

A
S E R M O N

ON THE OCCASION OF THE JUSTLY LAMENTED DEATH OF THE
TRULY REVEREND

MR. JOHN HOWE,

Deceased April the 2d.

Preached to his congregation, April 8. 1705. And published at
their request.

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By JOHN SPADEMAN, Minister of the Gospel.
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We are your rejoicing, even as you also are ours in the day of
the Lord Jesus, 2. Cor. 1. xiv.



TO MY SINCERELY

HONOURED FRIENDS,

Mrs. MARGARET HOWE, Dr. GEORGE HOWE,

Mr. JOHN HOWE,

Mrs. PHILLIPPE COLLET, Mr. JAMES HOWE ;

WITH OTHER

Near Relatives of the Deceased.

MY WORTHY FRIENDS,

IF either the desire of him, whom the all-wise Disposer hath translated, or yours, (differing in this single matter from his) had invited me to preach a funeral sermon for your excellent relative, I should have found a real unwillingness to such a service ; and have judged it more eligible to have been wholly silent, than have spoken so few things, as are mentioned in this practical discourse, concerning him. He indeed received, from the Father of lights, so great a variety of both natural and christian perfections, that he was not only a shining light, and ornament of his age, but an inviting example of universal goodness. The exercises whereof, towards men, did strongly recommend him to the esteem of those from whom his judgment in some things disagreed. So that, (though he was most remote from seeking honour on this earth) he had that principal recompense of piety, in this life, a good name ; which must preserve him from oblivion, though all his near relatives, and acquaintance, should studiously conceal his just praises. Nor can he want a monument to make him live in following ages, whose excellent writings have gained the approving suffrage of those who are capable judges ; and they will be valued, while a relish of good sense, and genuine piety is found among men.

All this speaks your loss, and of his church, yea, and of the nation, to be the greater ; and I persuade myself, very few of his order have been so generally lamented : which is a tribute due to his real worth. But the obedience, and resignation of your faith have been the more grateful to him who hath called you to make such an offering, and whose mighty hand alone is able to bind up this wound, and both sustain and guide you in your progress to the same happiness which he now possesseth : if this plain discourse may contribute unto this blessed design, this will induce you to excuse the publishing of it, and the defects which are very obvious in

Your affectionate faithful Servant,

In our common Lord,

J. Spademan,



A SERMON.

2 Timothy, III. xiv.

*But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned,
and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou
hast learned them.*

IT is reasonably supposed that the mantle which fell from the prophet Elijah, as he was taken up into heaven, was highly valued, and carefully preserved by his disciple Elisha; especially when he experienced a miraculous virtue annexed to it: the waters of Jordan, being divided when this garment was applied to them; as we read. 2 Kings. ii. 14. Indeed, when your late most worthy pastor, (who may justly be styled an Elijah of this age) was translated by death, he left no garment which has any virtue to recommend it: but (which is far more important) before his translation, he let fall such holy instructions and heavenly counsels, as, through divine assistance, are able to dry up the waters of excessive grief, and open a passage into the celestial Canaan, into which himself hath entered. It is not necessary, nor is it my design, to open fresh springs of sorrow, for so very grievous a breach as the hand of God hath made, by representing the exceeding loss which his family, and relatives, this society, yea, the whole city and nation, have sustained. There is the justest reason, with heart-affecting sorrow, to repeat Elisha's words, used on the occasion now mentioned, (2 Kings 2. 12.) My father, my father, the chariots of Israel, (England) and the horsemen thereof. The death of one Elijah, who had the spirit of prayer, whereby to open heaven, and bring down refreshing showers of blessings

on a whole people ; the death, I say, of one such, must be a public, and common loss never enough to be deplored.

The attiring of this place, and of many assembled in it, speaks it to be a house of mourning, but our concernment here, is not to indulge a fruitless sorrow, which can neither bring him back to us, or assist our happy ascent to him, which is far more covetable, and will certainly be attained, by continuing in those things which we have learned, knowing and considering of whom we have learned them.

This excellent advice, given by the apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy, I have judged a more proper subject of your meditation, on this occasion, than an encomium of your deceased pastor, whose truly humble mind made him discover an averseness to any funeral solemnities, or discourses, which had a tendency to magnify him, and gain public applause: he hated the sounding a trumpet before him, living and dying. I am not appointed to perform such a service, (though but a reasonable tribute to his memory) only the sense of my own duty has induced me to discourse something from the scripture that hath been read, which will, (through the divine blessing) assist you to improve this severe dispensation, and comply with the apparent design of his office and ministrations. It is evident, that such a providence loudly proclaims the vanity of human life, the unalterable law of mortality, which must be executed on the very best inhabitants of this world ; so that neither the brightest virtues, or greatest serviceableness, neither the use of the most promising means, or the most ardent and united supplications for the prolonging of life, can exempt any from the end of all the living ; which therefore ought to be laid to heart : but I judge it most useful, that our meditations correspond with the character which was eminently peculiar to him, whom God hath taken away from us ; and whose long excellent ministry bespeaks every one of us, in the language of the text. But continue thou in the things, &c. knowing of whom thou hast learned them.

It is generally agreed by interpreters, that the apostle, in the latter part of the verse, intends himself, and that, not only, or principally, as invested with the apostolic office, but as distinguished by something in his temper, conduct, and condition, which did strongly oblige his disciples to continue in the things they had learned, and being duly considered, would effectually engage him, unto this practice.

The preceding context leads us to this explication, where, without once mentioning his apostolic commission, or the miraculous gifts by which he confirmed his doctrine, he only represents to Timothy, verse 10. 12. Thou hast fully known,

(or for a long time hast fully observed) my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me; plainly intimating, that the life and practice, the sufferings and afflictions of one who teacheth the gospel of Christ, carry a most cogent argument, and strong efficacy to engage them who are taught, to a firm persevering in the truth, and duties of the Christian religion; which were (without all doubt) the things which Timothy had learned of this apostle, whose office and design led him to teach the holy doctrine and rules of the gospel.

The text thus cleared, offers to our consideration, a twofold important instruction.

I. The possibility and danger of departing from the truth, and rule of the gospel, is supposed.

II. A suitable, and (in its own nature) effectual preservative against this evil is provided, namely, the actual knowing, and due considering of the character of him, of whom they have been learned. As to the former,

I. The possibility, and danger, of forsaking the truth, and rule of the gospel: the supposing of such a thing (in the text) might seem to carry an affront to one of Timothy's excellent piety. Him, this apostle calls his own, (or legitimate) son in the faith, 1 Tim. 1. 2. And his dearly beloved son, 2 Tim. 1. 2. Yea, (as some learned men, with great probability conclude) the pillar, and ground of the truth, 1 Tim. 3. 15. For there is no necessity of giving this character, either to a particular church, or even the universal. However that be, it is unquestionable that Timothy was not only a sincere, but a very eminent believer, who had made an uncommon proficiency, under the teaching, and institution of the apostle Paul; who, thereupon did give him the office of an evangelist, (far more considerable than that of a bishop, or even a metropolitan, which hath been assigned to him without ground,) yet, notwithstanding, this exhortation to him, carrieth a plain supposition, that it was (considering the case abstractly from the divine purpose) possible, even for him, not to continue in the things which he had learned of such a teacher as the apostle Paul: who therefore, judged it necessary to fortify him, by this earnest advice and suitable direction. And we shall perceive just reason to extend the supposition unto all, who have learned, even of the best instructors, the sacred truths and duties of the gospel, if we reflect on the various causes of departing from them; As,

1. The native vicious inconstancy and instability of human minds. None are, by renewing grace, made perfect and delivered from all remaining defects as to the Christian state: if we

are not kept and guarded by divine power, we are in continual danger of departing from the living God. Who would have suspected any mutableness in those Israelites, who heard the majestic terrible voice of God promulgating his law on mount Sinai? (whom some * Jewish authors have magnified, as if they had all been advanced above the ministering angels) on which occasion, they most solemnly obliged themselves to hear, and do all that the Lord their God should speak, Deut. v. 27. And yet so unstable were their hearts, that they quickly (within less than forty days) turned aside out of the way, which God had commanded them, Exod. 32. 8. Yea, when the Son of God, the great prophet, was raised up, and sent to the same people among whom he was approved of God, by the most stupendous miracles (such as none other had ever wrought,) one of which, namely, the multiplying of the loaves (by which many thousands were fed) carried such convictive evidence, that the spectators professed, This is of a truth, that prophet that should come into the world, John 6. 14. Yet the very next day, many of these very persons, who were Christ's disciples, departed from him, and walked no more with him: verse 66. On this supposition of our vicious instability, the apostle grounds the earnest advice, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall, 1 Cor. 10. 12.

2. The strong delusive workings of remaining unbelief. This root of apostacy is not totally killed and destroyed, even in those who have the spirit of faith. Hence we find the apostle cautioning them, whom he styles holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, (Heb. 3. 1.) to take heed, lest there be in them an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, verse 12. How apt are we to admit into our minds, a suspicion, lest the gospel-revelation should be a cunning devised fable, a mere invention of deceivers, who for their own interest have framed this doctrine, especially, when any are observed to pretend a zeal for it, while they deny it in their works, and turn it into an engine of advancing secular power and advantage: like those, whom the apostle describeth by this infamous character; (1 Tim. 6. 5.) counting religion to be an income, or gainful business, as that passage ought to be rendered.

3. The various discouragements which attend a constant belief and practice of the gospel; which the apostle had his eye upon in the immediately preceding context; where he mentioneth the persecutions and afflictions, which still followed him in the discharging of his office, and subjoins verse 12.

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution, by the reviling tongues, or, (when God permits) by the oppressive hands of evil men: these lions, in the way of our duty, have terrified many out of it, who have been ashamed or afraid to continue in that course, (which, though most unjustly) hath the reproachful name of a sect, and is everywhere spoken against, Acts 28. 22. The experience of all places and times, informs us how strong and dangerous impressions have been made, by the reproach and contempt, the cross and sufferings which attend the faithful service of Christ; even while the memory of our Redeemer was recent, his blood as it were, yet warm, and his apostles alive, and shining as lights in the world, there was cause of a sorrowful complaint of this kind, 2 Tim. i. 15. Thou knowest how that all they that are in Asia, be turned from me. The true reason of this inexcusable deserting may be discovered in the following part of the chapter, namely, they were ashamed of the apostle's chain, they judged it both dishonourable and hazardous to persist in the communion of one, who gained nothing among men but disgracing bonds, and distressing torments.

4. The strong impressions made by worldly allurements. There is not a more dangerous enemy to our souls, and which so powerfully dissuadeth from continuing in the things they have learned (of the most excellent teachers.) than the love of this world. Wherever this prevails, it stifeth all the convictions of reason and conscience, it baffleth the force of all the arguments which demonstrate the divine original of the gospel, and the unspeakable importance of the truths and counsels contained in it. There have been, and will be many, to whom the account given of Demas, is justly applicable. 2 Tim. 4. 10. Demas hath forsaken me, (and consequently, the things he had learned of me) having loved this present world. And never, I think, was there greater danger from this snare, than in the age wherein we live: in which a paganish esteem and admiration of riches and greatness renders all the vast concerns of the other world despicable, and without force. It is most amazing, that christians should be so blinded, as not to discern, what the pagan Cicero has complained of, *corrupti mores depravatique sunt admiratione divitiarum: the manners of men are corrupted and depraved, by the admiring of riches.*

5th And last cause of this danger is the seduction and enticement of wicked men, which the apostle remarks in the verse immediately preceding. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, &c. It is a sad reflection, that too many good men seem contented, only to save their own souls, with-

out seeking to allure and draw others into the path of life ; but evil men set themselves to infect others, and engage them in the same pernicious courses : those who want learning to dispute and reason against truth and holiness, fail not to employ the little wit they have, in ridiculing the most sacred things, like the scoffers predicted by the apostle Peter, 2. Ep. 3. 3. Ungodly men, walking after their own lusts, who supply the want of argument by profane jests and raillery on the gospel, and those who seriously and heartily believe it. To which they often add the enticing baits of liberty, pleasure, and gain, which carry a mighty force, especially with younger persons, whose age makes them unsuspecting and inconsiderate. Hence, so many in their youth quite cast off all the bands of a pious education, whilst they guard not against the dangerous enticements of sinners, which is earnestly enjoined by the royal preacher, Prov. 1. 10. whose notorious defection from the worship of God, is assigned unto this cause. 1 Kings 11. 5, 6.

Having thus represented the danger of not continuing in the things which have been learned of those who have instructed us in our holy religion ; we proceed,

II. To consider the preservative against this danger, laid down in the latter part of the text, knowing (or considering) of whom thou hast learned them, as though he had said, I apprehend thou wilt be strongly tempted to desert the doctrine and practice which have been delivered to thee ; but if thou duly rememberest my character and conduct, how I have demeaned myself, in my whole course, this will be an apt and suitable means to establish thy resolution of adhering to the things thou hast learned of me. In discoursing on this apostolic prescription, we shall,—State the proper efficacy of the preservative in its general nature, and—Lay down the particular characters of a teacher, which most directly contribute unto the preserving from the danger mentioned. The former is necessary to prevent mistake, the latter to engage and animate our holy purpose of continuing in the truth and duty of the gospel. As to the

1. The stating and explaining the proper efficacy of what is prescribed, to preserve us from the danger above related, it will be useful to observe the following particulars,

(1.) That this is not to be understood, as if the bare authority of any ordinary teacher, were a sufficient ground of obligation to continue in the things we have learned of him. This cannot be supposed, without a most dangerous altering the very nature of faith, which is always to be built on a divine testimony, as the apostle asserts, Rom. x. 17. So then faith cometh by hearing, (or testimony) and hearing by the word of God.

We ought not to give this deference to an angel from heaven, much less to the most excellent teachers, that their single authority should oblige us. We are commanded by our Lord, in this sense, to call no man our father upon earth, Mat. xxiii. 9. that is, not to admit any one whomsoever (who acts in his own name) to have a dominion over our faith: only the supreme original truth, the blessed God speaking by his Son, and those whom he commissioneth, is absolutely to be relied on. The Bereans are dignified with the title of noble, or high-born persons, because when the apostle Paul first preached to them, they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so, Acts xvii. 11. Much more is it our duty to examine all that we learn of our ministers, by the same infallible rule, that we may not be the real disciples of any other master besides him whose name is put on us in our baptism. Our faith, and persevering obedience to the gospel, must not stand in the wisdom, (or authority) of men, but in the power (and veracity) of God, 1 Cor. ii. 5.

(2.) This is to be understood in subordination to the internal effectual agency of the Divine Spirit, by whom, as the principal efficient, God doth stablish all believers in Christ, as the apostle asserts, 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. The sealing and impressing of our minds and hearts by the heavenly signet, is absolutely needful unto our continuing in the things we have learned; all our own efforts and endeavours will never preserve us from defection and drawing back unto perdition, without the powerful working of the Holy Spirit, who alone can fix our wavering minds, and furnish with strength to resist, and overcome, the most dangerous assaults that we can be exposed to: therefore the apostle, besides this seasonable counsel to Timothy, earnestly prayeth for him; last verse of this epistle, The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit; as knowing, that without the inward vital presence of the Redeemer, all other helps will be insufficient and unsuccessful; and we are obliged to add unto our use of the means here prescribed, fervent and continued supplication, for obtaining the mighty aid of the Divine Spirit, whom God hath graciously promised to give to those who ask him, Luke xi. 13. But,

(3.) The efficacy of such a knowing and considering of him of whom we have learned, deriveth (in the usual method of providence) from the native prevalent force of example: when the practice of a minister agreeth with his doctrine, this doth strongly recommend and impress the things that are taught by him: whereas a practice that is contrary to the most holy rules and instructions, shuts up and bars the hearts of those who observe this disagreement. Hence the blessed God, while he

spake by prophets, called none to the prophetic office but holy persons, as we read, Luke 1. 70. 2 Pet. 1. 21. And it is well known, that where the qualifications of officers in Christian churches are described, the principal stress is laid upon a holy and unblamable life. 1. Tim. 3. 2. Tit. 1. 7. On this design, that the example of those who teach others, might powerfully convey their doctrine into the very hearts and consciences of men : and this consideration gives a sad occasion of observing, how great a judgment and tremendous plague, a vicious ungodly ministry is to a people, who usually are much more influenced by the manners of their teachers, than by all the arguments and counsels which are proposed by them : one straying guide, who himself leads the way in a course of sin, draws many after him into the same destructive path. This provoked the terrible displeasure of God against the Jewish priests, against whom he draws a most severe charge, Mal. 2. 8. But ye have departed out of the way ; ye have caused many to stumble at the law. Not the greatest learning, or moving eloquence, not the most accurate observing of external forms, can compensate for a defect as to holiness of conversation ; which leads to the

(4.) And last reflection, namely, That the knowing and considering of the Christian practice of a teacher, is a most apt means to prevent or remove prejudices against the things which have been learned. Constant experience attests the truth of this. Many have acknowledged that it was their observing the justice and temperance, the patience and humility of those who suffered as evil-doers, which convinced them of the divine authority of the Christian doctrine. Therefore the glorious Founder of the Christian church, did not only furnish the first publishers of the gospel, with the prophetic spirit, and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, but replenished them with all the fruits of righteousness and universal goodness. They could make just and safe appeal to all who had opportunity of observing in the apostle's language, 1 Thes. 2. 10. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. It is a very memorable passage which I have met with in a learned and judicious author,* " If the gospel (saith he) were now to be planted again, all the miracles in the world, I think, would not make it take, while our morals are as they are. A miracle may strike a little wonderment at first, but good morality, (that is, a holy conversation) it sinks, it soaks to the heart : perverseness may say a miracle is from the devil ; but who can say that good morality is from

* Garbutt.

the devil?" This will be sufficient, I hope, to prevent mistake, concerning the nature and kind of that efficacy which belongs to the means here directed to ; I now proceed,

2. To lay down the particular characters of a teacher, which most directly recommend, and impress the things which have been learned of him ; which will bring the discourse to the sorrowful circumstances of our present state ; where (as I have before signified) I shall not attempt to draw a full description of him, whose decease we justly lament, (which is always a considerable part of a funeral discourse ;) but confine myself to some short memorials of him, which agree with my present design ; which will be of far greater advantage to you, than to hear his just praises set forth by the tongues of men and of angels : this latter could only yield an evanid delight, which can no ways contribute to our chief interest, I mean the salvation of our souls, which through divine assistance, will be furthered by the following account of those special characters which are most apt to engage unto a continuing in the things that we have learned : As,

(1.) Knowledge in the mystery of Christ, a clear understanding of the council of God, that relates to the salvation of lost sinners. Without this, an honest mind may deceive others, because itself is liable to be deceived. This our apostle appeals unto, in the first place where he makes a description of himself, ver. 10. Thou hast fully known my doctrine, (that is, how consonant to the Scriptures ;) and puts the Ephesians in mind, that he was furnished with this sacred knowledge, (Eph .3. 3.) by which he was rendered a wise master-builder in the house of God. I shall not flatter your late teacher, when I affirm, that God had given him an uncommon skill in the word of righteousness, from whence he always drew all that he taught. He had peculiar advantages for understanding the oracles of God, a large fund of natural endowments, improved by superadded preparatives unto the study of the Scriptures ; a rich treasure of human learning ; (despised by none but the ignorant,) particularly, a thorough knowledge of pagan theology, by which he was enabled to descry the shortness and mistakes of human reason ; which faculty he very well understood to use, in subordination unto Christian faith, whose mysteries he was able to free from the objections of cavillers.

But that which most of all assisted his searching and right understanding of the Scriptures, was his very early and growing exemplary piety, which hath the promise of divine teaching and illumination. He took care to wash the vessel, that it might be receptive of divine communications. To all these, he added unwearied diligence, humility, and prayer, which was the delight

and solace of his whole life. In such a course, he was safe from the illusions of fancy, and the specious errors that many great wits have been entangled with. His very excellent useful writings are a public testimony of this thing: most justly might he use the apology made by the apostle Paul, when he was censured and reproached with being mad; I am not mad, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness, Acts xxvi. 25. This wisdom enabled him to confirm the truths of the gospel with proper and most convincing evidence, and represent the Christian scheme in its native unexceptionable comeliness. And should we not continue in the things we have learned of such a scribe, instructed unto the kingdom of heaven?

(2.) A second character, which has a peculiar aptness to recommend and impress divine things, is godly sincerity, with which all the first publishers of the gospel were adorned, and it did most eminently shine in the conduct of the apostle Paul, who takes frequent occasion to mention it, because some, either from ignorance or malice, taxed him with the want of it, as if he had acted according to worldly politics, 2 Cor. 1. 12. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom,—we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. And he more largely insists on this qualification of those who have the office of instructing others, 1 Thes. ii. 3, 4, 5, 6. I know the imputation of insincerity, and hypocrisy, hath been very frequent, against the most upright excellent servants of God; thus when the accuser could not fasten a charge on the life of holy Job, he taxeth him with a mercenary and insincere disposition of mind, Job 1, 1. Doth Job serve God for nought?

* The wise counsel of God permits these unrighteous and very uneasy accusations, to exercise and demonstrate the reality and truth of his servants love and devotedness to him: of which your deceased pastor gave most convictive evidences throughout the whole course of his ministry; by a noble and

* F. Paul. relateth that pope Adrian, (one of the honestest of his order) charged Luther, and his followers, with hypocrisy—in sua conscientia tenessero per indubitata l'opinioni Romane fingendo altrimente: E pero essere cosa facillima estinguere quella doterina, che non era fondata, salvo che sopra gl' interessi. *and acting against conscience, in which they were persuaded of the certain truth of the Romish tenets, but dissembled their sentiments: and yet that it was a very easy thing to destroy that doctrine which was founded on nothing but interest.* Istoria del Concilio Tridentino. L. 1.—That pope hath not been singular in his censure, than which nothing could be more unjust.

generous contemning of the world, and secular advantages, and a steady aiming at the honour of God, in all his conduct and ministrations; so that the character given of a learned and excellent defender of the † Protestant cause, doth truly belong to him, namely, Many excellencies there were in him, for which his memory remains; but above all was his crown, that he unfeignedly sought God's glory, and the good of men's souls; and nothing doth so strongly recommend the things that we have learned, as an assurance of the holy sincerity of the teacher, who can have no design to corrupt the word of God, for the sake of the greatest worldly advantage. 2. Cor. 2. 17. For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ. We have known few in our age, to whom, this solemn protestation of the apostle is more truly applicable than to him, of whom you have learned; and what can justify the not continuing in the things taught by him?

(3.) Another character, which directly contributes to this purpose, is an ardent affection unto them who are taught. Nothing doth so certainly open and captivate the hearts of men, as love when it is apprehended. Very eminent were the apostle Paul, and his fellow-labourers, for this disposition, 1 Thes. 2. 8. Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to impart to you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, (that is, lives) because ye were dear to us. Nothing could rise higher than what we read, Rom. 9. 3. For I could wish that myself were accursed for my brethren: where it is not to be supposed, that the apostle, a most sincere and fervent lover of Christ, could intend an eternal separation from Christ, which is all one with damnation, but he only meant a bodily destruction for the sake of Christ, such as they suffered who were accursed or devoted unto death. v. Lev. xxvii, 29. Numb. xxi. 2, 3. I can truly profess, that I have not known any one, who hath so nearly resembled this pattern as he whom we lament. How naturally, and with inward solicitude did he care for your estate? How often hath he ministered in this place, when his infirmities made such a service hazardous to his life? Which he did not count dear to himself, that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry he had received for the saving of souls; for which he had the most tender regard, to the disregarding of all other and lower interests. We may justly apply to him, the account given by this apostle, of Epaphroditus, Phil. 2. 30. For the work of Christ, he was nigh unto death,

† Chillingworth.

not regarding his life. I might mention various instances of this most tender and fervent love to souls, as his impartial and faithful reproof of sin, without respect of persons; his easiness of access, his condescending to the lowest, and indeed becoming all things to all, that he might gain the more. But I must not omit that bright evidence of his divine love to men, I mean his readiness to assist all the necessitous and distressed, that he had opportunity of doing good unto: Very few have been so governed as he, by the apophthegm of our Lord, It is more blessed to give, than to receive, Acts 20. 35. His charity was not a narrow spring, limited and confined to a small spot, but like an ocean, sent forth refreshing streams without distinction. How often have the bowels of our persecuted brethren in a neighbouring kingdom, those generous confessors of the faith, been refreshed by his concern for them? When it is the reproachful character of our age, that all seek their own things, are intent on building their own houses, and raising their families, he was intent on building up living temples, unto God, in all the ways which might contribute to the present and everlasting happiness of men. In this course he not only laid up for himself an undecaying treasure in heaven, but used the best method to entail a divine blessing on all his offspring. Surely the instructions, the counsels and exhortations of such a one, ought never to be forgotten or slighted, when they could proceed from no other principle than a most unfeigned love to God, and affection to those among whom he laboured.

(4.) Another recommending character of a minister of the gospel, is Christian patience under afflictions and sufferings. When any suffer death for the truth of Christ, they gain the glorious titles of martyrs, or witnesses of Christ, whose doctrine they seal with their blood. The divine providence hath taken care that the Christian faith should not want this evidence, both at its first planting, and at the time when it was rescued from anti-christian corruptions. The apostle in the preceding context lays a great stress on this thing, verse 10. 11. Thou hast fully known my—long-suffering, patience—persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me,—what persecutions I endured, that is, was not a mere compelled patient, but underwent them with becoming submission and fortitude. Indeed, God was not pleased to call forth his servant (lately withdrawn from us) unto the fiery trial, but he was furnished with patience, and fortitude of mind, able to encounter the most grievous sufferings. It is reasonable to conclude, that the afflicting hand of God did so long, and variously chasten him, not so much for his own profit, as that he might be an eminent example of a truly Chris-

tian patience, under very sharp afflictions. All the violent pains he endured, all the tedious hours he passed in his former, and last sickness, did not draw one impatient expression from him, but even then, his adoring praises of God, did instruct, and confirm others. This was a seal which he affixed to the doctrine taught by him, which therefore we ought to continue in.

(5.) and A last character, which strongly recommends the things which we have been taught, is a final joyful perseverance in the Christian course. It was on this design that the apostle giveth this account of himself; 4 chap. of this epistle, verse 7. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. That very same language did agree to your excellent pastor. If he had fainted, or retracted at last, this must have much weakened the force of the things he taught, and your obligation to continue in them. But the divine grace enabled him to finish his course with uncommon joy. As he had always exercised an inviolable reverence for his own conscience, whose purity and peace he preferred above the most tempting advantages, so few ever more experienced a divine peace, and serenity of mind, at the nearest approaches of death: the sentence of it, when he received it in himself, did not dismay him: he needed no consolations from men; but as aged holy Simeon, (Luke 2. 29.) only leave from his Lord to depart, and be admitted into his immediate presence, who hath now openly approved this good and faithful servant, and caused him to enter into his own joy.

Let us now, in the fear of God, lay these considerations to heart, that such excellent labours as we have enjoyed, may not be lost, or turn into accusing witnesses against us another day. Our continuing in the things we have learned of him, will be the best improvement of our unspeakable loss, and hereby shall we shew the truest respect to his memory, that he may not only live in his offspring and useful writings, but in the truly Christian conversation of those who were related to him, or had opportunity of learning of him. In order to which, I shall subjoin a few persuasive considerations. As,

1. It ought to have great weight in your minds, that the things you learned of him are the most important and uncontroverted truths of the gospel: he did not entertain you with doubtful disputations, or debates concerning external forms and modes of religion. His great soul could not descend to these little things. He hath expressed himself fully on this subject, in the dedication of *Delighting in God*, and preface to the *Carnality of Religious Contention*, which latter breathes so

heavenly a charity and concern for the truly Christian Interest, that a very eminent divine of the established church, did profess a willingness to lay down his own life, in such a state of things, as is there described, might obtain among Christians. God is witness, and you with many others also, that his public ministrations were wholly taken up in opening and applying the principles of the Oracles of God, (which he did with inimitable clearness and judiciousness) and in describing and pressing the unquestionable duties of men and christians; such as love to God and our neighbour, repentance, faith, Christian vigilance, prayer, humility, and holy fear, with which our salvation is to be wrought out, still inculcating the absolute necessity of Christ's mediation, and the renewing, assisting influence of the Holy Spirit, which he shewed to be consistent with, yea, obligatory unto our earnest endeavours after conversion, and eternal life. Which last he largely pressed in many discourses on Rom. 2. 7. Very frequently he cautioned against those three dangerous rocks, (that prove fatal to many souls) namely, a sensual life, formality in religion, and unfruitfulness in the Christian profession. And is there any of all these, which you ought to be ashamed, or unwilling to continue in? Can the reason, or judgment of men, frame a just objection against such a course? Nay, will not that man stand self condemned, who having once learned such important, undoubted truths, departs from them, through any temptations whatsoever? Add to this,

2. The convincing demonstration he produced to satisfy reason and conscience. He was an avowed enemy to a blind implicit faith, as also to a blind devotion. And none had a better skill to set in the best light, the rational evidences, which confirm the principles and duties, both of natural and revealed religion, of which his published writings are a convincing witness; and his ordinary discourses, though clothed with familiar language, were not inferior as to strength of reasoning. So that it could not be charged on him, that he preached to the fancy, or only aimed to move the affections; for he always first addressed to the judgment and conscience, so that if the gospel which was taught by him, remains hid, to any who attended his ministry, it is hid to those who are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not—because by manifestation of the truth he commended, (or approved) himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God; as the apostle speaks of himself, and his fellow-labourers, 2 Cor. iv. 2, 3, 4. Again

3. Reflect on the very manner of his teaching, how earnest,

how moving, how pungent, how persuasive was his language and expression? It might plainly be discerned, that he spake from his very heart; not as pleasing the ear or imagination, (which his rare wit and eloquence enabled him to do) but as seeking the eternal happiness of souls. What is said concerning the famed tract of a * Stoic Philosopher, that it was so moving and operative, that if any were not wrought on, he could only be reformed by the tribunals of the other world, (the author speaks according to the † Platonick hypothesis) is applicable in this case. It may almost be despaired, that those who refused and rejected the messages brought by him, but retained hard and obdurate hearts, should be persuaded to repentance, and holiness, by any other ministry.

4. It ought further to be considered, that the things learned of him, were a most precious trust or *depositum* committed to those who have learned them. The original term *επισωθης*, which is translated, hast been assured, in some Greek copies, by a small variation, is changed into a verb that signifieth to commit or intrust; and this reading hath been preferred by some translations. This cannot be questioned, that divine truths, and instructions, have the character of a sacred trust, which is to be preserved with utmost care and fidelity. The very light of nature, the dictates of reason, discover this obligation: so that all agree in condemning the base injustice of him, who betrays a trust, and is negligent in preserving that which is deposited with him, and the crime is judged the more heinous, and inexcusable, by how much the *depositum*, the thing committed to another, is more precious and valuable. Who but a blinded infidel, will deny the incomparable value of sacred and divine truths, which are of a heavenly original, and are a principal treasure committed to the church. How solemn a charge was given to Timothy, 1 Tim, 6. 20. O Timothy keep that which is committed to thy trust. And it is repeated, 2 Tim. 1. 14. That good thing which was committed to thee, keep. As though he had said, give all diligence to guard the excellent *depositum* of the gospel, which thou hast been intrusted with. The same obligation is laid on us, who learned the same gospel, which must deserve a far more solicitous concern than any of the precious and admired treasures of this earth, which are guarded with greatest care. But if we continue not in the things we have learned, we are guilty of the worst injustice, and unfaithfulness to others, and of greatest unkindness to ourselves; for the things we have learned, are not made our property, to do with them as we please; but we

* Epictetus. † Simplicius. ‡ *επισωθης* 22. .V Latin, French.

are obliged to transmit them to others of the succeeding age, that they who rise up after us, may enjoy the same blessed advantages, Psal. 78. 5, 6. How great is the crime of a parent, who having received a fair patrimony, or honour, doth waste the estate, and forfeit the honour, which he ought to transmit to those who are to succeed him. If those of this generation should betray the civil rights and liberties of the nation, which have been transmitted by their ancestors, and entail poverty and slavery on the succeeding generations; how unpardonable would such a conduct be judged? But the depriving of posterity of the light and efficacy of gospel truth, is an injury, an injustice unspeakably greater: because the former only affects the temporal, and lesser interests of men, but the latter endangers their souls, and eternal felicity: and who would not tremble at the thought of such guilt, if he really believes, and expects a future judgment, in which a severe account must be given of this sacred talent, that hath been intrusted with him? What answer shall he give in the day of accounts, who was very solicitous and diligent to guard every other trust, to transmit with great fidelity, houses, lands, trade, and such low matters, but was unfaithful to his principal charge, and (as much as lay in him) by not continuing in the things himself had learned, suffered the gospel to fail and be lost out of this world? In the

5th And last place; Without continuing in the things you have learned of your deceased pastor, you cannot come where he now is. The present separation is matter of just sorrow, that we shall see his face (on earth) no more: but what must an everlasting separation be? To behold him shining as the sun in the kingdom of his Father, and yourselves cast into outer darkness: to see him crowned with never-fading life and glory; and yourselves shut up in the place of torment: what heart can bear the very thought? But nothing is more unquestionable, than that there is but one passage, one path to heaven, where he had never come, if he had not continued himself in the things which he first learned, and afterwards taught. Nay, if you should depart from the holy truth and duty, in which you have been instructed by him; notwithstanding the tender love he bore to you, he must stand forth as a witness and accuser, to aggravate your guilt, and greaten your condemnation. I shall conclude with the advice of the apostle, to his dearly beloved Phillippians, applied to the present subject, Phil. 4. 9. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in him, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.