

A BELIEVER'S LAST DAY IS
HIS BEST DAY.

NOTE.

The 'Believer's Last Day his Best Day,' originally published in 1651-52, passed through a great number of editions during the ten subsequent years and onward, though the various reprints are not designated in the title-pages. Our text is that of 1657, compared with another of 1660. The title-page is given below.* Appended to the Sermon was this Notice:—'Christian Reader,—Be pleased to pass by, or to correct with thy pen, the faults that have escaped by reason of the author's absence from the press.' The 'Believer's Last Day' is often found as an appendix to 'Heaven on Earth;' and perhaps nothing proves more completely the popularity of Brooks, than the large circulation and sustained vitality of such merely local and fugitive publications as the 'String of Pearls' and 'Believer's Last Day'—both funeral Sermons. With reference to the former,—'String of Pearls,'—I take this opportunity to give a curious 'Advertisement' concerning it, by Brooks's publisher, which is appended to the seventh edition of the 'Apples of Gold,' (1667.) It is as follows:—

'The Stationer to the Reader.

'This is to give notice that some dishonest booksellers, called land-pirates, who make it their practice to steal impressions of other men's copies—whose sin will surely find them out—have lately printed a false and imperfect impression of Mr Brooks his 'String of Pearls,' and have wronged both the author and me by false printing many words, and leaving out all the table of the chief heads, and of a bad paper and print, and crammed it into eight sheets, the true sort being fifteen sheets, sold by John Hancock, in Broad-street, over against the Church.'—G.

* A

BELIEVERS

Last Day is his Best Day.

A

SERMON

Preached at the Funerall of

M^{ris} MARTHA RANDOLL,

At *Christ's Church, London*, June 28. 1651.

By THOMAS BROOKS, Minister of
the Gospel at *Margarets Fish-street-hill*.

*Thou wilt guide me by thy Counsell, and after
receiv me to glory. Psal. 73. 24.*

*Light is sowne for the righteous, and joy for the
upright in heart. Psal. 97. 11.*

Ejus est timere mortem, qui ad Christum nolit ire. *Cyp.*

Timor mortis pejor, quam ipsa mors. *Eras.*

Senibus mors in januis, adolescentibus in insidiis. *Ber.*

LONDON:

Printed, and are to be sold by *John Hancock*
at the first Shop in *Popes-head-Alley*,
next to *Cornhill*. 1657.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To my worthy and beloved Friends, Mr JOHN RUSSEL, and Mrs MARTHA, his wife; and to Mr THOMAS RANDOLL; all happiness in this world and that which is to come.

MY DEAR AND WORTHY FRIENDS,—The ensuing sermon was preached upon your importunity, and printed also upon the same account. You know nothing would satisfy your spirits but the printing of it, which at last made me unwillingly willing to answer your desires; not that I did delight to deny your desires, nor because I prized it, but because I thought it not good enough for you, nor worthy of that weight that you laid upon it, it being but the fruit of some short broken meditations. I have now published these notes, which in all love I present to you. They were once in your ear, they are now in your eye, and the Lord keep them ever in your hearts! If there be anything in this sermon worth the having, it is not mine but the Lord's, through grace. I know that my best actions stand in need of sweet sweet odours, a golden censer.

Dear Friends, You know we must all fall in the wilderness of this world, be gathered to our fathers, go hence and be no more seen. Abraham and Sarah must part, Jacob and Rachel must be separated, David and his child must be severed. Our days are numbered, our period of time appointed, and our bounds we cannot pass. 'All flesh is as grass, and the glory thereof as the flower of the field,' Ps. ciii. 15; therefore do not mourn as persons 'without hope,' neither be like Rachel that would 'not be comforted.' To that purpose take this counsel.

1. First, *Dwell much upon the sweet behaviour of others under the loss of their near and dear relations.* When God had passed the sentence of death upon David's child, 2 Sam. xii. 20, he 'arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped; then he came to his own house, and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.' When his servants questioned this action, he answers, 'Now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me,' ver. 23. So when Aaron's sons were destroyed by fire for their offering up strange fire, Lev. x. 22, 23, Aaron holds his peace; he bridled his

passions, and submitted sweetly and quietly to divine justice. So when it was told Anaxagoras that both his sons, which were all he had, were dead, being nothing terrified therewith, he answered, *Sciebam me genuisse mortales*, I knew I begat mortal creatures. Dransi,¹ people in Thrace, bury their children with great joy, but at their birth lament grievously, in regard of the miseries that are like to befall them while they live.

2. Secondly, *In time of crosses, losses, and miseries, it is the wisdom of believers to look more upon the crown than upon the cross, to dwell more upon glory than upon misery, to eye more the brazen serpent that is lifted up, than the fiery serpent that bites and stings.*² Basil speaketh of some martyrs that were cast out all night naked in a cold frosty time, and were to be burned the next day, how they comforted themselves in this manner: 'The winter is sharp, but paradise is sweet; here we shiver for cold, but the bosom of Abraham will make amends for all.'³ Galen writes of a fish called *Uranoscopos*, that hath but one eye, and yet looks continually up to heaven. A Christian under the cross should always have an eye looking up to heaven, that so his soul may not faint, and he may give glory to God in the day of visitation. It is recorded of Lazarus, that after his resurrection from the dead he was never seen to laugh; his thoughts and affections were so fixed in heaven, though his body was on earth, that he could not but slight temporal things, his heart being set upon eternal things.⁴ A man, saith one, [Chrysostom,] would dwell in this contemplation of heaven, and be loath to come out of it. Nay, saith another, [Augustine,] a man might age himself in it, and sooner grow old than weary.

3. Thirdly, *Compare your mercies and your losses together, and you shall find that your mercies will wonderfully outweigh your losses.* You have lost one mercy, you enjoy many mercies. What is the loss of a wife, a child, or any other temporal mercy, to a soul's enjoyment of the favour of God, pardon of sin, peace of conscience, hopes of heaven, &c.? Besides, you enjoy many temporal mercies that many of the precious sons of Zion want, &c.

4. Fourthly, *Consider seriously of the reasons of God's stripping his people of their nearest and their dearest mercies: and they are these:—*

[1.] *For a trial of the strength and power of their graces.* It is not every cross nor every loss that tries the strength of a Christian's graces. Job held bravely in the face of many afflictions for a time, but when he was thoroughly wet to the skin, then he acts like a man rather void of grace, than like a man that did excel all others in grace.⁵ When God burns up the out-houses but leaves the palace

¹ Query, 'Dolonei' or 'Digeri'?—G.

² 2 Cor. iv. 16 18; Heb. x. 34, xi. 24–26, 35, and xii. 1–3.

³ Basil *ad* XL Martyr. *Tolle calum nullus ero*, said the philosopher.

⁴ Let heaven be a man's object, and the earth will be his subject.

⁵ God tried the strength of Abraham's faith, and the strength of Job's patience, and the strength of Moses' meekness, and the strength of David's zeal, and the strength of Paul's courage, to the utmost. God will not only try the truth, but he will also try the strength of every grace that is in a believer sooner or later, Exod. xii. 27, 30, 31. It is the observation of Theodoret, that when God smote Pharaoh's firstborn, he drew blood off the arm for the enre of the head, which because it mended not, thereupon came all to confusion.

standing, when he takes away the servant but leaves the child, when he gathers here a flower and there a flower out of men's gardens, but leaves the flowers that are the delight of their eyes and the joy of their hearts, they bear it patiently and sweetly; but when he burns up the palace, and takes away the child, and gathers the fairest flower in all our garden, then we usually shew ourselves to be but men, yea, to be weak men, passionately crying out, 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' 2 Sam. xviii. 33.

[2.] *God passes the sentence of death upon men's dearest mercies, that himself may be more dreaded, and that his precious servants and their counsel may be the better minded and regarded.* The Egyptians trembled not under several judgments, nor minded not what Moses and Aaron said, till God smote their firstborn, and then they tremble, and then the servants of the Lord and their counsel found better quarter with them than formerly they had done. Ah, friends! has the Lord smitten your firstborn, as I may say? then look to it, as you tender the honour of God, the advancement of the gospel, the peace of your own consciences, the stopping of the mouths of the wicked, and the gladdening of those hearts that God would not have sadded, that God be more dreaded, and that his servants and his services be more owned, loved, and regarded. The people of God, and the ordinances of God, are to God as his firstborn; and they that make light of God's firstborn, God will make as light of their firstborn. These Egyptians had slain Israel, God's firstborn, and therefore God smites their firstborn. My desire and prayer shall be that God's removing and taking away your firstborn, as I may say, may be the making of more room in your bosoms for God, Christ, saints, and ordinances, that so your great loss may be turned into the greatest gain. And certainly, if this physic, this potion that is given you by an outstretched hand from heaven do not work this, the next potion will be far more bitter, John v. 14.

[3.] *God passes the sentence of death upon men's nearest and dearest mercies, that he may win them to a more complete and full dependence upon his blessed self.* Man is a creature apt to hang and rest upon creature props: 'I looked on my right hand, and beheld,' saith the psalmist, 'but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul,' Ps. cxlii. 4. Well, what does he do now all props fail him? why, now he sweetly leans upon God: ver. 5, 'I cried unto thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.' Cynægeirus, an Athenian captain, used great valour in the Persian war, pursuing his enemies that were laden with the rich spoil of his country, and were ready to set sail and be gone; he held the ship with his right hand, and when that was cut off, he held it with the left, that also being cut off, he held it with the stumps till his arms were cut off, and then he held it with his teeth till his head was cut off.¹ It is the very temper of most men and women in the world—they will hold upon one prop, and if God cut off that, then they will catch hold on another, &c., till God cut off all

¹ Herod. vi. 114; Suidas, s. v. *Kuvalyeipos*; Just. ii. 9; Val. Max. iii. 2, § 22; comp. Sueton. Jul. 63.—G.

their props, and then they will come and rest and centre in God, in whom are all their well-springs, Ps. lxxxvii. 7.

[4.] *God strips his people of their dearest mercies, that he may work their hearts to a more strict and diligent search and examination of their own hearts and ways, that they may say with the church, 'Let us search and try our ways, and turn to the Lord our God,' Lam. iii. 39, 40, 48.* The Hebrew word, חָפַשׁ, that is rendered 'search,' signifies to search as you would do to find out a disguised person that puts himself into a strange habit that he might not be discovered. When God's hand, when God's rod is upon our backs, our hands must be upon our hearts, and we must cry out, What evil have we done! what evil have we done! Seneca reports of one Sexius,¹ who would every night ask himself three questions—(1.) What evil hast thou healed to-day? (2.) What vice hast thou stood against this day? (3.) In what part art thou bettered this day? When the storm beats strong upon you, you had need to see what Jonah is asleep at the bottom of your souls, that so, he being discovered and cast overboard, your souls may be safe, for in the drowning of your sins lies the security of your soul.

[5.] *He strips his people of their dearest outward mercies, that they may be more compassionate toward those that are or shall be in the same condition with themselves.*² The Jews at this day, in their very nuptial feasts and mirth, break a glass with wine in remembrance of Jerusalem, saying, when they throw it down, Thus was Jerusalem broken; and what they spill in wine they fill with tears. Is it not a shame to have the same name, the same faith, the same Christ, the same profession, &c., and to desire always to tread on roses, to be embarked in this great ship of Christianity with so many brave spirits, and to go under hatches, to sleep like the outcasts and scorn of human nature? Saints should be like two lute strings that are tuned one to another; no sooner one is struck but the other trembles.

[6.] *God strips his people of their nearest and dearest outward mercies, that they may the more prize and the better taste spiritual and heavenly mercies.*³ He takes away uncertain riches, that they may the more prize certain riches; he takes away natural strength, that they may the more prize spiritual strength; he takes away the creature, that they may more prize their Saviour. Spiritual and heavenly things are of nearest and greatest concernment to you. Spirituals will only abide with you in all changes; spirituals can only satisfy your souls. The language of a gracious spirit is this, Ah, Lord! as what I have if offered to thee pleaseth not thee without myself, so the good things I have from thee, though they may refresh me, yet they cannot satisfy me without thyself, John xiv. 8.

5. The fifth and last word of counsel that I shall give you is this, *Consider seriously and frequently, that God's taking away or removing of one mercy is but his making of way for another, and usually for a*

¹ Query, 'Sextus' ?—G.

² That sentence likes me well for you, that he said of himself, I have no wit but weeping.

³ Diogenes taxed the folly of the men of his time, that they undervalued the best things but overvalued the worst. Ah that this were not the sin and shame of professors in these days!

*better mercy.*¹ He took from David a Michal, and gave him a wise Abigail; an Absalom, and gave him a Solomon. He took away the bodily presence of Christ from his disciples, but gave them more abundantly of his spiritual presence, which was far the choicer and the sweeter mercy. God will always make that word good, 'I will not leave you comfortless,' or as the Greek hath it, John xiv. 18, *ὀρφάνους ἀβ ὀρφνῆ*, 'I will not leave you as orphans, or fatherless children;' no, I will come and comfort you on every side, and I will make up all your wants, and be better to you than all your mercies: 'For your brass I will give you silver, and for your iron you shall have gold,' &c., Isa. lx. 17.

To draw to a close, let that dead man or dead woman be lamented whom hell harboureth, whom the devil devoureth, whom divine justice tormenteth; but let those whose departed souls angels accompany, Christ embosometh, and all the court of heaven comes forth to welcome, account immortality a mercy, and be grieved that they are so long detained from the sweet company of Christ, &c.

I desire you, and all others that shall read what is here written, to overlook the mistakes of the printer, if you meet with any, I having no time to wait upon the press to correct what may be found amiss. The perusal and acceptance of what I here present in love, I shall leave [to] your judgments, and rest yours to love and serve in our dearest Lord,

THOMAS BROOKS.

¹ John xvi. 7, 8. *Hujusmodi lucri, dulcis odor*, The smell of this gain is sweet to many.

A SAINT'S LAST DAY IS HIS BEST DAY.

Beloved, I am here at this time to speak a word to the living, my business being not to speak anything of the dead. Be pleased, therefore, to cast your eye upon

ECCLESIASTES VII. 1.

'A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth.'

I shall stand upon the latter part of this verse at this time:

'And the day of death than the day of one's birth.'

The Greeks say, 'that the beginning of a man's nativity is the begetting of his misery.' In Job xiv. 1, 'Man that is born of a woman is born to trouble' and sorrow. The Hebrew word that is there rendered 'born,' יָלַד, *jeluth*, signifieth also generated or conceived; to note to us that man is miserable as soon as he is warm in the womb; he comes crying into the world. Before ever the child speaks, he prophesies by his tears of his ensuing sorrows.

And this made Solomon to prefer his coffin before his crown, the day of his dissolution before the day of his coronation. *A fletu vitam auspiciatur*, saith Seneca. But not to hold you longer from what is mainly intended, the observation that I shall speak to at this time is this:—

That a believer's last day is his best day; his dying-day is better than his birthday.

This will be a very sweet and useful point to all believers. I shall first demonstrate the truth that it is so, and then make some use of this point to ourselves.

1. The first thing that doth with open mouth speak out this truth is this, *That death is a change of place.* A believer when he dieth, he doth but change his place; he changeth earth for heaven, a wilderness for a Canaan, an Egypt for a land of Goshen, a dunghill for a palace: as it is said of Judas, that 'he went to his place,' Acts i. 25. A soul out of Christ is not in his place, beneath is his place. So when a believer dieth he goes to his place. Heaven, the bosom of Christ, is his place. And that speaks out the truth asserted, that a believer's dying day is his best day.

A believer now is not in his place, 2 Cor. v. 6, but his soul is still

working and warring, and he cannot rest till he comes to centre in the bosom of Christ. This Paul well understood when he said, 'I long to be dissolved, and to be with Christ,' Phil. i. 23. I would fain weigh anchor, hoise sail, and away home. And upon this account those precious souls groaned for deliverance, 2 Cor. v. 2, 'For this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed with our house which is from heaven.' What is the ground? Why, it is this, 'While we are in the body we are absent from the Lord,' ver. 6. We be not in our place, and therefore we groan to be at home—that is, to be in heaven, to be in the bosom of Christ, which is our proper place, our most desirable home.

2. The second thing which doth demonstrate the truth asserted, is this, *That death is a change of company.* The best that breatheth in this world must live with the wicked, and converse with the wicked, &c.; and this is a part of their misery; it is their hell on this side heaven. This stuck upon the spirit of David: Ps. xii. 5,¹ 'Woe is me that I am constrained to be in Mesech, and to dwell in the tents of Kedar,' &c. And so Jer. ix. 2, 'Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them, for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.' And this was that that did vex and tear Lot's righteous soul: 2 Peter ii. 7, 8, 'His soul was vexed from day to day with their unlawful deeds.' The word ἐβαστανίζεν—*vide* Beza—signifies to 'rack;' he was racked to see their unlawful deeds. Oh, but death is a change of company. A man doth change the company of profane persons, of vile persons, &c., for the company of angels, and the company of weak Christians for the company of just men made perfect. That is a remarkable place, Heb. xii. 22, 23, 'We are come to mount Sion,' saith the apostle, 'and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.' Here is a change indeed. Death is a change of company as well as a change of place. And if this be but well weighed, it must needs be granted that a believer's dying day is better than his birthday.

3. *Death is a change of employment.* A believing soul when he dies, changeth his work and employment. I open it thus: The work of a believer in this world lies in praying, groaning, sighing, mourning, wrestling, and fighting, &c. And we see throughout the Scripture that the choicest saints, that have had the highest visions of God, have driven this trade; they have spent their time in praying, groaning, mourning, wrestling, and fighting: Eph. vi. 12, 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.'² The truth is, the very life of a believer is a continual warfare, and his business is to be in the field always. They

¹ I have read of a good gentlewoman, who, being near death, cried out, O Lord, let me not go to hell where the wicked are, for thou knowest that I never loved their company in the time of life.

² *Probus* a valiant Roman emperor's motto was, *Pro stipe labor*—No fight, no pay. So I say, No fight, no crown; no fight, no heaven. [*Probus*, M. Aurelius.—G.]

have to deal with subtle enemies, malicious enemies, wakeful enemies, and watchful enemies; with such enemies that threw down Adam in paradise, the most innocent man in the world, and that threw down Moses, the meekest man in the world, and Job, the patientest man in the world, and Joshua, the most courageous man in the world, and Paul, the best apostle in the world, &c. A Christian's life is a warfare. Job saith, 'All the time of my warfare (צַבָּרָי) will I wait till my change come,' Job xiv. 14,—I am still a-fighting, saith Job, with lusts and corruptions within, and with devils and men abroad; 'All the time of my warfare will I wait till my change come.' So in the 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'I have fought the good fight of faith,' &c. And so in the 2 Tim. ii. 4, 'No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life,' &c.¹ Death is a change of employment. It changeth this hard service, this work that lies in mourning, wrestling, and fighting, for joying and singing hallelujahs to the Almighty. Now no prayers, but praises; no fighting and wrestling, but dancing and triumphing. Can a believing soul look upon this glorious change, and not say, Surely 'better is the day of a believer's death than the day of his birth'? Death is the winding-sheet that wipes away all tears from the believer's eyes, Rev. vii. 9.

4. *Death is a change of enjoyments, as well as a change of employments.* I shall express this in three considerable things:—

(1.) *It is a change of our more dark and obscure enjoyment of God, for a more clear and sweet enjoyment of God.* I say, the best believer that breathes in this world, that doth see and enjoy most of God, and the visions of his glory, yet he enjoys not God so clearly, but that he is much in the dark. The apostle Paul was a man that was high in his enjoyments of God, yet while he was here in the flesh, he did but see as through a glass. 'We see through a glass darkly'—1 Cor. xiii. 12, *ἀνὸς γυμᾶτι*, in a riddle—but then face to face; then we shall know even as we are known. God told Moses that he could not see his face and live. The truth is, we are able to bear but little of the discoveries of God, there being such a mighty majesty and glory in all the spiritual discoveries of God. We are weak, and able to take in little of God. We have but dark apprehensions of God. Witness our tears, sighs, groans, and complaints, because we go forward and backward. We look on the right hand and on the left, as Job speaks, Job xxiii. 8, 9, and God hideth himself that we cannot see him. Plutarch tells of Eudoxus, that he would be willing to be burnt up presently by the sun, so he might be admitted to come so near it as to learn the nature of it. This is upon the heart of believers, Lord, let us be burnt up, so we may see thee more in all thy glorious manifestations; let us be poor, let us be anything, so that we may be taken up into a more clear enjoyment of thyself.² Ask them that live highest in the

¹ Alexander sent messengers to Mandanius, (?) a famous philosopher, to tell him that if he would do so and so he should be rewarded, and if he did not he should be put to death. The philosopher answered the messengers, That for his gifts he esteemed them worth nothing, seeing his own country could furnish him with necessaries, and as for death he did not fear it, but wish it rather, in that it was a change unto a more happy estate. So far did mere philosophy carry men in the opinion of felicity.

² Chrysostom profeseth that the want of the enjoyment of God would be a far greater hell to him than the feeling of any punishment.

enjoyment of God, What is your greatest burden? and they will tell you, This is our greatest burden, that our apprehensions of God are no more clear, that we cannot see him face to face whom our souls do dearly love. Oh, but now in heaven saints shall have a clear vision of God: there be no clouds nor mists in heaven.

(2.) *It is a change of our imperfect and incomplete enjoyments of God, for a more complete and perfect enjoyment of him.* As no believer hath a clear sight of God here, so no believer hath a full and perfect sight of God here. In Job xxvi. 14, how little a portion is heard of him—speaking of God—and of that is heard, ah how little a portion is understood!¹ So in 1 Cor. xiii. 12, ‘Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.’ ‘Now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.’ The soul, while it is here, dares not but say, I enjoy something of God, and that I would not want for a thousand worlds; yet my enjoyment is not full. If you should say, Souls, why do you wait upon God in this ordinance and that ordinance? they will answer, ‘That we may enjoy God more fully. ‘Fly away speedily, my beloved.’ What is the meaning of this language but this: ‘Oh that I might be filled with the fulness of God!’ There is no complaints in heaven, because there is no wants. Oh, when death shall give the fatal stroke, there shall be an exchange of earth for heaven, of imperfect enjoyments for perfect enjoyments of God; then the soul shall be swallowed up with a full enjoyment of God; no corner of the soul shall be left empty, but all shall be filled up with the fulness of God. Here they receive grace for grace, but in heaven they shall receive glory for glory. God keeps the best wine till last; the best of God, Christ, and heaven, is behind. Here we have but some sips, some tastes of God; fulness is reserved for a glorious state. He that sees most of God here sees but his back parts; his face is a jewel of that splendour and glory that no eye can behold but a glorified eye. Our hearts are like a vial-glass, which will not fill on a sudden, though it lie in the midst of the sea, where all fulness is. The best Christian is able to take in but little of God; their hearts are like the widow’s vessel, that could receive but a little oil. Sin, the world, and creatures do take up so much room in the best hearts, that God is put upon giving out himself by a little and little, as parents do to their children; but in heaven God will communicate himself fully at once to the soul; grace shall then be swallowed up of glory.

(3.) *It is a change of a more inconstant and transient enjoyment of God, for a more constant and permanent enjoyment of God.* Here the saints’ enjoyment of God is inconstant. One day they enjoy God, and another day the soul sits and complains in anguish of spirit. He that should ‘comfort my soul stands afar off;’ my glass is out, my sun is

¹ דָּבָר, *Dabar*, i. e., a word or thing. Oh, how little a word, how little a thing, is heard of him. It is an excellent expression that Augustine hath: The good things of eternal life, saith he, are so many, that they exceed number; so precious, that they exceed estimation; so great, that they exceed measure. *Esse Christum cum Paulo, magna securitas; esse Paulum cum Christo, summa felicitas*, [Bernard,]—For Christ to be with Paul was the greatest security, but for Paul to be with Christ was the chiefest felicity. Chrysostom saith, If it were possible that all the sufferings of the saints should be laid upon one man, it were not worth one hour’s being in heaven,—such is the greatness and fulness of that glory above. The saints’ motto is, *Migremus hinc, migremus hinc*—Let us go hence, let us go hence.

set, and what can make up the want of this sun? As all candle-light, star-light, and torch-light, cannot make up the want of the light of the sun; so when the Sun of righteousness hides his face, it is not all creature-comforts that can make up the want of his countenance.¹ David sometimes could say that 'God was his portion, and his salvation, and his strong tower,' Ps. lxi. 3, and what not; and yet presently cries out, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?' Ps. xlii. 5. In one place he saith, 'I shall never be moved,' Ps. xxx. 6; and yet presently it follows, 'Thou hiddest thy face from me, and I was troubled,' ver. 7. And this is the state of a believer in this world. But in heaven there shall no clouds arise between the Lord and a believing heart. God will not one day smile, and another day frown; one day take a soul in his arms, and another day lay that soul at his feet. This is his dealing with his people here. But in heaven there is nothing but kisses and embraces, nothing but a perpetual enjoyment of God. When once God takes the soul unto himself, it shall never be night with it any more—never dark with that soul more, &c.; all tears shall then be wiped away. That is a sweet word in the 1 Thes. iv. 17, 18, 'And so shall we be ever with the Lord; wherefore comfort one another with these words.' There are, saith Musculus, angels and archangels in heaven. Ay, but they do not make heaven; Christ is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory. It is heaven and happiness enough to see Christ, and to be for ever with Christ. Now, oh what a glorious change is this! Methinks these things should make us long for our dying-day, and account this life but a lingering death.

5. Consider this: *Death is a change that puts an end to all external and internal changes.* What is the whole life of a man, but a life of changes?² Death is a change that puts an end to all external changes. Here you change your joy for sorrow, your health for sickness, your strength for weakness, your honour for dishonour, your plenty for poverty, your beauty for deformity, your friends for foes, your silver for brass, and your gold for copper. Now the comforts of a man are smiling, the next hour they are dying, &c. All temporals are as transitory as a hasty, headlong torrent, a ship, a bird, an arrow, a post, that passeth by. Man himself—the king of these outward comforts—what is he, but a mere nothing?—the dream of a dream, a shadow, a bubble, a flash, a blast. Now death puts an end to all external changes: there shall be no more sickness, no more complaints, no more wants, &c.

And then it puts an end to all internal changes. Now the Lord smiles upon the soul, and anon he frowns upon the soul. Now God gives assistance to conquer sin, anon the man is carried captive by his sin; now he is strengthened against the temptation,

¹ By death saints come to a fixed and invariable eternity. *Nescio quid erit, quid ista vita non erit, &c.*, [Augustine.]—i. e., What will that life be, or rather, what will not that life be, since all good either is not at all, or is in such a life,—light which place cannot comprehend, noises and music which time cannot vanish away, odours which are never dissipated, a feast which is never consumed, a blessing which eternity bestoweth, but eternity shall never see at an end.

² There is nothing excellent that is not perpetual, saith Gregory Nazianzen. Philosophers could say, that he was never a happy man that might afterwards become miserable. Eternity is that *Unum perpetuum hodie.*

anon he falls before the temptation, &c. Job carried it out bravely in the midst of storms, and speaks like an angel; but when Job was wet to the skin, and the arrows of the Almighty stuck in him, and his day was turned into night, and his rejoicing into mourning, &c., then a man would have thought him a devil incarnate by his cursing. But death puts an end to internal changes, as well as external changes. Now the soul shall be tempted no more, sin no more, be foiled no more. Now ye may judge by this that a Christian's dying-day is his best day. Death is another Moses: it delivers believers out of bondage, and from making brick in Egypt. It is a day or year of jubilee to a gracious spirit—the year wherein he goes out free from all those cruel taskmasters which it had long groaned under. The heathen gods held death to be man's *summum bonum*, his chiefest good; therefore, when one of them had built and dedicated the temple at Delphos, he asked of Apollo for his recompense the thing that was best for man: the oracle told him that he should go home, and within three days he should have it—within which time he died. Thus the very heathens themselves have consented to this truth, that a man's dying-day is his best day.

6. *Death is a change that brings the soul to an unchangeable rest.* It is the bringing of the soul to bed—to a state of eternal rest.¹ That is the last demonstration of the point, that a believer's dying-day is his best day. Now while we are here the soul is in a-toss. The best man in the world—that is highest and clearest in his enjoyments of God—is too often like to Noah's dove that found no rest: either he wants some external mercy or internal mercy, and will do so till the soul be swallowed up in the everlasting enjoyments of God; but death brings a man to an unchangeable rest. In Rev. xiv. 13, 'I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead that died in the Lord.' Why? 'For they rest from their labours,' &c. Oh, saith he, write it down as a thing of worth and weight, 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; for they rest from their labours,' &c. Death brings the soul to unchangeable rest. In Isa. lvii. 1, 2, 'The righteous perish, and no man layeth it to heart, &c. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.' Oh, death is a change that brings a soul to unchangeable rest; it brings a soul a-bed. This was that that made Paul long 'to be dissolved, and to be with Christ;' and the Corinthians to groan for deliverance.² It was a notable saying of blessed Cooper, 'Many a day have I sought death with tears; not out of impatience or distrust,' saith he, 'but because I am weary of sin, and fearful to fall into it.' You know how the martyrs hugged the stake, and welcomed every messenger of death that came to them, and clapped their hands in the midst of the flames. Death is a believer's coronation-day, it is his marriage-day. It is a rest from sin, a rest from sorrow, a rest from afflictions and temptations, &c. Death to a

¹ Death is a rest from the trouble of our particular callings; it is a rest from afflictions, a rest from persecutions, a rest from temptation, a rest from desertion, a rest from sin, and a rest from sorrow, Gen. viii. 8.

² Laurence Saunders kissing the stake, said, Welcome the cross of Christ, welcome everlasting life. Funius, the Italian martyr, kissed him that brought him word of his execution. [Query, 'Faninus'?—G.]

believer is an entrance into Abraham's bosom, into paradise, into the 'New Jerusalem,' into the joy of his Lord. And thus much for the doctrinal part. You see that it is clear, by these six things, that a believer's dying-day is his best day, and the day of his death better than the day of his birth.

I might by many other arguments demonstrate this truth to you, but let these suffice; because I would not unwillingly keep you longer from the use and application of the point—application being the life of all teaching. Now then

1. First use shall be this, *Then never mourn immoderately at the death of any believer, let them be the most excellent and useful that ever lived.*¹ Death is to them the greatest gain; and it speaks out much selfishness in us to be more taken with the gain and benefit that redounds to us by their lives, than with the happiness and glory that redounds to them by their deaths. In the primitive times, when God had passed the sentence of death upon their dearest comforts, Christians did carry it at a more high, sweet, and noble rate than now-a-days they do. Remember this, death doth that, I say, in a moment, that no graces, no duties, nor no ordinances could do for a man all his lifetime; it frees a man from those diseases, corruptions, temptations, &c., that no duties, nor graces, nor ordinances could do. When Abraham came to mourn for his deceased Sarah, he mourned moderately for her, Gen. xxiii. 2, as is imported by a small *cap* in the word *Libcothath*, that signifies to weep; in that Hebrew word there is one little letter extraordinary, to note that Abraham wept but a little for her, not because she was old and overworn, as some Rabbins say, but because her dying-day was her best day. When Luther, that famous instrument of God, buried his daughter, he was not seen to shed a tear. So Mr Whately, who was famous in his time, whenas he had preached his own child's funeral sermon upon this subject, 'The will of the Lord be done,' he and his wife laid their own child in the grave.² That is the first use, let us not mourn immoderately for any believer's death.

2. Then, in the next place, *Fear not death.* Compose your spirits; say not of death as that wicked prince said to the prophet, 'Hast thou found me, O my enemy?' 1 Kings xxi. 20; but rather long for it, not to be rid of troubles, but that the soul may be taken up to a more clear and full enjoyment of God. Your dying-day is your best day. Good Jacob dies with a sweet composed spirit; he calls for his children, and blesseth and kisseth them, and gathers up his feet into his bed, and dies. Moses, that morning that the messenger came to him, and told him he must die, he goes up the hill, sees the land of Canaan at a distance, and dies. Cato, a heathen man, told Cæsar that he feared

¹ Death is not *mors hominis*, but *mors peccati*, not the death of the man, but the death of his sin.

² The people in Thrace mourn and greatly lament at the birth of their children, because of the sorrows and troubles they are born to; and they greatly joy and rejoice at the death of their children, because death is the funeral of all their sorrows. Death is not such as you, as some, would paint it. It was the saying of a heathen man, That the whole life of a man should be nothing else but *meditatio mortis*, a meditation of death. See Deut. xxxii. 29. Alexander the Great did ask the Indian philosopher how long a man should live; saith he, Until he think it better to die than to live. [Whately of Banbury. Died 1639.—G.]

his pardon more than the pain that he threatened. Joseph built his sepulchre in his own garden. And some philosophers had their graves always open before their gates, that going out and coming in they might always think of death, for in life they found comforts to be rare, crosses frequent, pleasures momentary, and pains permanent. Believers, your dying-day is your best day. Oh, then, be not afraid of death, and that you may not, remember that it is not such a slight matter as some make it, to be unwilling to die. There is much reproach cast upon God by believers being unwilling to die. You talk much of God, heaven, and glory, &c., and yet when you should come to go and share in this glory, you shrug and say, Spare me a little. Is not this a reproach to the God of glory? But that this counsel may stick upon you, remember these five things:—

[1.] *Christ's death is a meritorious death.* Can a believer think upon the death of Christ as meriting peace with God, pardon of sin, justification, glorification, and yet be afraid to die? What! is the death of Christ thus meritorious, and shall we still be unwilling to depart?

[2.] *Is not death a sword in your Father's hand?* It is true, a sword in a madman's hand, or in an enemy's hand, might make one tremble; but when the sword is in the father's hands, the child doth not fear. Grant that death is a sword, yet why should the child fear and be afraid, when it is in the father's hand, that will be sure to handle it so as he shall not be hurt or cut by it.

[3.] *Remember that Christ's death is a death-conquering death.*¹ He hath taken away the sting of death, that it cannot hurt you; and his death is a death-sanctifying and a death-sweetening death. He hath by his death sanctified and sweetened death to us.

Death is a fall that came by a fall. To die is to be no more unhappy, if we consider death aright. Oh, saith one, that I could see death, not as it was, but as thou, Lord, hast now made it! It is the greatest monarch and the ancientest king of the world. Death reigned from Adam to Moses, saith St Paul. Oh! but the Lord Jesus hath, as it were, disarmed death, and triumphed over death. He hath taken away its sting, so that it cannot sting us, and we may play with it, and put it into our bosoms, as we may a snake whose sting is pulled out. The apostle, upon this consideration, challengeth death, and out-braves death, and bids death do his worst, in that 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.

[4.] *Did not Christ willingly leave his Father's bosom for your sake?* Did he not willingly die for you? Did Christ plead thus, These robes are too good for me to leave off, this crown too glorious for me to lay aside, I am too great to suffer for such a people? No, but he readily leaves his Father's bosom, he lays down his crown, and puts off his robes, and suffers a cursed, cruel, and ignominious death. Ah,

¹ The fear of death is worse than the pains of death, *Timor mortis ipsa morte peior*, because fear of death kills us often, whereas death itself can do it but once. *Ejus est timere mortem qui ad Christum noluit ire*, Let him fear death that is loath to go to Christ—Cyprian. *Mori non metuo, sed damnari metuo*, I fear not to die, but I fear to be damned, saith one. *Una guttula plus valet quam cælum et terra*: Luther, speaking of the blood of Christ, saith, That one little drop is more worth than heaven and earth. If the souls under the altar cry, *Usque quo, Domine?* How long, Lord?—if they solicit for the day of judgment, why not I for the day of death, since death's day is but the eve of God's day? Zeno said, I have no fear but of old age.

souls, you should reason thus, Did Christ die for me that I might live with him? I will not therefore desire to live long from him. All men go willingly to see him whom they love; and shall I be unwilling to die, that I may see him whom my soul loves? Shall Christ lay by all his glory and pomp, and marry a poor soul that had neither portion nor proportion; and shall this soul be unwilling to go home to such a husband? Oh think of it, you souls that are unwilling to die!

Present life is not *vita, sed via ad vitam*, life, but the way to life; for when we cease to be men, we begin to be as angels. They are only creatures of inferior nature that are pleased with the present. Man is a future creature. The eye of his soul looks back. The labourer hastens from his work to his bed, the mariner rows hard to gain the port, the traveller is glad when he is near his inn; so should saints when they are near death, because then they are near heaven, they are near their inn.

[5.] *Are you not complete in Christ?*¹ Why should a believer be afraid to die that stands complete before God in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus? If we should appear in our own righteousness, in our own duties, it would be dreadful to think of dying, but a believer is complete in him, &c. 'Ye are complete in him,' Col. ii. 10. In Rev. xiv. 4, 5, they are said to be 'without fault before the throne of God;' and in Cant. iv. 7, 'Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee.' A believer, when he dies, he appears before God in the righteousness of Christ. All the spots and blemishes of his soul are covered with the righteousness of Christ, which is a matchless, spotless, peerless righteousness. Christ's spouse hath perfection of beauty; she is all 'glorious within' and without, she is spotless and blameless, she is the fairest among women, that she may be a meet mate for him that is fairer than all the children of men, Ps. xlv. 2. The saints are as that tree of paradise, Gen. iii., fair to his eye, and pleasant to his palate, or as Absalom, in whom there was no blemish from head to foot. Think of these things to sweeten your last changes, and to make you long to be in the bosom of Christ.

[6.] Sixthly, Consider *that the saints' dying-day is to them the Lord's pay-day*. Every prayer shall then have its answer; all hungerings and thirstings shall be filled and satisfied; every sigh, groan, and tear that hath fallen from the saints' eyes shall then be recompensed.² Then they shall be paid and recompensed for all public service, and all family service, and all closet service. Now a crown shall be set upon their heads, and glorious robes put upon their backs, and golden sceptres put into their hands; their dying-day being the Lord's pay-day, they shall hear the Lord saying to them, 'Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into your Master's joy,' Mat. xxv. 21. In that day they shall find that God is not like Antiochus, who promised often but seldom gave; no! Then God will make good all those golden and glorious promises that he hath made to them, especially those that

¹ *Ipsæ unus erit tibi omnia, quia in ipso uno bono, bona sunt omnia*, One Christ will be to thee instead of all things else, because in him are all good things to be found.—Augustine.

² That is not death but life, that joins the dying man to Christ; and that is not life but death, which separates the living man from Christ.

are cited in the margin.¹ Now God will give them gold for brass, and silver for iron, felicity for misery, plenty for poverty, honour for dishonour, freedom for bondage, heaven for earth, an immortal crown for a mortal crown.

[7.] Seventhly, Consider this, *the way to glory is by misery; the way to life is by death.* In this world we are all Benonis, the sons of sorrow. The way to heaven is by Weeping-cross. Christ's passion-week was before his ascension-day; none passeth to paradise but by burning seraphims; we cannot go out of Egypt but through the Red Sea; the children of Israel came to Jerusalem through the valley of tears, and crossed the swift river of Jordan before they came to the sweet waters of Siloam.² There is no passing into paradise but under the flaming sword of this angel, death; there is no coming to that glorious city above but through this strait, dark, dirty lane. No wiping all tears from your eyes but with your winding-sheet, which should make you entertain death *non ut hostis, sed ut hospes*, not as a foe, but as a friend, not as a stranger, but as a guest that you had long looked for, and bid welcome death more blessed than your birth.³ Every man is willing to go to his home, though the way that leads to it be never so dark, dirty, or dangerous; and shall believers be unwilling to go to their homes, because they are to go through a dark entry to those glorious, lightsome, and eternal mansions that Christ hath prepared for them? surely no.

[8.] Eighthly, Consider *that while we are in this world, our weak and imperfect and diseased bodies cast chains, and fetters, restraints, hindrances, and impediments upon the soul, that the soul is hindered from many high and noble actings, which in a state of separation it is free to.* In a state of separation the soul works clearer, and understands better, and discourses wiser, and rejoices louder, and loves nobler, and desires purer, and hopes stronger than it can do here.⁴

It is reported of Apollonius, that he had a familiar spirit engaged⁵ in a jewel. Such is the soul of man in the body: the soul, while it is in this body of clay, cannot act like herself, like a spirit whose nature is to soar aloft towards the place whence she came. When the soul is upon the wings for heaven, the body like a lump of lead pulls it down to the earth, &c.

Now the soul cannot look out at the eyes but it will be infected, nor hear by the ears but it will be distracted, nor smell at the nostrils and not be tainted, taste by the tongue and not be allured, and touch by the hand and not be defiled. Every sense and member is too ready upon every occasion and temptation to betray the soul; which should make us willing to die and to long for that day wherein our bodies shall be glorified.⁶

Ah, believers! it will be but as a day before those bodies of yours,

¹ Rev. ii. 10, iii. 4, 12, 22, and vii. 16, 17.

² A man will easily swallow a bitter pill to get health. The physician helps us not without pain, and yet we reward him for it.

³ Death to a believer is the gate of heaven; it is *janua vitæ*, the door of life. It conveys us out of the wilderness into Canaan, out of a troublesome sea into a quiet haven, John xiv. 1-3.

⁴ When Plato saw one over-indulgent to his body by high feeding it, he asked him what he meant, to make his prison so strong.

⁵ Query, 'engaged' or 'encased'?—G

⁶ The Greeks call the body the soul's bond, the soul's sepulchre.

that are now like a picture out of frame, or a house out of repair, that are now deformed and diseased, &c., shall be agile and nimble, swift and facile in their motion. For clarity and brightness they shall be like Christ's body when it was transfigured, Mat. xvii. 2; they shall be very amiable and beautiful, they shall be impassible and immortal. Here our bodies are still dying. It is more proper to ask when we shall make an end of dying, than to ask when we shall die. Death is a worm that is always feeding at the root of our lives, which should make death more desirable than life.

[9.] Ninthly, *Dwell much upon the readiness and willingness of other saints to die.* Good old Simeon having first laid Christ in his heart, and then taking him up in his arms, he sings, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation,' Luke ii. 28-30. I have lived enough, I have my life; I have longed enough, I have my love; I have seen enough, I have my sight; I have served enough, I have my reward; I have sorrowed enough, I have my joy. So the believing Corinthians, 2 Cor. v. 4, 8, they groaned earnestly to be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven, they groaned that mortality might be swallowed up of life, and 'that they might be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.' So Paul desires earnestly 'to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all,' Phil. i. 23. So those in Peter, 'they look for and hasten the coming of the day of God,' 2 Pet. iii. 12. They are said to hasten the day of God, in respect of their earnest desires after it, and in respect of their preparations for it. So the souls under the altar cry, 'How long, Lord, how long?' &c., Rev. vi. 9, 10.

So Paula, that noble lady, when one did read to her Cant. ii. 11, 'The winter is past, and the singing of birds is come;' Yea, she replied, 'the singing of birds is come,' and so she went singing into heaven. So Jewel, 'Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace; break off all delays; Lord, receive my spirit.' Further he said, 'I have not so lived that I am ashamed to live longer; neither do I fear to die,—because we have a merciful Lord. A crown of righteousness is laid up for me; Christ is my righteousness.' So another being in a swoon, as her friends thought, a little before her end they cried, Give her some *rosa solis*; but she put it back, saying, 'I have *rosa solis* you know not of.' So Mr Pearing,¹ a little before his death, said, 'I find and feel so much inward joy and comfort in my soul, that if I were put to my choice whether to die or live, I would a thousand times rather choose death than life, if it might stand with the holy will of God.'² So Mr Bolton, lying on his death-bed, said, 'I am by the wonderful mercies of God as full of comfort as my heart can hold, and feel nothing in my soul but Christ, with whom I heartily desire to be.' Ah, Christians! if the exceeding willingness of the saints to die will not make you willing to die, what will?

[10.] Tenthly and lastly, Consider this, *that the Lord will not leave thee, but be with thee in that hour:* 'Yea, though I walk through the

¹ Query, 'Dereing'?—G.

² Let all the devils in hell, saith Augustine, beset me round, let fasting macerate my body, let sorrows oppress my mind, let pains consume my flesh, let watching dry me, or heat scorch me, or cold freeze me, let all these—and what can come more—happen unto me, so I may enjoy my Saviour.

valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me,' saith the psalmist, Ps. xxiii. 4. So the apostle, Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have, for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'¹ There are five negatives in the Greek, to assure God's people that he will never forsake them; five times in Scripture is this precious promise renewed, that we may press it till we have pressed the sweetness out of it. Though God may seem to leave thee, thou mayest be confident he will never forsake thee. Why should that man be afraid of death, that may be always confident of the presence of the Lord of life?

3. The next use shall be *to stir you all up to prepare and fit for your dying-day*. Ah, Christians! what is your whole life, but a day to fit for the hour of death? what is your great business in this world, but to prepare and fit for another world? It was a sad speech of Cæsar Borgia, who being sick to death, said, 'When I lived, I provided for everything but death; now I must die, and am unprovided to die.'² Ah, Christians! you have need every day to pray with Moses, 'Lord, teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom,' Ps. xc. 13, and to follow the counsel of the prophet Jeremiah, 'Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness,' Jer. xiii. 16. Old age is the dark mountain which makes a broad way narrow, and a plain way eragged. It is a high point of heavenly wisdom to consider our latter end: 'Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!' Deut. xxiii. 19. Jerusalem paid dear for forgetting her latter end. Jerusalem's filthiness was in her skirts, because she remembered not her latter end, therefore also she came down wonderfully. To provoke you to prepare and fit for a dying-day, consider seriously these following things:—

(1.) *He that prepares not for his dying-day, runs the hazard of losing his immortal soul*. Though true repentance be never too late, yet late repentance is seldom true, *aut pœnitendum aut pereundum*. The heathen man could say, 'He that is not ready to repent to-day, will be less ready to-morrow; his understanding will be more dark, his heart more hard, his will more crooked, his affections more dis-tempered, his conscience more benumbed,' &c. Bede tells a story of a certain great man that was admonished in his sickness to repent, who answered, 'That he would not yet, for if he should recover, his companions would laugh at him;' but, growing sicker and sicker, his friends pressed him again to repent, but then he told them it was too late, '*Quia jam judicatus sum et condemnatus;*' 'For now,' said he, 'I am judged and condemned.' It is the greatest wisdom in the world to do that every day that a man would do on a dying-day, and to be afraid to live in such an estate as a man would be afraid to die in.

¹ Maximilian the emperor was so delighted with that sentence, *Si Deus nobiscum?* &c., If God be with us, who shall be against us? that he caused it to be written upon the walls in most rooms of his palace.

² As before.—G.

Ah, souls! you are afraid to die in such and such sins; and will you not be afraid to live in those sins?

(2.) Again, *The certainty of death should bespeak you to prepare for death.* When we would affirm anything to be infallibly true, we say, 'As sure as death.' 'It is appointed,' saith the apostle, 'unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,' Heb. ix. 27. The Greek word that is translated 'It is appointed,' signifieth, it lieth as a man's lot.¹ 'Once,' implies two things—[1.] A certainty, it shall once be; [2.] A singularity, it will be but once. 'What man lives and shall not see death?' saith the psalmist,—that is, no man lives and shall not see death. In Job the grave is called 'the house appointed for all the living.' Solomon calls the grave *Baith Gholam*, (בת עולם)—i.e., *Domum seculi*, the house of age. The learned translate it 'Long home,' where men must abide for a long time, even till the resurrection. To live without fear of death, is to die living; to labour not to die, is labour in vain. Death hath for its motto, *Nulli cedo*, I yield to none. It is decreed that all must die. Every man's death-day is his doom's-day.

The French have a proverb, 'Three things,' say they, 'agree in the world—the priest, the lawyer, and death.' The priest takes the living and the dead, the lawyer right and wrong, and death the weak and strong. But the Jews have a better: 'In Golgotha are to be seen skulls of all sizes;' that is, death comes on the young as well as the old; the lot is fallen upon all, and therefore all must die. All men are made of one mould and matter,² 'Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return,' Gen. iii. 19. 'All have sinned, are fallen short of the glory of God,' Rom. v. 12; and therefore death must pass upon all.

(3.) *The uncertainty of the time of your death does bespeak you with open mouth to be in a constant readiness and preparedness for death.* No man knows when he shall die, nor what kind of death he shall die, whether a natural or a violent death. Augustus died in a compliment, Tiberius in dissimulation, Galba with a sentence, Vespasian with a jest; Zeuxes died laughing at the picture of an old woman which he drew with his own hand; Sophocles was choked with the stone in a grape; Diodorus the logician died for shame that he could not answer a jocular question propounded at the table by Stilpo; Joannes Masius preaching upon the raising of the woman of Naomi's son from the dead, within three hours after died himself; Felix, Earl of Wurtemburgh, sitting at supper with many of his friends, some at the table fell into discourse about Luther, and the people's general receiving [of] his doctrine, upon which the Earl swore a great oath, 'that before he died he would ride up to the spurs in the blood of Lutherans;' but the very same night God stretched out his hand so against him, that he was choked with his own blood.³

Consider, in the last place, *That it is a solemn thing to die.* Death is a solemn parting of two near friends, soul and body. Remember,

¹ Heb. ix. 27, ἀπόκειται; Ps. lxxxix. 48; Job xxx. 23; Eccles. xii. 5.

² Adam of Adamah, *homo ab humo*.

³ Bibulus, a Roman general, riding in triumph in all his glory, a tile fell from a house in the street, and beat out his brains.

all other preparations are to no purpose, if a man be not prepared to die. What will it avail a man to prepare this and that for his children, kindred, or friends, &c., when he hath made no preparations for his soul, for his eternal well-being? As death leaves you, so judgment shall find you. If death take you before you expect it, and are prepared for it, it will be the more terrible to you; it will cause your countenance to be changed, your thoughts to be troubled, your loins to be loosed, and your knees to be dashed one against another.¹ Oh the hell of horrors and terrors that attends those souls that have their greatest work to do when they come to die! therefore, as you love your souls, and as you would be happy in death, and everlastingly blessed after death, prepare and fit for death.² Look that you build upon nothing below Christ; look that you have a real interest in Christ; look that you die daily to sin, to the world, and to your own righteousness. Look that conscience be always waking, speaking, and tender; look that Christ be your Lord and Master; look that all reckonings stand right betwixt the Lord and your souls; look that you be fruitful, faithful, and watchful, and then your dying-day shall be to you as the day of harvest to the husbandman, as the day of deliverance to the prisoner, as the day of coronation to the king, and as the day of marriage to the bride. Your dying-day shall be a day of triumph and exaltation, a day of freedom and consolation, a day of rest and satisfaction. Then the Lord Jesus shall be as honey in the mouth, ointment in the nostrils, music in the ear, and a jubilee in the heart.

The last use then is this, If a believer's last day be his best day, *then by the rule of contraries, a wicked man's last day must be his worst day*, for he must there lie down with the sins of his youth.³ Death shall put an end to all the benefits and comforts that now thou enjoyest. Now thou must say, Honours, friends, pleasures, riches, credit, &c., farewell for ever; I shall never have good day more; I shall never be merry more; my sun is set, my glass is out, my hopes fail, my heart fails; all offers of grace are past, the Spirit will never strive with me more, free grace will never move me more, the golden⁴ serpent shall never be held forth more; death will be an inlet to judgment, yea, to an eternity of misery.⁵ What the voice was of God to Adam upon eating the forbidden fruit; what the coming of the flood was to the profane men of the old world; what the waters of the Red Sea were to Pharaoh and his army; what the fire from heaven was to the captains that came up against Elijah; what the burning furnace was to them that cast in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the same will be the day of death to profane wicked souls. Ah, sinners, my prayer for you shall be, that the Lord would awaken you, and set up

¹ He that prepares for his body and friends, but neglects his soul, is like him that prepares for his slave, but neglects his wife.

² When I was young, saith Seneca the heathen, I then studied *artem bene vivendi*, the art of living well; when age came upon me, I then studied *artem bene moriendi*, the art of dying well.

³ A great man wrote thus a little before his death: *Spes et fortuna valete*—Hope and fortune farewell.

⁴ Query, 'Brazen'!—G.

⁵ Sigismund the emperor and Louis the Eleventh of France straitly charged all their servants that they should not dare to name that bitter word *death* when they saw them sick, so dreadful was the very thoughts of death to them.

a choice light in your souls, that you may see where you are, and what you are ; that he would give you to break off your sins by repentance, and give you an interest in himself ; that so ' for you to live may be Christ, and to die may be gain,' Phil. i. 21 ; that in life and death Christ may be advantage to you ; and that death may be the funeral of all your sins and sorrows, and an inlet to all that joy and pleasure, that blessedness and happiness that is at God's right hand.