 27,) sure you would enter into serious consideration this day, what it is that makes this difference, and why Christ so useth the one and the other, and what must be done now by the soul that would be received then. Alas ! men will do any thing but that which they should do ! Among the superstitious Papists the conceit of a deliverance from purgatory makes them bequeath their lands and moneys to priests and friars to pray for them when they are dead, and to have other men cry to Christ to receive them, and open to them, when time is past ; and yet now, in the accepted time, now when it is at your choice, and the door is open, men live as if they were past feeling, and cared not what became of them at the last, and would not be beholden to Christ to receive them, when the deceitful world hath cast them off.

And, now, beloved hearers all, I would make it my most earnest request to you, as one that knoweth we are all passing hence, and foreseeth the case of a departed soul, that you would now, without any more delay, prepare and make sure that you may be received into the everlasting habitations : and to this end, I shall more distinctly, though briefly, tell you, 1. What souls they are that Christ will receive, and what he will not ; and, consequently, what you must do to be received. 2. What considerations should stir you up to this preparation.

1. Nothing is more sure than that Christ will not receive, 1. Any unregenerate, unconverted soul, (John iii. 3, 5 ; Matt. xviii. 3,) that is, not renewed and sanctified by his Spirit. (Rom. viii. 9 ; Heb. xii. 14 ; Acts xxvi. 18.) They must have the new and heavenly nature that will ever come to heaven. Without this you are morally incapable of it. Heaven is the proper inheritance of saints. (Col. i. 12.) This heavenly nature and spirit is your earnest : if you have this you are sealed up unto salvation. (2 Cor. i. 22 ; Eph. i. 13, and iv. 30.)

2. Christ will receive none but those that make it now their work to lay up a treasure in heaven, rather than upon the earth, (Matt. vi. 20, 21,) and that seek it in the first place, (Matt. vi. 33,) and can be content to part with all to purchase it. (Matt. xiii. 44, 46 ; Luke xiv. 33, and xviii. 22.) An earthly-minded worldling is incapable of heaven in that condition. (Phil. iii. 17, 18 ; Luke xvi. 13.) You must take it for your portion, and set your hearts on it, if ever you will come thither. (Matt. vi. 21 ; Col. iii. 1—3.)

3. Christ will receive no soul at last, but such as sincerely received him as their Lord and Saviour now, and gave up themselves to him, and received his word, and yield obedience to it, and received his Spirit, and were cleansed by him from their iniquities. (John i. 11, 12; Luke xix. 27.) "That all they might be damned that believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. ii. 10, 12.) They are God's own words; be not offended at them, but believe and fear. "He hateth all the workers of iniquity," and will say to them, "Depart from me, I know you not." (Psalm v. 5; Matt. vii. 23.)

4. He will receive none but those that loved his servants, that bore his holy image, and received them according to their abilities. (Matt. xxv. 40, 41, &c.) And if he will say to those that did not entertain them, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," what will he say to those that hate and persecute them? (1 John iii. 14, and v. 2.)

5. He will receive none but those that live to him in the body, and use his gifts and talents to his service, and make it their chief business to serve, and honour, and please him in the world; (Matt. xxv. 21, 26; 2 Cor. v. 9, 15; Gal. vi. 7, 8;) and live not to the pleasing of the flesh, but have crucified it and its lusts. (Rom. viii. 1, 13; Gal. v. 24.)

Examine all these texts of Scripture, (for the matter is worthy of your study,) and you will see what souls they are that Christ will then receive, and what he will reject. You may see also what you must now be and do, if you will be then received. If you are not regenerate by the Spirit of God; (though you may be sacramentally regenerate in baptism;) if you are not justified by Christ; (though you may be absolved by a minister;) if you seek not heaven with higher estimation and resolutions than any felicity on earth, and take not God for your satisfying portion; (though you be never so religious in subserviency to a fleshly, worldly happiness;) if you receive not Christ as your only Saviour, and set him not in the throne and government of your hearts and lives; (though you may go with men for current Christians;) if you hate not sin, if you love not the holy image and children of God, and use them not accordingly; if you crucify not the flesh, and die not to the world, and deny not yourselves, and live not unto God, as making it your chief business and happiness to please him; I say, if this be not your case, as sure as you are men, if you died this hour in this condition, Christ will not own you, but turn you off with a

“Depart, ye cursed.” You may as well think of reconciling light and darkness, or persuade a man to live on the food of beasts, or the stomach to welcome deadly poison; as to think that Christ will receive an ungodly, earthly, guilty soul.

Deceive not yourselves, sinners. If God could have entertained the ungodly, and heaven could hold unholy souls, answer me, then, these two or three questions.

Quest. 1. What need Christ, then, to have shed his blood, or become a sacrifice for sin? If he could have received the ungodly, he might have done it upon cheaper rates. This feigneth him to have died to no purpose, but to bring the unsanctified to heaven, that might have been as well entertained there without his sufferings.

Quest. 2. To what use doth Christ send the Holy Ghost to sanctify his elect, or send his word and ministers to promote it, if they may come to heaven unsanctified?

Quest. 3. If the ungodly go to heaven, what use is hell for? There is no hell, if this be true. But you will quickly find that to be too good news to the ungodly to be true.

2. In Luke xvi., Christ teacheth us our duty by the parable of the steward, that asketh himself beforehand, what he shall do when he must be no longer steward, and contriveth it so that others may receive him when he is cast off; and he applieth it to us that must now so provide, that when we fail we may be received into the everlasting habitations. This is the work that we have all to mind. We always knew that this world would fail us. O, how uncertain is your tenure of the dwellings that you now possess. Are you provided, certainly provided whither to go, and who shall receive you when your stewardship is ended, and you must needs go hence? O think of these considerations that should move you presently to provide.

1. Your cottages of earth are ready to drop down, and it is a stormy time, there are many sicknesses abroad. One blast may quickly lay them in the dust, and then the flesh that had so much care, and was thought worthy to be preferred before the soul, must be laid and left to rot in darkness, to avoid the annoyance of the living; and when you may justly look every hour when you are turned out of these dwellings that you are in, is it not time to be provided of some other?

2. Consider, if Christ should not receive thy spirit how unspeakably deplorable thy case will be. I think there is no man in all this assembly so mad, that would take all the world now

to have his soul refused then by Christ, that would professedly make and subscribe such a bargain; and yet, alas, how many are they that will be hired for a smaller price, even for the pleasure of a sin, to do that which Christ himself hath told them will cause him to refuse them? O sirs, for aught you know, before to-morrow, or within this week, you may be put to know these things by trial, and your souls may be refused or received; and wo to you that ever you were men, if Christ receive you not.

Consider, 1. If Christ receive thee not, thou hast no friend left, then, to receive thee. Thy house, and land, and riches, and reputation, are all left behind; none of them will go with thee; or, if they did, they could afford thee no relief. Thy bosom friends, thy powerful defenders, are all left behind; or, if they go before thee, or with thee, they can do nothing there, that could do so much for thee here. No minister so holy, no friend so kind, no patron so powerful, that can give thee any entertainment, if Christ refuse to entertain thee. Look to the right hand or the left, there will be none to help thee, or care for thy forsaken soul. Then thou wilt find that one Christ had been a better friend than all the great ones upon earth.

2. If Christ, then, receive not thy departed soul, the devils will receive it. I am loth to speak so terrible a word, but that it must be spoken, if you will be awaked to prevent it. He that deceived thee will then plead conquest, and claim thee as his due, that he may torment thee. And if the devil say, 'This soul is mine,' and Christ do not rescue and justify thee, but say so too, no heart is able to conceive the horror that will then overwhelm thee. Doth not the reading of the sentence make thee tremble, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels?" (Matt. xxv. 41.) This is that dreadful delivering up to Satan, when the soul is excommunicated from the city of God. Oh, therefore, if thou be yet unreconciled to God, agree with him quickly, while thou art here in the way, lest he deliver thee to this terrible jailor and executioner, and thou be cast into the prison of the bottomless pit: "Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." (Matt. v. 25, 26.)

3. The greatness of the change will increase the amazement and misery of thy spirit, if Christ receive it not. To leave a world that thou wast acquainted with; a world that pleased thee, and entertained thee; a world where thou hadst long thy

business and delight, and where, wretched man, thou hadst made thy chief provision, and laid up thy treasure, this will be a sad part of the change. To enter into a world where thou art a stranger, and much worse, and see the company and the things that before thou never sawest, and to find things go there so contrary to thy expectation; to be turned, with Dives, from thy sumptuous dwelling, attendance, and fare, into a place of easeless torment, this will be a sadder part of thy change. Here the rich would have received thee, the poor would have served and flattered thee, thy friends would have comforted thee, thy playfellows would have been merry with thee. But there, alas! how the case is altered: all these have done; the table is withdrawn, the game is ended, the mirth is ceased, and now succeedeth, "Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and thou art tormented." (Luke xvi. 25.) Oh, dreadful change to those that made the world their home, and little dreamed, or did but dream, of such a day. Never to see this world again, unless by such reviews as will torment them: never to have sport or pleasure more; and for these to have such company, such thoughts, such work and usage, as God hath told us is in hell.

4. If Christ receive thee not, the burden of thy sins will overwhelm thee, and conscience will have no relief. Sin will not then appear in so harmless a shape as now: it will then seem a more odious or frightful thing. O, to remember these days of folly, of careless, sluggish, obstinate folly, of sottish negligence, and contempt of grace, will be a more tormenting thing than you will now believe. If such sermons and discourses as foretel it are troublesome to thee, what then will that sad experience be?

5. The wrath of an offended God will overwhelm thee. This will be thy hell. He that was so merciful in the time of mercy, will be most terrible and implacable when that time is past, and make men know that Christ and mercy are not neglected, refused, and abused at so cheap a rate, as they would needs imagine in the time of their deliration.

6. It will overwhelm the soul if Christ receive it not, to see that thou art entering upon eternity, even into a state of everlasting wo. Then thou wilt think, 'O whither am I going? What must I endure? and how long, how long? When shall my miseries have an end? and when shall I come back? and

how shall I ever be delivered?' O now what thoughts wilt thou have of the wonderful design of God in man's redemption! Now thou wilt better understand what a Saviour was worth, and how he should have been believed in, and how his gospel and his saving grace should have been entertained.

O that the Lord would now open your hearts to entertain it, that you may not then value it to your vexation, that would not value it now to your relief! Poor sinner, for the Lord's sake, and for thy soul's sake, I beg now of thee, as if it were on my knees, that thou wouldest cast away thy sinful cares and pleasures, and open thy heart, and now receive thy Saviour and his saving grace, as ever thou wouldest have him then receive thy trembling, departed soul! Turn to him now, that he may not turn thee from him then. Forsake him not for a flattering world, a little transitory, vain delight, as ever thou wouldest not then have thy departed soul forsaken by him! O delay not, man, but now, even now receive him, that thou mayest avoid so terrible a danger, and put so great a question presently out of doubt, and be able comfortably to say, 'I have received Christ, and he will receive me; if I die this night he will receive me,' then thou mayest sleep quietly, and live merrily, without any disparagement to thy reason. O yield to this request, sinner, of one that desireth thy salvation. If thou wert now departing, and I would not pray earnestly to Christ to receive thy soul, thou wouldest think I were uncharitable. Alas! it will be one of these days; and it is thee that I must entreat, and thyself must be prevailed with, or there is no hope. Christ sendeth me to thyself, and saith, that he is willing to receive thee, if now thou wilt receive him, and be sanctified and ruled by him. The matter stops at thy own regardless, wilful heart. What sayest thou? Wilt thou receive Christ now, or not? Wilt thou be a new creature, and live to God, by the principle of his Spirit, and the rule of his word, to please him here, that thou mayest live with him for ever? Wilt thou take up this resolution, and make this covenant with God this day? O give me a word of comfort, and say, thou art resolved, and wilt deliver up thyself to Christ. That which is my comfort now on thy behalf, will be ten thousand-fold more thy comfort then, when thou partakest of the benefit. And if thou grieve us now, by denying thy soul to Christ, it will be at last ten thousand-fold more thy grief. Refuse not our requests, and Christ's request now, as ever thou wouldest not have him refuse thee then, and thy requests. It is

men's turning away now from Christ that will cause Christ then to turn from them. "The turning away of the simple slayeth them, and they then eat but the fruit of their own way, and are filled with their own devices." (Prov. i. 31, 32.) "See then that ye now refuse not him that speaketh: for there is no escaping if you turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." (Heb. xii. 25.)

What would you say yourselves to the man that would not be dissuaded from setting his house on fire, and then would pray and cry importunately to God that he would keep it from being burnt? Or of the man that will not be dissuaded from taking poison, and then when it gripeth him will cry to God to save his life? Or of the man that will go to sea in a leaking, broken vessel, yea, himself will make those breaches in it that shall let the water in, and when it is sinking will cry to God to save him from being drowned? And will you do this about so great a matter as the everlasting state of your immortal souls? Will you now be worldlings, and sensualists, and ungodly, and undo yourselves, and then cry, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," at the last? What! receive an unholy spirit? Will you not knock till the door is shut? When he telleth you, that "it is not every one that will cry Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of his Father which is in heaven." (Matt. vii. 21.)

Lastly, consider with what unspeakable joy it will fill thy soul to be then received by the Lord. O what a joyful word will it be, when thou shalt hear, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you." If thou wilt not have this to be thy case, thou shalt see those received to the increase of thy grief whom thou refusedst here to imitate: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and those that from east, west, north, and south, shall sit there with them, and thou thrust out." (Luke xiii. 27—29.)

I have been long in this part of my application, having to do with souls that are ready to depart, and are in so sad an unprepared state, as is not to be thought on but with great compassion; I am next to come to that part of the application which I chiefly intended to those that are the heirs of life.

2. O you that are members of Jesus Christ, receive this cordial which may corroborate your hearts against all inordinate fears of death. Let it come when it will, you may boldly recom-

mend your departing souls into the hands of Christ. Let it be by a lingering disease, or by an acute, by a natural or a violent death, at the fulness of your age, or in the flower of your youth; death can but separate the soul from flesh, but not from Christ; whether you die poor or rich, at liberty or in prison, in your native country or a foreign land, whether you be buried in the earth or cast into the sea, death shall but send your souls to Christ. Though you die under the reproach and slanders of the world, and your names be cast out among men as evil-doers, yet Christ will take your spirits to himself. Though your souls depart in fear and trembling, though they want the sense of the love of God, and doubt of pardon and peace with him, yet Christ will receive them.

I know thou wilt be ready to say, that thou art unworthy, 'Will he receive so unworthy a soul as mine?' But if thou art a member of Christ thou art worthy in him to be accepted. Thou hast a worthiness of aptitude, and Christ hath a worthiness of merit.

The day that cometh upon such at unawares that have their hearts overcharged with surfeiting, drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and as a snare surpriseth the inhabitants of the earth, shall be the day of thy great deliverance; "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." (Luke xxi. 34—36.) "They that are accounted worthy to obtain that world can die no more; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God." (Luke xx. 35, 36.)

Object. 'O but my sins are great and many; and will Christ ever receive so ignorant, so earthly and impure a soul as mine?'

Answer. If he have freed thee from the reign of sin, by giving thee a will that would fain be fully delivered from it, and given thee a desire to be perfectly holy, he will finish the work that he hath begun; and will not bring thee defiled into heaven, but will wash thee in his blood, and separate all the remnant of corruption from thy soul, when he separateth thy soul from flesh; there needs no purgatory, but his blood and Spirit in the instant of death shall deliver thee, that he may present thee spotless to the Father.

O fear not then to trust thy soul with him that will receive it; and fear not death that can do thee no more harm. And when once thou hast overcome the fears of death, thou wilt be the more resolute in thy duty, and faithful to Christ, and above

the power of most temptations, and wilt not fear the face of man, when death is the worst that man can bring thee to. It is true, death is dreadful; but it is as true that the arms of Christ are joyful. It is an unpleasant thing to leave the bodies of our friends in the earth; but it is unspeakable pleasure to their souls to be received into the heavenly society by Christ.

And how confidently, quietly, and comfortably you may commend your departing spirits to be received by Christ, be informed by these considerations following.

1. Your spirits are Christ's own; and may you not trust him with his own? as they are his by the title of creation, "All souls are mine, saith the Lord;" (Ezek. xviii. 4;) so also by the title of redemption, "We are not our own, we are bought with a price." (1 Cor. vi. 19.)

Say therefore to him, 'Lord, I am thine much more than my own; receive thine own, take care of thine own. Thou drewest me to consent to thy gracious covenant, and I resigned myself and all I had to thee. And thou swarest to me, and I became thine, (Ezek. xvi. 8.) And I stand to the covenant that I made, though I have offended thee. I am sinful, but I am thine, and would not forsake thee, and change my Lord and Master for a world. O know thine own, and own my soul that hath owned thee, though it hath sinned against thee! Thy sheep know thy voice, and follow not a stranger; now know thy poor sheep, and leave them not to the devourer. Thy lambs have been preserved by thee among wolves in the world, preserve me now from the enemy of souls. I am thine, O save me, (Psalm cxix. 94,) and lose not that which is thine own!'

2. Consider that thou art his upon so dear a purchase, as that he is the more engaged to receive thee. Hath he bought thee by the price of his most precious blood, and will he cast thee off? Hath he come down on earth to seek and save thee, and will he now forsake thee? Hath he lived in flesh a life of poverty, and suffered reproach, and scorn, and buffetings, and been nailed to the cross, and put to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" And will he now forget his love, and sufferings, and himself forsake thee after this? Did he himself on the cross commend his spirit into his Father's hands, and will he not receive thy spirit when thou at death commendest it to him? He hath known himself what it is to have a human soul separated from the body, and the body buried in a grave, and there lamented by surviving friends. And why

did he this, but that he might be fit to receive and relieve thee in the like condition? O who would not be encouraged to encounter death, and lie down in a grave, that believeth that Christ did so before him, and considereth why he went that way, and what a conquest he had made!

I know an argument from the death of Christ will not prove his love to the souls of the ungodly so as to infer that he will receive them; but it will prove his reception of believers' souls: "He that spared not his own son, but gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32,) is an infallible argument as to believers, but not as to those that do reject him.

Say therefore to him, 'O my Lord! can it be that thou couldest come down in flesh, and be abused, and spit upon, and slandered, and crucified! That thou couldest bleed, and die, and be buried for me, and now be unwilling to receive me! That thou shouldest pay so dear for souls, and now refuse to entertain them! That thou shouldest die to save them from the devil, and now wilt leave them to his cruelty! That thou hast conquered him, and yet wilt suffer him at last to have the prey! To whom can a departing soul fly for refuge, and for entertainment, if not to thee that diedst for souls, and sufferedst thine to be separated from the flesh, that we might have all assurance of thy compassion unto ours? Thou didst openly declare upon the cross, that the reason of thy dying was to receive departed souls, when thou didst thus encourage the soul of a penitent malefactor, by telling him, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." O give the same encouragement or entertainment to this sinful soul that flieth unto thee, that trusteth in thy death and merits, and is coming to receive thy doom.'

3. Consider that Jesus Christ is full of love, and tender compassion to souls. What his tears over Lazarus compelled the Jews to say, "Behold how he loved him," (John xi. 36,) the same his incarnation, life, and death should much more stir us up to say, with greater admiration, 'Behold how he loved us.' The foregoing words, though the shortest verse in all the Bible, "Jesus wept," (verse 35,) are long enough to prove his love to Lazarus: and the Holy Ghost would not have the tears of Christ to be unknown to us, that his love may be the better known. But we have a far larger demonstration of his love; "He loved us, and gave himself for us." (Gal. ii. 20.) And by what gift could he better testify his love? "He loved us, and

washed us in his blood." (Rev. i. 5.) He loved us, as the Father loveth him. (John xv. 9.) And may we not comfortably go to him that loved us? Will love refuse us when we fly unto him?

Say then to Christ 'O thou that hast loved my soul, receive it! I commend it not unto an enemy. Can that love reject me, and cast me into hell, that so oft embraced me on earth, and hath declared itself by such ample testimonies!'

O had we but more love to Christ, we should be more sensible of his love to us, and then we should trust him, and love would make us hasten to him, and with confidence cast ourselves upon him.

4. Consider that it is the office of Christ to save souls, and to receive them, and therefore we may boldly recommend them to his hands. The Father sent him to be the Saviour of the world; (1 John iv. 14;) and he is effectively the Saviour of his body. (Eph. v. 23.) And may we not trust him in his undertaken office, that would trust a physician or any other in his office, if we judge him faithful? Yea, he is engaged by covenant to receive us: when we gave up ourselves to him, he also became ours; and we did it on this condition, that he should receive and save us. And it was the condition of his own undertaking; he drew the covenant himself and tendered it first to us, and assumed his own conditions, as he imposed ours.

Say then to him, 'My Lord, I expected but the performance of thy covenants, and the discharge of thine undertaken office: as thou hast caused me to believe in thee, and love and serve thee, and perform the conditions which thou laid'st on me, though with many sinful failings, which thou hast pardoned; so now let my soul, that hath trusted on thee, have the full experience of thy fidelity, and take me to thyself according to thy covenant. "O now remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused him to hope!" (Psalm cxix. 49.) How many precious promises hast thou left us, that we shall not be forsaken by thee, but that we shall be with thee where thou art, that we may behold thy glory! For this cause art thou the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. (Heb. ix. 15.) According to thy covenant, "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and

of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.) And when we have done thy will (notwithstanding our lamentable imperfections) we are to receive the promise. (Heb. x. 36.) O, now receive me into the kingdom which thou hast promised to them that love thee! (James i. 12.)

5. Consider how able Christ is to answer thine expectations; All power is given him in heaven and earth, (Matt. xxviii. 19,) and all things are given by the Father into his hands. (John xiii. 3.) All judgment is committed to him. (John v. 22.) It is fully in his power to receive and save thee; and Satan cannot touch thee but by his consent. Fear not, then; he is the first and last, that liveth, and was dead, and behold he liveth for evermore, amen: and hath the keys of hell and death. (Rev. i. 17, 18.)

Say then, if thou wilt, Lord, thou canst save this departing soul! Oh, say but the word, and I shall live! Lay but thy rebuke upon the destroyer, and he shall be restrained. When my Lord and dearest Saviour hath the keys, how can I be kept out of thy kingdom, or cast into the burning lake? Were it a matter of difficulty unto thee, my soul might fear lest heaven would not be opened to it; but thy love hath overcome the hinderances; and it is as easy to receive me, as to love me.

6. Consider how perfectly thy Saviour is acquainted with the place that thou art going to, and the company and employment which thou must there have; and, therefore, as there is nothing strange to him, so the ignorance and strangeness in thyself should therefore make thee fly to him, and trust to him, and recommend thy soul to him, and say, 'Lord, it would be terrible to my departing soul to go into a world that I never saw, and into a place so strange, and unto company so far above me; but that I know there is nothing strange to thee, and thou knowest it for me, and I may better trust thy knowledge than mine own. When I was a child I knew not mine own inheritance, nor what was necessary to the daily provisions for my life; but my parents knew it that cared for me. The eyes must see for all the body, and not every member see for itself. Oh, cause me as quietly and believingly to commit my soul to thee, to be possessed of the glory which thou seest and possessest, as if I had seen and possessed it myself, and let thy knowledge be my trust!

7. Consider that Christ hath provided a glorious receptacle for faithful souls, and it cannot be imagined that he will lose his

preparations, or be frustrate of his end. All that he did and suffered on earth was for this end. He therefore became the Captain of our salvation, and was made perfect through sufferings, that he might bring many sons to glory. (Heb. ii. 10.) He hath taken possession of our nature, and is himself interceding for us in the heavens. (Heb. vii. 25.) And for whom doth he provide this heavenly building, not made with hands, but for believers? If, therefore any inordinate fear surprise thee, remember what he hath said: "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me: in my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." (John xiv. 1—3.)

Say, therefore, 'Lord, when thou hadst made this lower narrow world, thou wouldest not leave it uninhabited: for man thou madest it, and man thou placedst in it. And when thou hast prepared that more capacious glorious world for thy redeemed flock, it cannot be that thou wilt shut them out. O, therefore, receive my fearful soul, and help me to obey thy own command.' (Luke xii. 32.) Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Oh, let me hear that joyful sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." (Matt. xxv. 34.)

8. Consider that Christ hath received thy soul unto grace, and therefore he will receive it unto glory. He hath quickened us who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past we walked, &c. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins and trespasses, quickened us together in Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Eph. ii. 1—6.) The state of grace is the kingdom of heaven, as well as the state of glory. (Matt. iii. 2, and x. 7, and xiii. 11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47.) By grace thou hast the heavenly birth and nature: we are first-born to trouble and sorrow in the world, but we are new-born to everlasting joy and pleasure. Grace maketh us heirs, and giveth us title, and therefore at death we shall have possession. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of

Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. (1 Pet. i. 3, 4.) The great work was done in the day of thy renovation; then thou wast entered into the household of God, and made a fellow-citizen with the saints, and receivedst the Spirit of adoption. (Eph. ii. 19; Gal. iv. 6.) He gave thee life eternal, when he gave the knowledge of himself, and of his Son. (John xvii. 3.) And will he now take from thee the kingdom which he hath given thee? Thou wast once his enemy, and he hath received thee already into his favour, and reconciled thee to himself, and will he not then receive thee to his glory? (Rom. v. 8—11.) “God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For, if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.” And when we have peace with God, being justified by faith, (Rom. v. 1,) why should we doubt whether he will receive us? The great impediments and cause of fear are now removed, unpardoned sin is taken away, our debt is discharged. We have a sufficient answer against all that can be alleged to the prejudice of our souls: yea, it is Christ himself that answereth for us; it is he that justifieth, who then shall condemn us? Will he not justify those at last whom he hath here justified? Or will he justify us, and yet not receive us? That were both to justify and condemn us.

Depart, then, in peace, O fearful soul; thou fallest into his hands that hath justified thee by his blood; will he deny thee the inheritance of which he himself hath made thee heir, yea, a joint-heir with himself? (Rom. viii. 17.) Will he deprive thee of thy birthright, who himself begot thee of the incorruptible seed? If he would not have received thee to glory, he would not have drawn thee to himself, and have blotted out thine iniquities, and received thee by reconciling grace. Many a time he hath received the secret petitions, complaints, and groans which thou hast poured out before him, and hath given thee access with boldness to his throne of grace, when thou couldest not have access to man; and he hath taken thee up, when man hath cast thee off. Surely he that received thee so

readily in thy distress, will not now at last repent him of his love. As Manoah's wife said, "If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things." (Judges xiii. 23.) He hath received thee into his church, and entertained thee with the delights and fatness of his house, (Psalm xxxvi. 8,) and bid thee welcome to his table, and feasted thee with his body and his blood, and communicated in these his quickening Spirit; and will he then disown thee, and refuse thee, when thou drawest nearer him, and art cast upon him for thy final doom? After so many receptions in the way of grace, dost thou yet doubt of his receiving thee?

9. Consider how nearly thou art related to him in this state of grace: thou art his child, and hath he not the bowels of a father? When thou didst ask bread, he was not used to give thee a stone; and will he give thee hell, when thou askest but the entertainment in heaven which he hath promised thee? Thou art his friend, (John xv. 14, 15,) and will he not receive his friends? Thou art his spouse, betrothed to him the very day when thou consentedst to his covenant; and where then shouldst thou live but with him? Thou art a member of his body, of his flesh and bone; (Eph. v. 30;) and no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: (verse 29:) as he came down in flesh to be a suitor to thee, so he caused thee to let go all for him; and will he now forsake thee? Suspect it not, but quietly resign thy soul into his hands, and say, 'Lord, take this soul that pleads relation to thee; it is the voice of thy child that crieth to thee: the name of a father, which thou hast assumed towards me, is my encouragement. When thou didst call us out of the world unto thee, thou saidst, I will receive you, and I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters. (2 Cor. vi. 17, 18.) O our Father, which art in heaven, shut not out thy children, the children of thy love and promise. The compassion that thou hast put into man engageth him to relieve a neighbour, yea, an enemy, much more to entertain a child; our children and our friends dare trust themselves upon our kindness and fidelity, and fear not that we will reject them in their distress, or destroy them, though they do sometimes offend us; our kindness is cruelty in comparison of thine; our love deserveth not the name of love in comparison of thy most precious love. Thine is the love of God, who is love itself; (1 John iv:

8, 16;) and who is the God of love: (2 Cor. i. 13, 11:) and is answerable to thine omnipotency, omniscience, and other attributes? But ours is the love of frail and finite sinful men. As we may pray to thee to forgive us our trespasses, for we also forgive those that have trespassed against us; so we may pray to thee to receive us, though we have offended thee; for even we receive those that have offended us. Hath thy love unto thine own its breadth, and length, and height, and depth; and is it such as passeth knowledge? (Eph. iii. 17—19.) And yet canst thou exclude thine own, and shut them out that cry unto thee? Can that love, which washed me and took me home when I lay wallowing in my blood, reject me, when it hath so far recovered me? Can that love now thrust me out of heaven that lately fetched me from the gates of hell, and placed me among thy saints? “Whom thou lovest, thou lovest to the end.” (John xiii. 1.) “Thou art not as man, that thou shouldest repent.” (Num. xxiii. 19.) “With thee is no variableness, or shadow of turning.” (James i. 17.) If yesterday thou so freely lovedst me as to adopt me for thy child, thou wilt not to day refuse me, and cast me into hell. Receive, Lord Jesus, a member of thy body; a weak one, indeed, but yet a member, and needeth the more thy tenderness and compassion, who hast taught us not to cast out our infants, because they are small and weak. “We have forsaken all to cleave unto thee, that we might with thee be one flesh and spirit.” (Eph. v. 31; 1 Cor. vi. 17.) O cut not off and cast not out thy members that are engrafted into thee. “Thou hast dwelt in me here by faith, and shall I not now dwell with thee?” (Eph. iii. 17.) Thou hast prayed to the Father, that we may be one in thee, and may be with thee to behold thy glory; (John xvii. 20—24;) and wilt thou deny to receive me to that glory, who pray but for what thou hast prayed to thy Father? Death maketh no separation between thee and thy members: it dissolveth not the union of souls with thee, though it separate them from the flesh; and shall a part of thyself be rejected and condemned?’

10. Consider that Christ hath sealed thee up unto salvation and given thee the earnest of his Spirit, and therefore will certainly receive thee. (2 Cor. i. 22, and v. 5; Eph. i. 13, 14, and iv. 30.) Say, therefore, to him, ‘Behold, Lord, thy mark, thy seal, thine earnest; flesh and blood did not illuminate and renew me; thy Spirit which thou hast given me is my witness

that I am thine." (Rom. viii. 16.) And wilt thou disown and refuse the soul that thou hast sealed?'

11. Consider that he that hath given thee a heavenly mind, will certainly receive thee into heaven. If thy treasure were not there, thy heart would never have been there. (Matt. vi. 21.) Thy weak desires do show what he intends thee for; he kindled not those desires in vain. Thy love to him, (though too small) is a certain proof that he intends not to reject thee; it cannot be that God can damn, or Christ refuse a soul that doth sincerely love him: he that loveth, "dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John iv. 15, 16.) And shall he not then dwell with God for ever? God fitteth the nature of every creature to its use, and agreeable to the elements in which they dwell: and, therefore, when he gave thee the heavenly nature, (though but in weak beginnings) it showed his will to make thee an inhabitant of heaven.

— Say, therefore, to him, 'O Lord, I had never loved thee if thou hadst not begun and loved me first; I had not minded thee, or desired after thee, if thou hadst not kindled these desires; it cannot be that thy grace itself should be a deceit and misery, and intended but to tantalize us; and that thou hadst set thy servants' souls on longing for that which thou wilt never give them. Thou wouldest not have given me the wedding garment, when thou didst invite me, if thou hadst meant to keep me out: even the grain of mustard seed which thou sowedst in my heart, was a kind of promise of the happiness to which it tendeth. Indeed I have loved thee so little, that I am ashamed of myself, and confess my cold indifferency deserves thy wrath; but that I love thee, and desire thee, is thy gift, which signifieth the higher satisfying gift; though I am cold and dull, my eyes are towards thee; it is thee that I mean when I can but groan; it is long since I have bid this world away; it shall not be my home or portion; O perfect what thou hast begun; this is not the time or place of my perfection; and though my life be now hid with thee in God, when thou appearest, let me appear with thee in glory. (Col. iii. 4.) And, in the meantime, let this soul enjoy its part that appeareth before thee; give me what thou hast caused me to love, and then I shall more perfectly love thee, when my thirst is satisfied, and the water which thou hast given me shall spring up to everlasting life. (John iv. 14.)'

12. Consider also, that he that hath engaged thee to seek

first his kingdom, is engaged to give it them that do sincerely seek it. He called thee off the pursuit of vanity when thou wast following the pleasures and profits of the world; and he called thee to labour for the food that perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life. (John vi. 27.) Since then it hath been thy care and business, (notwithstanding all thine imperfections,) to seek and serve him, to please and honour him, and so to run that thou mightest obtain.

Say, then, 'Though my sins deserve thy wrath, and nothing that I have done deserve thy favour, yet godliness hath thy promise of the life to come; and thou hast said, "That he that seeks shall find." (Matt. vii. 7, 8.) O now let me find the kingdom that I have sought, and sought by thy encouragement and help; it cannot be that any should have cause to repent of serving thee, or suffer disappointment that trusts upon thee. My labour for the world was lost and vain, but thou didst engage me to be steadfast and abound in thy work; on this account that my labour should not be in vain. (1 Cor. xv. 58.) Now give the full and final answer unto all my prayers: now that I have done the fight, and finished my course, let me find the crown of righteousness which thy mercy hath laid up. (2 Tim. iv. 8.) O crown thy graces, and with thy greatest mercies recompense and perfect thy preparatory mercies, and let me be received to thy glory, who have been guided by thy counsel. (Psalm lxxiii. 24.)'

13. Consider that Christ hath already received millions of souls, and never was unfaithful unto any. There are now with him, the spirits of the just made perfect, that in this life were imperfect as well as you. Why, then, should you not comfortably trust him with your souls? and say, 'Lord, thou art the common salvation and refuge of thy saints; both strong and weak, even all that are given thee by the Father shall come to thee, and those that come thou wilt in nowise cast out. Thousands have been entertained by thee that were unworthy in themselves, as well as I. It is few of thy members that are now on earth, in comparison of those that are with thee in heaven. Admit me, Lord, into the new Jerusalem; thou wilt have thy house to be filled; O, take my spirit into the number of those blessed ones that shall come from east, west, north, and south, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom, that we may, together with eternal joys, give thanks and praise to thee that hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.'

14. Consider that it is the will of the Father himself that we should be glorified. He, therefore, gave us to his Son, and gave his Son for us, to be our Saviour, "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." All our salvation is the product of his love. (John iii. 16, 17; Eph. ii. 4; John vi. 37, and xvi. 26, 27.) I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, &c. (John xiv.) He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Say, therefore, with our dying Lord, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; by thy son who is the way, the truth, and the life, I come to thee." (John xiv. 6.) "Fulness of joy is in thy presence, and everlasting pleasures at thy right hand." (Psalm xvi. 11.) Thy love redeemed me, renewed and preserved me; O! now receive me to the fulness of thy love. This was thy will in sending thy Son, that of all that thou gavest him he should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. O let not now this soul be lost that is passing to thee through the straits of death. I had never come unto thy Son if thou hadst not drawn me, and if I had not heard and learned of thee. (John vi. 44, 45.) I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast revealed to me, a babe, an idiot, the blessed mysteries of thy kingdom. (Luke x. 21; Acts iv. 13.) O, now, as the veil of flesh must be withdrawn, and my soul be parted from this body, withdraw the veil of thy displeasure, and show thy servant the glory of thy presence: that he that hath seen thee but as in a glass, may see thee now with open face; and when my earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, let me inhabit thy building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2 Cor. v. 1.)

15. Lastly, consider that God hath designed the everlasting glory of his name, and the pleasing of his blessed will, in our salvation; and the Son must triumph in the perfection of his conquest of sin and Satan, and in the perfecting of our redemption; and, doubtless, he will not lose his Father's glory and his own. Say, then, with confidence, 'I resign my soul to thee, O Lord, who hast called and chosen me, that thou mightest make known the riches of thy glory on me, as a vessel of mercy prepared unto glory. (Rom. ix. 23.) Thou hast predestinated me to the adoption of thy child by Christ unto thyself, to the praise of the glory of thy grace, wherein thou hast made me accepted in thy beloved. (Eph. i. 5, 6, 11, 12.) Re-

ceive me now to the glory which thou hast prepared for us. (Matt. xxv. 34.) The hour is at hand, Lord, glorify thy poor adopted child, that he may for ever glorify thee. (John xvii. 1.) It is thy promise to glorify those whom thou dost justify. (Rom. viii. 30.) As "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ; (Rom. viii. 1;) so now let him present me faultless before the presence of the glory with exceeding joy; and to thee the only wise God our Saviour, be the glory, majesty, dominion, and power for evermore. Amen." (Jude ver. 23, 34.)'

What now remaineth, but that we all set ourselves to learn this sweet and necessary task, that we may joyfully perform it in the hour of our extremity, even to recommend our departing souls to Christ, with confidence that he will receive them. It is a lesson not easy to be learned; for faith is weak, and doubts and fears will easily arise, and nature will be loth to think of dying; and we that have so much offended Christ, and lived so strangely to him, and been entangled in too much familiarity with the world, shall be apt to shrink when we should joyfully trust him with our departing souls. Oh! therefore, now set yourselves to overcome these difficulties in time. You know we are all ready to depart; it is time this last important work were thoroughly learned, that our death may be both safe and comfortable.

There are divers other uses of this doctrine, that I should have urged upon you, had there been time. As, 1. If Christ will receive your departing souls, then fear not death, but long for this heavenly entertainment.

2. Then do not sin for fear of them that can but kill the body, and send the soul to Christ.

3. Then think not the righteous unhappy because they are cast off by the world; neither be too much troubled at it yourselves when it comes to be your case; but remember that Christ will not forsake you, and that none can hinder him from the receiving of your souls. No malice nor slanders can follow you so far as by defamation to make your justifier condemn you.

4. If you may trust him with your souls, then trust him with your friends, your children that you must leave behind, with all your concerns and affairs: and trust him with his gospel and his church; for they are all his own, and he will prevail to the accomplishment of his blessed pleasure.

But, 5. I shall only add that use which the sad occasion of our meeting doth bespeak. What cause have we now to mix

our sorrows for our deceased friend, with the joys of faith for her felicity? We have left the body to the earth, and that is our lawful sorrow, for it is the fruit of sin; but her spirit is received by Jesus Christ, and that must be our joy, if we will behave ourselves as true believers. If we can suffer with her, should we not rejoice also with her? And if the joy be far greater to the soul with Christ, than the ruined state of the body can be lamentable, it is but reason that our joy should be greater for her joy, than our sorrow for the dissolution of the flesh. We that should not much lament the passage of a friend beyond the seas, if it were to be advanced to a kingdom, should less lament the passage of a soul to Christ, if it were not for the remnant of our woful unbelief.

She is arrived at the everlasting rest, where the burden of corruption, the contradictions of the flesh, the molestations of the tempter, the troubles of the world, and the injuries of malicious men, are all kept out, and shall never more disturb her peace. She hath left us in these storms, who have more cause to weep for ourselves, and for our children, that have yet so much to do and suffer, and so many dangers to pass through, than for the souls that are at rest with Christ. We are capable of no higher hopes than to attain that state of blessedness which her soul possesseth; and shall we make that the matter of our lamentation as to her, which we make the matter of our hopes as to ourselves? Do we labour earnestly to come thither, and yet lament that she is there? You will say, it is not because she is clothed upon with the house from heaven, but that she is unclothed of the flesh: but is there any other passage than death into immortality? Must we not be unclothed before the garments of glory can be put on? She bemoaneth not her own dissolved body; the glorified soul can easily bear the corruption of the flesh; and if you saw but what the soul enjoyeth, you would be like-minded, and be moderate in your griefs. Love not yourselves so as to be unjust and unmerciful in your desires to your friends! Let Satan desire to keep them out of heaven, but do not you desire it. You may desire your own good, but not so as to deprive your friends of theirs; yea, of a greater good, that you may have a lesser by it. And if it be their company that you desire, in reason you should be glad that they are gone to dwell where you must dwell for ever, and therefore may for ever have their company; had they stayed on earth you would have had their company but a little while, because you must make so

short a stay yourselves. Let them therefore begin their journey before you, and grudge not that they are first at home, as long as you expect to find them there. In the mean time he that called them from you hath not left you comfortless; he is with you himself, who is better than a mother, or than ten thousand friends; when grief or negligence hindereth you from observing him, yet he is with you, and holdeth you up, and tenderly provideth for you; though turbulent passions injuriously question all his love, and cause you to give him unmannerly and unthankful words, yet still he beareth with you, and forgiveth all, and doth not forsake you for your peevishness and weakness, because you are his children, and he knoweth that you mean not to forsake him: rebuke your passions, and calm your minds; reclaim your thoughts, and cast away the bitterness of suspicious, quarrelsome unbelief, and then you may perceive the presence of your dearest friend and Lord, who is enough for you, though you had no other friend. Without him all the friends on earth would be but silly comforters, and leave you as at the gates of hell; without him all the angels and saints in heaven would never make it a heaven to you. Grieve not too much that one of your candles is put out while you have the sun; or if indeed it be not day with any of you, or the sun be clouded or eclipsed, let that rather be the matter of your grief; find out the cause, and presently submit and seek reconciliation: or if you are deprived of this light, because you are yet asleep in sin, hearken to his call, and rub your eyes: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. (Eph. v. 14.)" "Knowing that it is now high time to awake out of sleep, our salvation being nearer than when we first believed; the night is far spent, the day of eternal light is at hand; cast off therefore the works of darkness, and put on all the armour of light; walk honestly and decently as in the day." (Rom. xiii. 11—14.) And whatever you do, make sure of the Friend that never dieth, and never shall be separated from you, and when you die will certainly receive the souls which you commend unto him.

And here, though contrary to my custom, I shall make some more particular mention of our deceased friend on several accounts. 1. In prosecution of this use that now we are upon, that you may see in the evidences of her happiness how little cause you have to indulge extraordinary grief on her account, and how much cause to moderate your sense of our loss with the sense of her felicity. 2. That you may have the benefit of

her example for your imitation, especially her children that are bound to observe the holy actions as well as instructions of a mother. 3. For the honour of Christ, and his grace, and his servant : for as God hath promised to honour those that honour him, (1 Sam. ii. 30,) and Christ hath said, " If any man serve me, him will my Father honour, (John xii. 26.) so I know Christ will not take it ill to be honoured in his members, and to have his ministers subserve him in so excellent a work : it is a very considerable part of the love or hatred, honour or dishonour, that Christ hath in the world, which he receiveth as he appeareth in his followers. He that will not see a cup of cold water given to one of them go unrewarded, and will tell those at the last day that did or did not visit and relieve them, that they did or did it not to him, will now expect it from me as my duty to give him the honour of his graces in his deceased servant, and I doubt not will accordingly accept it, when it is no other indeed than his own honour that is my end, and nothing but the word of truth and soberness shall be the means.

And here I shall make so great a transition as shall retain my discourse in the narrow compass of the time in which she lived near me, and under my care, and in my familiar acquaintance, omitting all the rest of her life, that none may say I speak but by hearsay of things which I am uncertain of ; and I will confine it also to those special gifts and graces in which she was eminent, that I may not take you up with a description of a Christian as such, and tell you only of that good which she held but in common with all other Christians. And if any thing that I shall say were unknown to any reader that knew her, let them know that it is because they knew her but distantly, imperfectly, or by reports ; and that my advantage of near acquaintance did give me a just assurance of what I say.

The graces which I discerned to be eminent in her, were these. 1. She was eminent in her contempt of the pride, and pomp, and pleasure, and vanity of the world ; and in her great averseness to all these she had an honest impatience of the life which is common among the rich and vain-glorious in the world : voluptuousness and sensuality, excess of drinking, cards and dice, she could not endure, whatever names of good house-keeping or seemly deportment they borrowed for a mask. In her apparel she went below the garb of others of her rank ; indeed in such plainness as did not notify her degree ; but yet in such a grave and decent habit as notified her sobriety and humility,

She was a stranger to pastimes, and no companion for time-wasters, as knowing that persons so near eternity, that have so short a life, and so great a work, have no time to spare. Accordingly, in her latter days she did, as those that grow wise by experience of the vanity of the world, retire from it, and cast it off before it cast off her : she betook herself to the society of a people that were low in the world, of humble, serious, upright lives, though such as had been wholly strangers to her ; and among these poor inferior strangers she lived in contentment and quietness ; desiring rather to converse with those that would help her to redeem the time, in prayer and edifying conference, than with those that would grieve her by consuming it on their lusts.

2. She was very prudent in her converse and affairs, (allowing for the passion of her sex and age,) and so escaped much of the inconveniences that else in so great and manifold businesses would have overwhelmed her : as “ a good man will guide his affairs with discretion,” (Psalm cxii. 5,) so “ discretion will preserve him, and understanding will keep him, to deliver him from the way of the evil man, who leaveth the paths of uprightness to walk in the way of darkness.” (Prov. ii. 11—13.)

3. She was seriously religious, without partiality, or any taint of siding or faction, or holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ in respect of persons ; I never heard her speak against men, or for men, as they differed in some small and tolerable things ; she impartially heard any minister that was able, and godly, and sound in the main, and could bear with the weaknesses of ministers when they were faithful ; instead of owning the names or opinions of prelatical, presbyterian, independent, or such like, she took up with the name of a Christian, and loved a Christian as a Christian, without much respect to such different tolerable opinions. Instead of troubling herself with needless scruples, and making up a religion of opinions and singularities, she studied faith and godliness, and lived upon the common certain truths, and well known duties, which have been the old and beaten way, by which the universal church of Christ hath gone to heaven in former ages.

4. She was very impartial in her judgment about particular cases, being the same in judging of the case of a child and a stranger ; and no interest of children, or other relations, could make her swerve from an equal judgment.

5. She very much preferred the spiritual welfare of her children before their temporal ; looking on the former as the true

felicity, and on the latter without it but as a pleasant, voluntary misery.

6. Since I was acquainted with her I always found her very ready to good works, according to her power. And when she hath seen a poor man come to me, that she conjectured solicited me for relief, she hath reprehended me for keeping the case to myself, and not inviting her to contribute; and I could never discern that she thought any thing so well bestowed as that which relieved the necessities of the poor that were honest and industrious.

7. She had the wonderful mercy of a man-like, Christian, patient spirit, under all afflictions that did befall her, and under the multitude of troublesome businesses, that would have even distracted an impatient mind. Though sudden anger was the sin that she much confessed herself, and therefore though she wanted patience, yet I have wondered to see her bear up with the same alacrity and quietness, when Job's messengers have brought her the tidings that would have overwhelmed an impatient soul. When law-suits and the great afflictions of her children have assaulted her like successive waves, which I feared would have borne her into the deep, if not devoured all her peace, she sustained all as if no great considerable change had been made against her, having the same God, and the same Christ, and promises, and hope, from which she fetched such real comfort and support as showed a real, serious faith.

8. She was always apt to put a good interpretation upon God's providences; like a right believer, that having the spirit of adoption, perceiveth fatherly love in all, she would not easily be persuaded that God meant her any harm; she was not apt to hearken to the enemy that accuseth God and his ways to man, as he accuseth man and his actions to God; she was none of those that are suspicious of God, and are still concluding death and ruin from all that he doth to them, and are gathering wrath from misinterpreted expressions of his love; who weep because of the smoke before they can be warmed by the fire. 'Yet God is good to Israel; and it shall go well with them that fear before him,' (Psalm lxxiii. 1; Eccles. viii. 12, 13,) were her conclusions from the sharpest providences; she expected the morning in the darkest night, and judged not of the end by the beginning; but was always confident if she could but entitle God in the case that the issue would be good. She was not a mur-

murer against God, nor one that contended with her Maker ; nor one that created calamity to herself by a self-troubling, unquiet mind ; she patiently bore what God laid upon her, and made it not heavier by the additions of uncomfortable prognostics, and misgiving or repining thoughts. She had a great confidence in God, that he was doing good to her and her's in all ; and where at present she saw any matter of grief, she much supported her soul with a belief that God would remove and overcome it in due time.

9. She was not troubled, that ever I discerned, with doubtings about her interest in Christ, and about her own justification and salvation ; but whether she reached to assurance or not, she had confident apprehensions of the love of God, and quietly reposed her soul upon his grace. Yet not secure through presumption or self-esteem ; but comforting herself in the Lord her God ; by this means she spent those hours in a cheerful performance of her duty, which many spend in fruitless self-vexation for the failings of their duty, or in mere inquiries whether they have grace or not, and others spend in wrangling, perplexed controversies about the manner or circumstances of duty : and I believe that she had more comfort from God by way of reward upon her sincere obedience, while she referred her soul to him, and rested on him, than many have that more anxiously perplexed themselves about the discerning of their holiness, when they should be studying to be more holy, that it might discover itself. And by this means she was fit for praises and thanksgiving, and spent not her life in lamentations and complaints, and made not religion seem terrible to the ignorant, that judge of it by the faces and carriage of professors. She did not represent it to the world as a morose and melancholy temper, but as the rational creature's cheerful obedience to his Maker, actuated by the sense of the wonderful love that is manifested in the Redeemer, and by the hopes of the purchased and promised felicity in the blessed sight and fruition of God. And I conjecture that her forementioned disposition to think well of God, and of his providences, together with her long and manifold experience, (the great advantage of ancient, tried Christians,) did much conduce to free her from doubtings and disquieting fears about her own sincerity and salvation ; and I confess, if her life had not been answerable to her peace and confidence, I should not have thought the better, but the worse of her condition ; no-

thing being more lamentable than to make haste to hell, through a wilful confidence that the danger is past, and that they are in the way to heaven as well as the most sanctified.

10. Lastly, I esteemed it the height of her attainment that she never discovered any inordinate fears of death, but a cheerful readiness, willingness, and desire, to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. This was her constant temper both in health and sickness, as far as I was able to observe. She would be frequently expressing how little reason she had to be desirous of longer life, and how much reason to be willing to depart. Divers times in dangerous sicknesses I have been with her, and never discerned any considerable averseness, dejectedness, or fear. Many a time I have thought how great a mercy I should esteem it if I had attained that measure of fearless willingness to lay down this flesh, as she attained. Many a one that can make light of wants, or threats, or scorns, or any ordinary troubles, cannot submit so quietly and willingly to death. Many a one that can go through the labours of religion, and contemn opposition, and easily give all they have to the poor, and bear imprisonments, banishment, or contempt, can never overcome the fears of death. So far, even the father of lies spake truth; "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life." (Job ii. 4.) I took it, therefore, for a high attainment and extraordinary mercy to our deceased friend, that the King of Terrors was not terrible to her. Though I doubt not but somewhat of averseness and fear is so radicated in nature's self-preserving principle, as that it is almost inseparable, yet in her I never discerned any troublesome appearances of it. When I first came to her in the beginning of her last sickness, she suddenly passed the sentence of death upon herself, without any show of fear or trouble, when to us the disease appeared not to be great. But when the disease increased, her pains were so little, and the effect of the fever was so much in her head, that, after this, she seemed not to esteem it mortal, being not sensible of her case and danger: and so, as she lived without the fears of death, she seemed to us to die without them. God, by the nature of her disease, removing death as out of her sight, when she came to that weakness, in which else the encounter was like to have been sharper than ever it was before. And thus, in one of the weaker sex, God hath showed us that it is possible to live in holy confidence, and peace, and quietness of mind, without distressing griefs or fears, even in the

midst of a troublesome world, and of vexatious businesses, and with the afflictions of her dearest relations almost continually before her : and that our quiet or disquiet, our peace or trouble, dependeth more on our inward strength and temper than upon our outward state, occasions, or provocations : and that it is more in our hands than of any or all our friends and enemies, whether we shall have a comfortable or uncomfortable life.

What remaineth now, but that all we that survive, especially you that are her children, do follow her as she followed Christ? Though the word of God be your sufficient rule, and the example of Christ be your perfect pattern, yet as the instructions, so the example of a parent must be a weighty motive to quicken and engage you to your duty ; and will else be a great aggravation of your sin. A holy child, of unholy parents, doth no more than his necessary duty ; because whatever parents are, he hath an holy God : but an unholy child of holy parents is inexcusable in sin, and deplorably miserable, as forsaking the doctrine and pattern both of their Creator and their progenitors, whom nature engageth them to observe ; and it will be an aggravation of their deserved misery to have their parents witness against them, that they taught them, and they would not learn ; and went before them in a holy life, but they would not follow them. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother ; for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck." (Prov. i. 8.) Read and consider Prov. xxx. 17, and xv. 20, and xxiii. 22, 25. Sins against parents have a special curse affixed to them in this life, (as the case of Ham showeth ; and the due observance and honouring of parents hath a special promise of temporal blessings, as the fifth commandment showeth. "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for it is right : honour thy father and thy mother," (which is the first commandment with promise,) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." (Eph. vi. 1—3.) The histories of all ages are so full of the instances of God's judgments, in this life, upon five sorts of sinners, as may do much to convince an atheist of the government and special providence of God, that is, upon persecutors, murderers, sacrilegers, false witnesses (especially by perjury), and abusers and dishonourers of parents. And the great honour that is due to parents when they are dead, is to give just honour to their names, and to obey their precepts, and imitate their good examples. It is the high commendation of the Rechabites,

that they strictly kept the precepts of their father, even in a thing indifferent, a mode of living ; not to drink wine, or build houses, but dwell in tents : and God annexeth this notable blessing, “ Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you : Therefore thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel ; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.” (Jer. xxxvi. 6, 7, 18, 19.) But, especially in the great duties of religion, where parents do but deliver the mind of God, and use their authority to procure obedience to divine authority ; and where the matter itself is necessary to our salvation, the obligation to obedience and imitation is most indispensable ; and disobedience is an aggravated iniquity, and the notorious brand of infelicity, and prognostic of ensuing wo ; the ungodly children of godly parents being the most deplorable, unhappy, unexcusable persons in the world (if they hold on).

There is yet another doctrine that I should speak to.

Doct. 7. Prayer in general, and this prayer in particular, that Christ will receive our departing souls, is a most suitable conclusion of all the action of a Christian’s life.

Prayer is the breath of a Christian’s life : it is his work and highest converse, and therefore fittest to be the concluding action of his life, that it may reach the end at which he aimed. We have need of prayer all our lives, because we have need of God, and need of his manifold and continued grace. But in our last extremity we have a special need. Though sloth is apt to seize upon us, while prosperity hindereth the sense of our necessities, and health persuadeth us that time is not near its journey’s end, yet it is high time to pray with doubled fervour and importunity when we see that we are near our last. When we find that we have no more time to pray, but must now speak our last for our immortal souls, and must at once say all that we have to say, and shall never have a hearing more. O, then, to be unable to pray, or to be faithless, and heartless, and hopeless, in our prayers, would be a calamity beyond expression.

Yet I know, for ordinary observation tells it us, that many truly gracious persons may accidentally be undisposed and disabled to pray when they are near to death. If the disease be such as doth disturb the brain, or take them up with violence of pain, or overwhelm the mind by perturbation of the passions, or

abuse the imagination, or notably waste and debilitate the spirits, it cannot be expected that a body thus disabled should serve the soul in this or any other duty. But still the praying habit doth remain, though a distempered body do forbid the exercise. The habitual desires of the soul are there; and it is those that are the soul of prayer.

But this should move us to pray while we have time, and while our bodies have strength, and our spirits have vigour and alacrity to serve us, seeing we are so uncertain of bodily disposition and capacity so near our end. O pray, and pray with all your hearts, before any fever or deliration overthrow your understandings or your memories, before your thoughts are all commanded to attend your pains, and before your decayed spirits fail you, and deny their necessary service to your suits, and before the apprehensions of your speedy approach to the presence of the most holy God, and your entrance upon an endless state, do amaze, confound, and overwhelm your souls with fear and perturbation. O Christians! what folly, what sin and shame is it to us, that now while we have time to pray, and leave to pray, and helps to pray, and have no such disturbing hinderances, we should yet want hearts, and have no mind, nor life and fervour for so great a work. O, pray now, lest you are unable to pray then; and if you are then hindered but by such bodily indisposedness, God will understand your habitual desires, and your groans, and take it as if you had actually prayed. Pray now, that so you may be acquainted with the God that then you must fly unto for mercy, and may not be strangers to him, or unto prayer, and that he may not find then that your prayers are but the expression of your fears, and not of your love, and are constrained, and not voluntary motions unto God; pray now in preparation to your dying prayers. Oh, what a terrible thing it is to be to learn to pray in that hour of extremity, and to have then no principle to pray by, but natural self-love, which every thief hath at the gallows! To be then without the spirit of prayer, when without it there cannot an acceptable word or groan be uttered, and when the rejection of our suits and person will be the prologue to the final judicial rejection, and will be a distress so grievous as presumptuous souls will not believe, till sad experience become their tutor. Can you imagine that you shall then at last be taught the art of acceptable prayer merely by horror, and the natural sense of pain and danger, as seamen in a storm, or a malefactor by the rack, when

in your health and leisure you will not be persuaded to the daily use of serious prayer, but number yourselves with the families that are under the wrath of the Almighty, being such as call not on his name. (Jer. x. 25 ; Psalm lxxix. 6.)

Indeed, there are many prayers must go before, or else this prayer, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," will be in vain, when you would be loth to find it so. You must first pray for renewing, sanctifying grace, for the death of sin, and the pardon of sin, for a holy life, and a heavenly mind, for obedience, patience, and perseverance, and if you obtain not these, there is no hope that Jesus Christ should receive your spirits, that never received his sanctifying Spirit.

How sad is it to observe that those that have most need of prayer, have least mind to pray, as being least sensible of their needs ! Yea, that those that are the next step to the state of devils, and have as much need of prayer as any miserable souls on earth, do yet deride it, and hate those that seriously and fervently perform it ; a man of prayer being the most common object of their malicious reproach and scorn. O miserable Cainites, that hate their brethren for offering more acceptable sacrifice than their own ! Little do they know how much of the very satanical nature is in that malice, and in those reproachful scorns. And little do they know how near they are to the curse and desperation of Cain, and with what horror they shall cry out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." (Gen. iv. 11, 13.) If God and good men condemn you for your lip-service, and heartless devotions, and ungodly lives, will you therefore hate the holy nature and better lives of those that judge you, when you should hate your own ungodliness and hypocrisy ? Hear what God said to the leader of your sect, "Why art thou wrath ? And why is thy countenance fallen ? If thou do well, shalt thou not be accepted ? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." (Gen. iv. 6.) Have you not as much need to pray as those that you hate and reproach for praying ? Have you not as much need to be oft and earnest in prayer as they ? Must Christ himself spend whole nights in prayer, (Luke vi. 12,) and shall an ignorant, sensual, hardened sinner think he hath no need of it, though he be unconverted, unjustified, unready to die, and almost past the opportunity of praying ? O miserable men, that shortly would cry and roar in the anguish of their souls, and yet will not pray while there is time and room for prayer ! Their Judge is willing now to hear

them, and now they have nothing but hypocritical, lifeless words to speak! Praying is now a wearisome, tedious, and unpleasant thing to them, that shortly would be glad if the most heart-tearing lamentations could prevail for the crumbs and drops of that mercy which they thus depise. (Luke xvi. 24.) Of all men in the world it ill becomes one in so deep necessities and dangers to be prayerless.

But for you, Christians, that are daily exercised in this holy converse with your Maker, hold on, and grow not strange to heaven, and let not your holy desires be extinguished for want of excitation. Prayer is your ascent to heaven; your departure from a vexatious world to treat with God for your salvation. Your retirement from a world of dangers into the impregnable fortress where you are safe, and from vanity unto felicity, and from troubles unto rest, which, though you cannot come so near, nor enjoy so fully and delightfully as hereafter you shall do, yet thus do you make your approaches to it, and thus do you secure your future full fruition of it. And let them all scoff at hearty, fervent prayer as long as they will, yet prayer shall do that with God for you which health, and wealth, and dignity, and honour, and carnal pleasures, and all the world shall never do for one of them. And though they neglect and vilify it now, yet the hour is near when they will be fain to scramble and bungle at it themselves, and the face of death will better teach them the use of prayer, than our doctrine and example now can do. A departing soul will not easily be prayerless, nor easily be content with sleepy prayers, but, alas! it is not every prayer that hath some fervency from the power of fear that shall succeed. Many a thousand may perish for ever that have prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." But the soul that breatheth after Christ, and is weary of sinning, and hath long been pressing toward the mark, may receive encouragement for his last petitions, from the bent and success of all the foregoing prayers of his life. Believe it, Christians, you cannot be so ready to beg of Christ to receive your souls, as he is ready and willing to receive them. As you come praying, therefore, into the world of grace, go praying out of it into the world of glory. It is not a work that you were never used to, though you have had lamented backwardness, and coldness, and omissions. It is not to a God that you were never with before; as you know whom you have believed, so you may know to whom you pray. It is indeed a most important suit to beg for the receiving of a

departed soul, but it is put up to him to whom it properly doth belong, and to him that hath encouraged you by answering many a former prayer with that mercy which was the earnest of this, and it is to him that loveth souls much better than any soul can love itself. O live in prayer, and die in prayer, and do not, as the graceless, witless world, despise prayer while they live, and then think a 'Lord have mercy on me,' shall prove enough to pass them into heaven. Mark their statues and monuments in the churches, whether they be not made kneeling and lifting up the hands, to tell you that all will be forced to pray, or to approve of prayer, at their death, whatever they say against it in their life. O pray, and wait but a little longer, and all your danger will be past, and you are safe for ever! Keep up your hands a little longer, till you shall end your conflict with the last enemy, and shall pass from prayer to everlasting praise.