

ABOUT DEATH

"For I know that you will bring me to death and to the house appointed for all living."
Job 30:23.

Death Is Certain! Man's Life Is But Vanity!

I come now to the discourse of man's eternal state, into which he enters by death. Of this entrance, Job takes a solemn serious view, in the words of the text, which contain a general truth, and a particular application of it. The general truth is supposed; namely, that all men must, by death, remove out of this world; they must die. But where must they go? They must go to the house appointed for all living; to the grave, that darksome, gloomy, solitary house, in the land of forgetfulness. Wherever the body is laid up until the resurrection, there, as to a dwelling-house, death brings us home. While we are in the body, we are but in a lodging-house, in an inn, on our way homeward. When we come to our grave, we come to our home, our *long home*, Eccl. 12:5.

All living must be inhabitants of this house, good and bad, old and young. Man's life is a stream, running into death's devouring deeps. Those who now live in palaces, must leave them, and go home to this house; and those who have not where to lay their heads, shall thus have a house at length. It is appointed for all, by Him whose counsel shall stand. This appointment cannot be shifted; it is a law which mortals cannot transgress. Job's application of this general truth to himself, is expressed in these words: "For I know that you will bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living." He knew, that he must meet with death; that his soul and body must part; that God, who had set the time, would certainly see it kept. Sometimes Job was inviting death to come to him, and carry him home to its house; yes, he was in the hazard of running to it before the time—Job 7:15, "My soul chooses strangling, and death rather than my life." But here he considers God would bring him to it; yes, bring him back to it, as the word imports. Whereby he seems to intimate, that we have no life in this world, but as runaways from death, which stretches out its cold arms, to receive us from the womb—but though we do then narrowly escape its clutches, we cannot escape long; we shall be brought back again to it. Job knew this, he had laid it down as a certainty, and was looking for it.

ALL MUST DIE. Although this doctrine is confirmed by the experience of all former generations, ever since Abel entered into the house appointed for all living, and though the living know that they shall die, yet it is needful to discourse of the certainty of death, that it may be impressed on the mind, and duly considered.

Therefore consider,

There is an unalterable statute of death, under which all men are concluded. "It is appointed unto men once to die," Heb. 9:27. It is laid up for them, as parents lay up for their children—they may look for it, and cannot miss it; seeing God has designed and reserved it for them. There is no peradventure in it; "we must die," II Sam. 14:14. Though some men will not *hear* of death, yet every man must *see* death, Psalm 89:48. Death is a champion all must grapple with—we must enter the lists with it, and it will have the mastery, Eccl. 8:8, "There is no man that has power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither has he power in the day of death." Those indeed who are found alive at Christ's coming, shall all be changed, 1 Cor. 15:51. But that change will be equivalent to death, will answer the purposes of it. All other people must go the common road, the way of all flesh.

Let us consult daily observation. Every man "sees that wise men die, likewise the fool and brutish person," Psalm 49:10. There is room enough on this earth for us, notwithstanding the multitudes that were upon it before us. They are gone, to make room for us; as we must depart, to make room for others. It is long since death began to transport men into another world, and vast multitudes are gone there already—yet the work is going on still; death is carrying off new inhabitants daily, to the house appointed for all living. Who has ever heard the grave say, It is enough! Long has it been getting, but still it asks. This world is like a great fair or market, where some are coming in, others going out; while the assembly that is in it is confusion, and the most part know not why they are come together; or, like a town situated on the road to a great city, through which some travelers have passed, some are passing, while others are only coming in, Eccl. 1:4, "One generation passes away, and another generation comes—but the earth abides forever." Death is an inexorable, irresistible messenger, who cannot be diverted from executing his orders by the force of the mighty, the bribes of the rich, or the entreaties of the poor. It does not reverence the hoary head, nor pity the harmless babe. The bold and daring cannot outbrave it; nor can the fainthearted obtain a discharge in this war.

The human body consists of perishing materials, Gen. 3:19, "Dust you are, and unto dust you shall return." The strongest are but brittle earthen vessels, easily broken in shivers. The soul is but basely housed, while in this mortal body, which is not a house of *stone*, but a house of *clay*, the mud walls cannot but molder away; especially seeing the foundation is not on a rock, but in the dust; they are crushed before the moth, though this insect be so tender that the gentle touch of a finger will destroy it, Job 4:19.

These materials are like gunpowder; a very small spark lighting on them will set them on fire, and blow up the house—the seed of a rason, or a hair in milk, having choked men, and laid the house of clay in the dust. If we consider the frame and structure of our bodies, how fearfully and wonderfully we are made; and on how regular and exact a motion of the fluids, and balance of humors, our life depends; and that *death has as many doors to enter in by, as*

the body has pores; and if we compare the soul and body together, we may justly reckon, that there is somewhat more astonishing in our *life*, than in our *death*; and that it is *more strange to see dust walking up and down on the dust, than lying down in it.*

Though the lamp of our life may not be violently blown out, yet the flame must go out at length for lack of oil. What are those distempers and diseases which we are liable to, but death's harbingers, that come to prepare his way? They meet us, as soon as we set our foot on earth, to tell us at our entry, that *we do but come into the world to go out again.* Nevertheless, some are snatched away in a moment, without being warned by sickness or disease.

We have sinful souls, and therefore have dying bodies—death follows sin, as the shadow follows the body. The wicked must die, by virtue of the threatening of the covenant of works, Gen. 2:17, "In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die." And the godly must die too, that as death entered by sin, sin may go out by death. Christ has taken away the sting of death, as to them; though he has not as yet removed death itself. Therefore, though it fastens on them, as the viper did on Paul's hand, it shall do them no harm—but because the leprosy of sin is in the walls of the house, it must be broken down, and all the materials thereof carried forth.

Man's life in this world, according to the Scripture account of it, is but a few degrees removed from death. The Scripture represents it as a vain and empty thing, short in its continuance, and swift in its passing away.

First, Man's life is a vain and empty thing—while it is, it vanishes away; and lo! it is not. Job 7:6, "My days are vanity." If we suspect afflicted *Job* of partiality in this matter, hear the wise and prosperous *Solomon's* character of the days of his life, Eccl. 7:15, "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity," that is, my vain days. *Moses*, who was a very active man, compares our days to a sleep, Psalm 90:5, "They are as a sleep," which is not noticed until it is ended. The resemblance is just—few men have right apprehensions of life, until death awakes them; then we begin to know that we were living. "We spend our years as a tale that is told," ver. 9. When an idle tale is telling it may affect a little; but when it is ended, it is remembered no more—and so is a man forgotten, when the *fable of his life* is ended. It is as a dream, or vision of the night, in which there is nothing solid; when one awakes, all vanishes; Job 20:8, "He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found; yes, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night." It is but a vain show or image; Psalm 39:6, "Surely every man walks in a vain show." Man, in this world, is but as it were a walking statue—his life is but an *image of life*, there is so much of death in it.

If we look on our life, in the several periods of it, we shall find it *a heap of vanities.* "Childhood and youth are vanity," Eccl. 11:10. We come into the world the most helpless of all animals—young birds and beasts can do

something for themselves, but infant man is altogether unable to help himself. Our childhood is spent in pitiful trifling pleasures, which become the scorn of our after thoughts. Youth is a flower that soon withers, a blossom that quickly falls off; it is a space of time in which we are rash, foolish, and inconsiderate, pleasing ourselves with a variety of vanities, and swimming as it were through a flood of them.

But before we are aware it is past; and we are, in middle age, encompassed with a thick cloud of cares, through which we must grope; and finding ourselves beset with prickling thorns of difficulties, through them we must force our way, to accomplish the projects and contrivances of our riper thoughts. The more we solace ourselves in any earthly enjoyment we attain to, the more bitterness do we find in parting with it.

Then comes old age, attended with its own train of infirmities, labor, and sorrow, Psalm 90:10, and sets us down next door to the grave. In a word, "All flesh is like grass," Isa. 40:6. Every stage or period in life, is vanity. "Man at his best state," his middle age, when the heat of youth is spent, and the sorrows of old age have not yet overtaken him, "is altogether vanity," Psalm 39:5. Death carries off some in the bud of childhood, others in the blossom of youth, and others when they are come to their fruit; few are left standing, until, like ripe corn, they forsake the ground—all die one time or other.

Man's life is a SHORT thing. It is not only a vanity, but *a short-lived vanity*. Consider,

1. How the life of man is reckoned in the Scriptures. It was indeed sometimes reckoned by hundreds of years—but no man ever arrived at a thousand, which yet bears no proportion to eternity. Now hundreds are brought down to scores; threescore and ten, or fourscore, is its utmost length, Psalm 90:10. But few men arrive at that length of life. Death does but rarely wait, until men be bowing down, by reason of age, to meet the grave. Yet, as if years were too big a word for such a small thing as the life of man on earth, we find it counted by months, Job 14:5. "The number of his *months* are with you." Our course, like that of the moon, is run in a little time—we are always waxing or waning, until we disappear.

But frequently it is reckoned by days; and these but few, Job 14:1, "Man, that is born of a woman, is of few *days*." No, it is but one day, in Scripture account; and that a hireling's day, who will precisely observe when his day ends, and give over his work, ver. 6, "Until he shall accomplish as an hireling his day." Yes, the Scripture brings it down to the shortest space of time, and calls it a moment, II Cor. 4:17, "Our light affliction," though it last all our life long, "is but for a *moment*." Elsewhere it is brought down yet to a lower pitch, farther than which one cannot carry it, Psalm 39:5, "My age is as nothing before you." Agreeably to this, Solomon tells us, Eccl. 3:2, "There is a time to be *born*, and a time to *die*"; but makes no mention of a time to *live*, as if our life

were but a skip from the womb to the grave.

2. Consider the various SIMILITUDES by which the Scripture represents the shortness of man's life. Hear Hezekiah, Isa. 38:12, "My age is departed, and is removed from me as a *shepherd's tent*; I am cut off like a *weaver's shuttle*." The shepherd's tent is soon removed; for the flocks must not feed long in one place; such is a man's life on this earth, quickly gone. It is a web which he is incessantly working; he is not idle so much as for one moment—in a short time it is wrought, and then it is cut off. Every breathing is a thread in this web; when the last breath is drawn, the web is woven out; he expires, and then it is cut off, he breathes no more.

Man is like *grass*, and like a *flower*, Isa. 40:6. "All flesh," even the strongest and most healthy flesh, "is *grass*, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field." The grass is flourishing in the morning; but, being cut down by the mowers, in the evening it is withered—so man sometimes is walking up and down at ease in the morning, and in the evening is lying a corpse, being struck down by a sudden blow, with one or other of death's weapons. The *flower*, at best, is but a weak and tender thing, of short continuance wherever it grows—but observe, man is not compared to the flower of the garden; but to the flower of the field, which the foot of every beast may tread down at any time. Thus is our life liable to a thousand accidents every day, any of which may cut us off. But though we should escape all these, yet at length this grass withers, this flower fades by itself. It is carried off "as the *cloud* is consumed, and vanishes away," Job 7:9. It looks big as the morning cloud, which promises great things, and raises the expectation of the husbandman; but the sun rises, and the cloud is scattered; *death comes, and man vanishes!*

The apostle James proposes the question, "What is your life?" chapter 4:14. Hear his answer, "It is even a *vapor*, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away." It is frail, uncertain, and does not last. It is as *smoke*, which goes out of the chimney, as if it would darken the face of the heavens; but quickly it is scattered, and appears no more—thus goes man's life, and "where is he?" It is *wind*, Job 7:7, "O remember that my life is wind. "It is but a passing blast, a short puff, "a wind that passes away, and comes not again," Psalm 78:39. Our *breath* is in our nostrils, as if it were always upon the wing to depart; ever passing and repassing, like a traveler, until it goes away, not to return until the heavens be no more.

Man's life is a SWIFT thing; not only a passing, but a *flying vanity*. Have you not observed how swiftly a shadow runs along the ground, in a cloudy and a windy day, suddenly darkening the places beautified before with the beams of the sun, but is suddenly disappearing? Such is the life of man on the earth, for "he flees as a shadow, and continues not," Job 14:2. A weaver's shuttle is very swift in its motion; in a moment it is thrown from one side of the web to the other; yet "our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle," chap. 7:6. *How*

quickly is man tossed through time, into eternity! See how Job describes the swiftness of the time of life, chap. 9:25-26. "Now my days are swifter than a runner; they flee away, they see no good. They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hastens to the prey." He compares his days with a *runner*, who runs speedily to carry tidings, and will make no stop. But though the runner were like Ahimaaz, who overrun Cush, our days would be swifter than he; for they flee away, like a man fleeing for his life before the pursuing enemy; he runs with his utmost vigor, yet our days run as fast as he.

But this is not all; even he who is fleeing for his life, cannot run always—he must needs sometimes stand still, lie down, or turn in somewhere, as Sisera did into Jael's tent, to refresh himself—*but our time never halts!* Therefore it is compared to *ships*, that can sail night and day without intermission, until they reach their port; and to swift ships, ships of desire, in which men quickly arrive at their desired haven; or ships of pleasure, that sail more swiftly than ships of burden. Yet the wind failing, the ship's course is checked—but *our time always runs with a rapid course!* Therefore it is compared to the *eagle* flying; not with his ordinary flight, for that is not sufficient to represent the swiftness of our days; but when he flies upon his prey, which is with an extraordinary swiftness. And thus, even thus, our days flee away.

Having thus discoursed of death, let us APPLY the subject in discerning the vanity of the world; in bearing up, with Christian contentment and patience under all troubles and difficulties in it; in mortifying our lusts; in cleaving unto the Lord with full purpose of heart, at all hazards, and in preparing for death's approach.

Let us hence, as in a looking-glass, **Behold, the vanity of the world**, and of all those things in it, which men so much value and esteem; and therefore set their hearts upon. The rich and the poor are equally intent upon gaining this world; they bow the knee to it; yet it is but a *clay god*—they court the bulky vanity, and run eagerly to catch this shadow. The rich man is hugged to death in its embraces; and the poor man wearies himself in the fruitless pursuit. What wonder if the world's smiles overcome us, when we pursue it so eagerly even while it frowns upon us!

But look into the grave! O man! Consider and be wise; listen to the doctrine of death; and learn,

1. that, "hold as hard as you can, you shall be forced to let go your hold of the world at length." Though you load yourself with the fruits of this earth; yet all shall fall off when you come to creep into your hole, the house, underground, appointed for all living. When death comes, you must bid an eternal farewell to your enjoyments in this world—you must leave your goods to another; Luke 12:20, "And whose shall those things be which you have provided?"

2. Your portion of these things shall be very little before long. If you lie down

on the grass, and stretch yourself at full length, and observe the print of your body when you rise, you may see how much of this earth will fall to your share at last. It may be you shall get a coffin, and a winding-sheet; but you are not sure of that; many who have had abundance of wealth, yet have not had so much when they took up their new house in the land of silence. But however that be, more you cannot expect.

It was a sobering lesson, which Saladin, when dying, gave to his soldiers. He called for his standard bearer, and ordered him to take his shroud upon a pole, and go out to the camp with it, and declare that of all his conquests, victories, and triumphs, he had nothing now left him, but that piece of linen to wrap his body in for burial.

3. "This world is a false friend," who leaves a man in time of greatest need, and flees from him when he has most to do. When you are lying on a deathbed, all your friends and relatives cannot rescue you; all your substance cannot ransom you, nor procure you a reprieve for one day; no, not for one hour! Yes, the more you possess of this world's goods, your sorrow at death is likely to be the greater; for though one may live more commodiously in a palace than in a cottage, yet he may die more easily in the cottage, where he has very little to make him fond of life.

It may serve as **a storehouse for Christian contentment and patience under worldly losses and crosses**. A close application of the doctrine of death is an excellent remedy against fretting, and gives some ease to a troubled heart. When Job had sustained very great losses, he sat down contented, with this meditation, Job 1:21, "Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." When Providence brings a mortality or disease among your cattle, how ready are you to fret and complain! but the serious consideration of your own death, to which you have a notable help from such providential occurrences, may be of use to silence your complaints, and quiet your spirits. Look to "the house appointed for all living," and learn,

1. That you must suffer a more severe tragedy than the loss of worldly goods.

Do not cry out because of an illness in the leg or arm—for before long there will be a long home thrust at the heart. You may lose your dearest relations—the wife may lose her husband, and the husband his wife; the parents may lose their dear children and the children their parents; but if any of these trials happen to you, remember you must lose your own life at last; and "Why does a living man complain?" Lam. 3:39. It is always profitable to consider, under affliction, that our case might have been worse than it is. Whatever is consumed, or taken from us, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we ourselves are not consumed," ver. 22.

2. It is but for a short space of time that we are in this world. It is but a little

that our necessities require in so short a space of time; when death comes, we shall stand in need of none of these things. Why should men rack their heads with cares how to provide for tomorrow; while they know not if they shall then need anything? Though a man's provision for his journey be nearly spent, he is not disquieted, if he thinks he is near home. Are you working by candle light, and is there *little* of your candle left? It may be there is as little sand in your glass; and if so, you have little use for it.

3. You have matters of great weight that challenge your care. Death is at the door, beware that you lose not your souls. If blood breaks out at one part of the body, they often open a vein in another part of it, to turn the stream of the blood, and to stop it. Thus the Spirit of God sometimes cures men of sorrow for earthly things, by opening the heart-vein to bleed for sin. Did we pursue heavenly things more vigorously when our affairs in this life prosper not, we should thereby gain a double advantage—our worldly sorrow would be diverted, and our best treasure increased.

4. Crosses of this nature will not last long. The world's smiles and frowns will quickly be buried together in everlasting forgetfulness. Its *smiles* go away like foam on the water; and its *frowns* are as a passing ache in a man's side. Time flies away with swift wings, and carries our earthly comforts, and crosses too, along with it—neither of them will accompany us into "the house appointed for all living." "For in death the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. Even prisoners are at ease in death, with no guards to curse them. Rich and poor are there alike, and the slave is free from his master." Job 3:17-19.

Cast a look into eternity, and you will see affliction here in this world, is but for a moment. The truth is, our time is so very short, that it will not allow either our joys or griefs to come to perfection. Therefore, let them "that weep be as though they wept not; and those who rejoice as though they rejoiced not," etc., 1 Cor. 7:29-31.

5. Death will put all men on the same level. The king and the beggar must dwell in one house, when they come to their journey's end; though their entertainment by the way may be very different. "The small and the great are there," Job 3:19. We are all in this world as on a stage; it is no great matter, whether a man acts the part of a prince or a peasant, for when they have acted their parts, they must both get behind the curtain, and appear no more.

6. If you are not in Christ, whatever your afflictions now be, "troubles a thousand times worse, are abiding you in another world." *Death will turn your crosses into pure unmingled curses!* and then, how gladly would you return to your former afflicted state, and purchase it at any rate, were there any possibility of such a return.

7. If you are in Christ, you may well bear your cross. *Death will put an end to*

all your troubles. If a man on a journey is not well accommodated, where he lodges only for a night, he will not trouble himself much about the matter; because he is not to stay there, it is not his home. *You are on the road to eternity!* let it not distress you that you meet with some hardships in the 'inn of this world'. Fret not, because it is not so well with you as with some others. One man travels with a cane in his hand; his fellow traveler, perhaps, has but a common staff or stick—either of them will serve the turn. It is no great matter which of them be yours; both will be laid aside when you come to your journey's end.

It may serve for a bridle, to curb all manner of lusts, particularly those conversant about the body. A serious visit made to cold death, and that solitary mansion, the grave, might be of good use to repress them.

(1.) It may be of use to cause men to cease from their INORDINATE CARE FOR THE BODY; which is to many the bane of their souls. Often do these questions, "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and with what shall we be clothed?" leave no room for another of more importance, namely, "With what shall I come before the Lord?" The *soul* is put on the shelf, to answer these base questions in favor of the *body*; while its own eternal interests are neglected. But ah! why are men so busy to repair *the ruinous cottage*; leaving *the inhabitant* to bleed to death of his wounds, unheeded, unregarded? Why so much care for the body, to the neglect of the concerns of the immortal soul? O do not be so anxious for what can only serve your bodies; since, before long, the clods of cold earth will serve for back and belly too!

(2.) It may abate your pride on account of BODILY ENDOWMENTS, which vain man is apt to glory in. Value not yourselves on the blossom of youth; for while you are in your blooming years, you are *but ripening for a grave*; death gives the fatal stroke, without asking any body's age. Do not boast in your strength, it will quickly be gone—*the time will soon be, when you shall not be able to turn yourselves on a bed*; and you must be carried by your grieving friends to your long home. And what signifies your healthful constitution? Death does not always enter in soonest where it begins soonest to knock at the door; but makes as great dispatch with some in a few hours, as with others in many years.

Do not value yourselves on your beauty, which "shall consume in the grave," Psalm 49:14. Remember the change which death makes on the fairest face, Job 14:20—"You always overpower them, and then they pass from the scene. You disfigure them in death and send them away." Death makes the greatest beauty so loathsome, that it must be buried out of sight. Could a mirror be used in "the house appointed for all living," it would be a terror to those who now look oftener into their mirrors than into their Bibles. And what though the body be gorgeously arrayed? The finest *clothes* are but badges of our sin and shame; and in a little time will be exchanged for a shroud, when the body will become a feast to the worms!

(3.) It may be A CHECK UPON SENSUALITY AND FLESHLY LUSTS. 1 Peter 2:11, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." It is hard to cause wet wood to take fire; and when the fire does take hold of it, it is soon extinguished. Sensuality makes men most unfit for divine communications, and is an effectual means to quench the Spirit. *Intemperance in eating and drinking* carries on the ruin of soul and body at once; and hastens death, while it makes the man most unfit for it. Therefore, "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap." Luke 21:34

But O how often is the soul struck through with a dart, in gratifying the senses! At these doors destruction enters in. Therefore Job "made a covenant with his eyes," chap. 31:1. "The mouth of a strange woman is a deep pit—he that is abhorred of the Lord, shall fall therein," Prov. 22:14. "Let him that stands, take heed lest he fall," 1 Cor. 10:12. Beware of lustful pleasure; study modesty in your apparel, words, and actions. The ravens of the valley of death will at length pick out the lustful eye—the obscene filthy tongue will at length be quiet, in the land of silence; and grim death, embracing the body in its cold arms, will effectually allay the heat of all fleshly lusts!

(4.) In a word, it may CHECK OUR EARTHLY-MINDEDNESS; and at once knock down "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Ah! if we must die why are we *so fond of temporal things*; so anxious to get them, so eager in the embraces of them, so mightily bothered with the loss of them?

Let me, upon a view of "the house appointed for all living," address the worldling in the words of Solomon. Prov. 23:5, "Will you set your eyes upon that which is not?" For riches certainly make themselves wings, "they flee away as an eagle towards heaven." Riches, and all worldly things are but 'a lovely nothing'; they are that which is not. They are not what they seem to be—they are but gilded vanities, that deceive the eye.

Comparatively, they are not; there is infinitely more of nothingness and nonbeing, than of being, or reality, in the best of them. *What is the world and all that is in it*, but a fashion, or fair show, such as men make on the stage—a passing show? 1 Cor. 7:31. Royal pomp is but gaudy show, or appearance, in God's account, Acts 25:23. The best name they get, is good things—but observe it, they are only the *wicked* man's good things, Luke 16:25, "You in your lifetime received your good things," says Abraham, in the parable, to the rich man in hell. Well may the men of the world call these things their goods; for there is no other good in them, about them, nor attending them. Now, will you set your eyes upon empty shadows and fancies? Will you cause your eyes to fly on them, as the word is? Shall men's hearts fly out at their eyes upon them, as a ravenous bird on its prey? If they do, let them know, that at length these shall flee as fast away from them, as their eyes flew upon

them—like a flock of fair-feathered birds, that settle on a fool's ground; which, when he runs to catch them as his own, do immediately take wing, fly away, and sitting down on his neighbor's ground, elude his expectation, Luke 12:20, "*You fool*, this night your soul shall be required of you; then whose shall these things be?"

Though *you* do not make wings to them, as many do; they themselves make wings, and fly away; not as a tame house-bird, which may be caught again; but as an eagle, which quickly flies out of sight, and cannot be recalled. Forbear then to seek these things. O mortal! there is no good reason to be given why you should set your eyes upon them. This world is a great *inn*, on the road to eternity, to which you are traveling. You are attended by those things, as servants belonging to the inn where you lodge—they wait upon you while you are there; and when you go away, they will convoy you to the door. But *they are not yours*, they will not go away with you; but return to wait on other strangers, as they did on you.

4. It may serve as a spring of CHRISTIAN RESOLUTION, to cleave to Christ, adhere to his truths, and continue in his ways; whatever we may suffer for so doing. It would much allay 'the fear of man, that brings a snare'. "Who are you, that you should be afraid of a man that shall die?" Isa. 51:12. Look on persecutors as pieces of brittle clay, that shall be dashed in pieces, for then shall you despise them as foes, that are mortal; whose terror to others in the land of the living, shall quickly die with themselves.

The serious consideration of the shortness of our time, and the certainty of death, will teach us, that all the advantage which we can make by our seeking the world, is not worth the while; it is not worth going out of our way to get it—and what we refuse to forgo for Christ's sake, may be quickly taken from us by death. But we can never lose it so honorably, as for the cause of Christ, and his gospel; for what glory is it, that you give up what you have in the world, when God takes it away from you by death, whether you will or not? This consideration may teach us to undervalue life itself, and choose to forgo it, rather than to sin. The worst that men can do, is to take away that life, which we cannot long keep, though all the world should conspire to help us to retain the spirit. If we refuse to offer it up to God when he calls for it in defense of his honor, he can take it from us another way; as it fared with him, who could not burn as a martyr for Christ, but was afterwards burned by an accidental fire in his house.

5. It may serve for a spur to INCITE US TO PREPARE FOR DEATH. Consider,

(1.) YOUR ETERNAL STATE WILL BE ACCORDING TO THE STATE IN WHICH YOU DIE—death will open the doors of heaven or hell to you. As the tree falls, so it shall lie through eternity. If the infant be dead born, the whole world cannot raise it to life again—and if one die out of Christ, in an

unregenerate state, there is no more hope for him, forever.

(2.) SERIOUSLY CONSIDER WHAT IT IS TO GO INTO THE ETERNAL WORLD; a world of spirits, with which we are very little acquainted. How frightful is converse with spirits to poor mortals in this life! and how dreadful is the case, when men are hurried away into another world, not knowing but that devils may be their companions forever! Let us then give all diligence to make and advance our acquaintance with the Lord of that world.

(3.) IT IS BUT A SHORT TIME YOU HAVE TO PREPARE FOR DEATH—therefore now or never, seeing the time assigned for preparation will soon be over. Eccl. 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might—for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go." *How can we be idle, having so great a work to do, and so little time to do it in?* But if the time is short, the work of preparation for death, though hard work, will not last long. The shadows of the evening make the laborer work cheerfully; knowing the time to be at hand, when he will be called in from his labor.

(4.) MUCH OF OUR SHORT TIME IS OVER ALREADY; and the youngest of us all cannot assure himself, that there is as much of his time to come, as is past. *Our life in the world is but a short preface to long eternity; and much of the tale is told.* Oh! shall we not double our diligence, when so much of our time is spent, and so little of our great work is done?

(5.) THE PRESENT TIME IS FLYING AWAY—and we cannot bring back time past, it has taken an eternal farewell of us—there is no kindling the fire again that is burned to ashes. The time to come is not ours—and we have no assurance of a share in it when it comes. We have nothing we can call ours, but the present moment; and that is flying away. How soon our time may be at an end, we know not. Die we must—but who can tell us when? If death kept one set time for all, we were in no hazard of a surprise—but daily observation shows us, that there is no such thing. The flying shadow of our life allows no time for loitering. The rivers run speedily into the sea, from where they came; but not so speedily as man to dust, from where he came. The stream of time is the swiftest current, and quickly runs out to eternity!

(6.) If once death carries us off, THERE IS NO COMING BACK to mend our matters, Job 14:14, "If a man dies, shall he live again?" Dying is a thing we cannot get a trial of; it is what we can only do once, Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed unto men *once* to die." And that which can be but once done, and yet is of so much importance that our all depends on our doing it right, we have need to use the utmost diligence that we may do it well. Therefore prepare for death. If you who are unregenerate ask me, what you shall do to prepare for death, that you may die safely; I answer, I have told you already what must be done. Your nature and state must be changed—you must be united to Jesus Christ by faith. Until this is done, you are not capable of other directions, which

belongs to a person's dying comfortably.

The difference between the Righteous and the Wicked in their Death.

"The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous has hope in his death." Proverbs 14:32.

This text looks like the cloud between the Israelites and Egyptians; having a dark side towards the latter, and a bright side towards the former. It represents death like Pharaoh's jailor, bringing the chief butler and the chief baker out of prison; the one to be restored to his office, and the other to be led to execution. It shows the difference between the godly and ungodly in their death; who, as they act a very different part in life, so, in death, have a very different exit.

As to the death of a WICKED man, here is,

1. The MANNER of his passing out of the world. He is "*driven away*;" namely, in his death, as is clear from the opposite clause. He is forcibly thrust out of his place in this world; driven away as chaff before the wind.

2. The STATE he passes away in. He dies also in a *sinful* and *hopeless* state.
A. In a sinful state—He is driven away in his wickedness. He lived in it, and he dies in it. His filthy garments of sin in which he wrapped up himself in his life are his prison garments, in which he shall lie wrapped up forever.

B. In a hopeless state—"but the righteous has hope in his death;" which plainly imports the hopelessness of the wicked in their death. Whereby is not meant, that no wicked man shall have *any* hope at all when he is dying, but shall die in despair. No—sometimes it is so indeed; but frequently it is otherwise; foolish virgins may, and often do, hope to the last breath. But the wicked man has no *solid* hope—as for the delusive hopes he entertains himself with, death will root them up, and he shall be forever irretrievably miserable. As to the death of a righteous man, he has hope in his death. This is ushered in with a "but," importing the removal of these dreadful circumstances, with which the wicked man is attended, who is driven away in his wickedness; but the godly are not so.

1. Not so, in the manner of their passing out of the world. The righteous are not driven away as chaff before the wind; but led away as a bride to the marriage chamber, carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22.

2. Not so as to their state, when passing out of this life. The righteous man dies, not in a sinful, but in a holy state. He does not go away *in* his sin, but *out of* it. In his life he was putting off the old man, changing his prison garments; and now the remaining rags of them are removed, and he is adorned with robes of glory. Not in a hopeless, but a hopeful state. He has hope in his death;

he has the grace of hope, and the well-founded expectation of better things than he ever had in this world—and though, the stream of his hope at death may run shallow, yet he has still so much of it as makes him venture his eternal interests upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

DOCTRINE 1. The WICKED dying, are driven away in their wickedness, and in a HOPELESS state. In speaking to this doctrine,

I. I shall show how, and in what sense, the wicked are "driven away in their wickedness" at death.

II. I shall prove the hopelessness of their state at death.

III. And then apply the whole.

I. How, and in what sense, the wicked are "driven away in their wickedness."

In discoursing of this matter, I shall briefly inquire,

1. What is meant by their being "driven away?"

2. Why they shall be driven, and where.

3. In what respects they may be said to be driven away "in their wickedness."

But before I proceed, let me remark, that you are mistaken if you think that no people are to be called wicked, but those who are avowedly vicious and profane; as if the devil could dwell in none but those whose name is Legion. In Scripture account, all who are not righteous, in the manner hereafter explained, are reckoned wicked. Therefore the text divides the whole world into two sorts—"the righteous and the wicked," and you will see the same thing in Malachi 3:18, "Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked." Therefore if you are not righteous, you are wicked. If you have not an *imputed* righteousness, and also an *implanted* righteousness, or united to Christ by faith, however moral and blameless in the eyes of men your conversation may be, you are the wicked who shall be driven away in their wickedness—if death finds you in that state. Now,

1. As to the MEANING of this phrase, "driven away," there are three things in it; the wicked shall be taken away suddenly, violently, and irresistibly.

(1.) Unrenewed men shall be taken away SUDDENLY at death. Not that all wicked men die suddenly; nor that they are all wicked that die so; God forbid. But,

1. Death commonly comes upon them unexpectedly, and so surprises them, as the deluge surprised the old world, though they were forewarned of it long

before it came; and as travail comes on a woman with child, with surprising suddenness, although looked for and expected, 1 Thess. 5:3. Death seizes them, as a creditor does his debtor, to drag him to prison, Psalm 55:15, and that when they are not aware. Death comes in, as a thief, at the window, and finds them full of busy thoughts about this life which that very day perish.

2. Death always seizes them unprepared for it; the old house falls down about their ears, before they have another provided. When death casts them to the door, they have not where to lay their heads; unless it be on a bed of fire and brimstone. The soul and body are as it were hugging one another in mutual embraces; when death comes like a whirlwind, and separates them.

3. Death hurries them away in a moment to destruction, and makes a most dismal change—the man for the most part never knows where he is, until "in *hell* he lift up his eyes," Luke 16:23. The floods of wrath suddenly overwhelm his soul; and before he is aware, he is plunged into the bottomless pit!

(2.) The unrenewed man is taken away out of the world VIOLENTLY.

Driving is a violent action; he is "chased out of the world," Job 18:18. Gladly would he stay, if he could; but death drags him away, like a malefactor to the execution. He sought no other portion than the profits and pleasures of this world—he has no other; he really desires no other—how can he then go away out of it, if he were not *driven*?

Question. "But may not a wicked man be willing to die?" Answer. He may indeed be willing to die; but observe it is only in one of three cases.

1. In a fit of passion, by reason of some trouble that he is impatient to be rid of. Thus, many people, when their passion has got the better of their reason, and when, on that account they are most unfit to die, will be ready to cry, "O to be gone!" But should their desire be granted, and death came at their call, they would quickly show they were not in earnest; and that, if they go, they must be driven away against their wills.

2. When they are brim-full of despair may they be willing to die. Thus Saul murdered himself; and Spira wished to be in hell, that he might know the uttermost of what he believed he was to suffer. In this manner men may seek after death, while it flees from them. But fearful is the violence these undergo, whom the terrors of God do thus drive.

3. When they are dreaming of happiness after death. Foolish virgins, under the power of delusion, as to their state, may be willing to die, having no fear of lying down in sorrow. How many are there, who can give no scriptural ground for their hope, who yet have no bands in their death! Many are driven to darkness 'sleeping'—they go off like lambs, who would roar like lions, did they but know what place they are going to; though the chariot in which they

are, drives furiously to the depths of hell, yet they fear not, because they are fast asleep!

(3.) The unregenerate man is taken away IRRESISTIBLY. He must go, though sore against his will. Death will take no refusal, nor admit of any delay; though the man has not lived half his days, according to his own computation. If he will not *bow*, it will *break* him. If he will not come forth, it will pull the house down about his ears; for there he must not stay. Although the physicians help, friends groan, the wife and children cry, and he himself use his utmost efforts to retain the spirit, his soul is required of him; yield he must, and go where he shall never more see light.

2. Let us consider, WHY they are driven, and WHERE.

When the wicked die,

(1.) They are driven out of this world, where they sinned, into the other world, where they must be judged, and receive their particular sentences, Heb. 9:27, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." They shall no more return to their beloved earth. Though their hearts are wedded to their earthly enjoyments, they must leave them, they can carry nothing hence. How sorrowful must their departure be, when they have nothing in view so good as that which they leave behind them!

(2.) They are driven out of the society of the saints on earth, into the society of the damned in hell, Luke 16:22-23, "The rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lift up his eyes." What a multitude of the devil's goats do now take place among Christ's sheep! but at death they shall be "led forth with the workers of iniquity," Psalm 125:5. There is a *mixed* multitude in this world, but no mixture in the other; each party is there set by themselves. Though hypocrites grow here as *tares* among the wheat, death will root them up, and they shall be bound in bundles for the fire.

(3.) They are driven out of time into eternity! While time lasts with them, there is hope; but when time goes, all hope goes with it. Precious time is now lavishly spent—it lies so heavy on the hands of many, that they think themselves obliged to take several ways to drive away time. But beware of being at a loss what to do in life—improve time for eternity, while you have it; for before long, death will drive it from you, and you from it, so as you shall never meet again.

(4.) They are driven out of their specious 'pretenses to piety'. Death strips them of the splendid robes of a fair profession, with which some of them are adorned; and turns them off the stage, in the rags of a wicked heart and life. The word "hypocrite" properly signifies a stage-player, who *appears* to be what indeed he is not. This world is the stage on which these children of the devil impersonate the children of God. Their 'show of religion' is the player's

coat, under which one must look, who will judge of them aright. Death turns them out of their coat, and they appear in their native dress—it unveils them, and takes off their mask! There are none in the other world, who pretend to be better than they really are. Depraved nature acts in the regions of horror, undisguised!

(5.) They are driven away from all means of grace; and are set beyond the line, quite out of all prospect of mercy. There is no more an opportunity to buy oil for the lamp; it is gone out at death, and can never be lighted again. There may be offers of mercy and peace made, after they are gone; but they are to *others*, not to them—there are no such offers in the place to which they are driven; these offers are only made in that place from which they are driven away.

3. In what respects may they be said to be driven away in their wickedness?
Answer 1. In respect of their being driven away in their sinful unconverted state. Having *lived* enemies to God, they *die* in a state of enmity to him—for none are brought into the eternal state of consummate happiness, but by the way of the state of grace in this life. The child that is dead in the womb, is born dead, and is cast out of the womb into the grave— so, "he who is dead while he lives", or is spiritually dead, is cast forth of the womb of time, in the same state of death, into the pit of utter misery.

O miserable death, to die in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity! It had been incomparably better for such as die thus, that they had never been born!

Answer 2. In regard that they die sinning, acting wickedly against God, in contradiction to the divine law; for they can do nothing but sin while they live—so death takes them in the very act of sinning; violently draws them from the embraces of their lusts, and drives them away to the tribunal, to receive their sentence! It is a remarkable expression, Job 36:14, "They die in youth," the marginal reading is, "their soul dies in youth"—their lusts being lively, their desires vigorous, and expectations big, as is common in youth. "And their life is among the unclean;" or, "And the company" or herd "of them" dies "among the Sodomites," namely, is taken away in the act of their sin and wickedness, as the men of Sodom were, Genesis 19; Luke 17:28, 29.

Answer 3. As they are driven away, loaded with the guilt of all their sins; this is the winding-sheet that shall lie down with them in the dust, Job 20:11. Their works follow them into the other world; they go away with the yoke of their transgressions wreathed about their necks. Guilt is a bad companion in life, but how terrible will it be in death! It lies now, perhaps, like cold brimstone on their benumbed consciences—but when death opens the way for sparks of divine vengeance, like fire, to fall upon it, it will make dreadful flames in the conscience, in which the soul will be, as it were, wrapped up forever!

Answer 4. The wicked are driven away in their wickedness, in so far as they

die under the absolute power of their wickedness. While there is hope, there is some restraint on the worst of men; those moral endowments, which God gives to a number of men, for the benefit of mankind in this life, are so many restraints upon the impetuous wickedness of human nature. But all hope being cut off, and these gifts withdrawn, the wickedness of the wicked will then arrive at its perfection.

As the seeds of *grace*, sown in the hearts of the elect, come to their full maturity at death; so *wicked and hellish dispositions in the reprobate, come then to their highest pitch!* Their prayers to God will then be turned to horrible curses, and their praises to hideous blasphemies, Matthew 25:13, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." This gives a *dismal*, but *correct* view of the state of the wicked in another world.

I shall discover the HOPELESSNESS of the state of unrenewed men at death. It appears to be very hopeless, if we consider these four things.

1. Death cuts off their hopes and prospects of peace and pleasure in this life. Luke 12:19, 20, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you—then who shall have those things which you have provided?" They look for great matters in this world, they hope to increase their wealth, to see their families prosper, and to live at ease; but death comes like a stormy wind, and shakes off all their fond hopes, like green fruit from off a tree. "When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him," Job 20:23. He may begin a web of contrivances for advancing his worldly interest; but before he gets it wrought out, death comes and cuts it off. "His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Psalm 146:4.

2. When death comes, they have no solid ground to hope for eternal happiness. "For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he has gained, when God takes away his soul?" Job 27:8. Whatever hopes they fondly entertain, they are not founded on God's word, which is the only sure ground of hope; if they knew their own case, they would see themselves only happy in a 'dream'. And indeed what hope can they have? The law is plain against them, and condemns them. The curses of it, those cords of death, are about them already. The Savior whom they slighted, is now their Judge; and their Judge is their enemy! How then can they hope? They have bolted the door of mercy against themselves, by their unbelief. They have despised the remedy, and therefore must die without mercy. They have no saving interest in Jesus Christ, the only channel of conveyance through which mercy flows—and therefore they can never taste it.

The 'sword of justice' guards the door of mercy, so as none can enter in, but the members of the mystical body of Christ, over whose head is a covert of atoning blood, the Mediator's blood. These indeed may pass without a harm, for justice has nothing to require of them. But others cannot pass, since they

are not in Christ—death comes to them with the sting in it—the sting of unpardoned guilt. It is armed against them with all the force which the sanction of a holy law can give it. 1 Cor. 15:56, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." When that law was given on Sinai, "the whole mount quaked greatly," Exodus 19:18. When the Redeemer was making satisfaction for the elect's breaking it, "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent," Matt, 27:51.

What possible ground of hope, then, is there to the wicked man, when death comes upon him armed with the force of this law? How can he escape that fire, which "burnt unto the midst of heaven?" Deut. 4:11. How shall he be able to stand in that smoke, that "ascended up as the smoke of a furnace?" Exod. 19:18. How will he endure the terrible "thunders and lightnings," verse 16, and dwell in "the darkness, clouds, and thick darkness?" Deut. 4:11. All these comparisons heaped together do but faintly represent the fearful tempest of wrath and indignation, which shall pursue the wicked to the lowest hell; and forever abide on those who are driven to darkness at death.

3. Death roots up their delusive hopes of eternal happiness; then it is that their covenant with death and agreement with hell, is broken. They are awakened out of their golden dreams, and at length lift up their eyes; Job 8:14, "Whose hope shall be cut off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web." They trust that all shall be well with them after death—but their trust is as a web woven out of their own bowels, with a great deal of art and industry. They wrap themselves up in their hope, as the spider wraps herself in her web. But it is a weak and slender defense; for however it may withstand the threatenings of the word of God; death, that broom of destruction, will sweep them and it both away, so as there shall not be the least shred of it left; and he, who this moment will not let his hope go, shall next moment be utterly hopeless. Death overturns the house built on the sand; it leaves no man under the power of delusion.

4. Death makes their state absolutely and forever hopeless. Matters cannot be retrieved and amended after death. For,

1. Time once gone can never be recalled. If cries or tears, price or pains, could bring time back again, the wicked man might have hope in his death. But tears of blood will not prevail! Nor will his *roaring* for millions of ages cause it to return! The sun will not stand still for the sluggard to awake and enter on his journey; and when once it is gone down, he needs not expect the night to be turned into day for his sake—he must lodge through the long night of eternity, where his time left him.

2. There is no returning to this life, to amend what is amiss; it is a state of probation and trial, which terminates at death; therefore we cannot return to it again; it is but once we thus live, and once we die. Death carries the wicked man to "his own place," Acts 1:25. This life is our working day. Death closes our day and our work together. We may readily admit the wicked might have

some hope in their death, if, after death has opened their eyes, they could return to life, and have but the trial of one Sabbath, one offer of Christ, one day, or but one hour more, to make up their peace with God—but "man lies down, and rises not until the heavens be no more; they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep," Job 14:12.

3. In the other world, men have no access to get their ruined state and condition retrieved, though they be ever so desirous of it. "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go," Eccl. 9:10. *Now* a man may flee from the wrath to come; he may get into a refuge. But when once death has done its work, "the door is shut!" there are no more offers of mercy, no more pardons—where the tree is fallen, there it must lie.

Let what has been said be carefully pondered; and that it may be of use, let me exhort you,

First, To take heed that you entertain no hopes of heaven, but what are built on a solid foundation—tremble to think what fair hopes of happiness death sweeps away, like cobwebs; how the hopes of many are cut off, when they seem to themselves to be at the very threshold of heaven; how, in the moment they expected to be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, into the regions of bliss and peace; they are carried by devils into the society of the damned in hell, into the place of torment, and regions of horror!

I beseech you to BEWARE—

1. Of a hope built upon ground that was never cleared. The wise builder dug deep, Luke 6:48. Were your hopes of heaven never shaken; but have you had good hopes all your days? Alas for it! you may see the mystery of your case explained, Luke 11:21, When a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are at peace. But if they have been shaken, take heed lest some breaches only have been made in the old building, which you have got repaired again, by ways and means of your own. I assure you, that your hope, however fair a building it is, is not fit to trust to, unless your old hopes have been razed, and you have built on a foundation quite new.

2. Beware of that hope which looks bright in the dark, but loses all its luster when it is set in the light of God's word, when it is examined and tried by the touchstone of divine revelation, John 3:20, 21, "for every one that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that does the truth, comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." That hope, which cannot abide *scripture trial*, but sinks when searched into by sacred truth, is a delusion, and not a true hope—for God's word is always a friend to the graces of God's Spirit, and an enemy to delusion.

3. Beware of that hope, which stands without being supported by scriptural evidences. Alas! many are big with hopes, who cannot give, because they really have not, any scripture grounds for them. You hope that all will be well with you after death—but what word of God is it, on which you have been caused to hope? Psalm 119:49. What scriptural evidence have you to prove that yours is not the hope of the hypocrite? What have you, after impartial self-examination, as in the sight of God, found in yourself, which the word of God determines to be a sure evidence of his right to eternal life, who is possessed of it? Numbers are ruined with such hopes as stand unsupported by scriptural evidence. Men are fond and tenacious of these hopes; but death will throw them down, and leave the self-deceiver hopeless.

4. Beware of that hope of heaven, which does not prepare and dispose you for heaven, which never makes your soul more holy, 1 John 3:3, "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure." The hope of the most part of men, is rather a hope to be free from pain and torment in another life; than a hope of true happiness, the nature whereof is not understood and discerned. Therefore it rests in sloth and indolence, and does not excite to mortification and a heavenly life. So far are they from hoping aright for heaven, that they must own, if they speak their genuine sentiments, removing out of this world into any other place whatever, is rather their *fear* than their *hope*.

The glory of the heavenly city does not at all draw their hearts upwards to it, nor do they lift up their heads with joy, in the prospect of arriving at it. If they had the true hope of the marriage day, they would, as the bride, the "Lamb's wife," be "making themselves ready for it," Rev. 19:7. But their hopes are produced by their sloth, and their sloth is nourished by their hopes. Oh, Sirs, as you would not be driven away helpless in your death, beware of these hopes! Raze them now, and build on a new foundation, lest death leave not one stone of them upon another, and you never be able to hope any more. Secondly, Hasten, O sinners, out of your wickedness, out of your sinful state, and out of your wicked life, if you would not at death be *driven* away in your wickedness! Remember the fatal end of the wicked as the text represents it. I know there is a great difference in the death of the wicked, as to some circumstances—but ALL of them, in their death, agree in this, that they are driven away in their wickedness. Some of them die resolutely, as if they scorned to be afraid; some in raging despair, so filled with horror that they cry out as if they were already in hell; others in sullen despondency, oppressed with fears, so that their hearts sink within them, at the remembrance of misspent time, and the view which they have of eternity, having neither head nor heart to do anything for their own relief. And others die stupidly; they live like beasts, and they die like beasts, without any concern on their spirits, about their eternal state. They groan under their *bodily* distress but have no sense of the danger of their *soul*! One may, with almost as much prospect of success, speak to a stone, as speak to them; vain is the attempt to teach them; nothing that can be said moves them. To discourse to them, either of the joys

of heaven on the torments of hell, is to plough on a rock, or beat the air. Some die like the foolish virgins, dreaming of heaven; their foreheads are steeled against the fears of hell, with presumptuous hopes of heaven. The business of those who would be useful to them, is not to answer doubts about the case of their souls, but to discover to them their own false hopes. But which way soever the unconverted man dies, he is "driven away in his wickedness." O dreadful case! Oh, let the consideration of so horrid a departure out of this world, move you to flee to Jesus Christ, as the all-sufficient Savior, an almighty Redeemer. Let it prevail to drive you out of your wickedness, to holiness of heart and life. Though you reckon it pleasant to live in wickedness, yet you cannot but own, it is bitter to die in it. And if you leave it not in time, you must go on in your wickedness to hell, the *proper* place of it, that it may be set there on its own base. For when you are passing out of this world, all your sins, from the first to the last of them, will swarm about you, hang upon you, accompany you to the other world, and, as so many furies, surround you there forever.

Thirdly, O be concerned for *others*, especially for your relations, that they may not continue in their sinful natural state, but be brought into a state of salvation; lest they be driven away in their wickedness at death. What would you not do to prevent any of your friends dying an untimely and violent death? But, alas! do you not see them in hazard of being driven away in their wickedness! Is not death approaching them, even the *youngest* of them? And are they not strangers to true Christianity, remaining in that state which they came into the world? Oh! make haste to pluck the brand out of the fire, lest it be burned to ashes! The death of relations often leaves a sting in the hearts of those they leave behind them, because they did not do for their souls as they had opportunity; and because the opportunity is forever taken out of their hands.

Doctrine II.

The state of the GODLY in death is a HOPEFUL state.

We have seen the dark side of the cloud looking towards ungodly men, passing out of the world; let us now take a view of the bright side of it, shining on the godly, as they enter on their eternal state. In discoursing on this subject, I shall confirm this doctrine, answer an objection against it, and then make some practical improvement of the whole.

I. For CONFIRMATION, let it be observed, that although the passage out of this world by death has a frightful aspect to poor mortals, and to miscarry in it must needs be of fatal consequence; yet the following circumstances make the state of the godly in their death, happy and hopeful.

1. They have a trusty good Friend before them in the other world. Jesus Christ, their best Friend, is Lord of the land to which death carries them.

When Joseph sent for his father to come down to him to Egypt, telling him, "God had made him lord over all Egypt," Gen. 45:9, "And Jacob "saw the wagons Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob revived," verse 27. He resolves to undertake the journey.

I think, when the Lord calls a godly man out of the world, he sends him such glad tidings, and such a kind invitation into the other world, that, he has faith to believe it, his spirit must revive, when he sees the 'wagon of death' which comes to carry him there. It is true, indeed, he has a weighty trial to undergo—after death the judgment. But the case of the godly is altogether hopeful; for the *Lord* of the land is their *husband*, and their husband is the *judge*. "The Father has committed all judgment unto the Son," John 5:22. Surely the case of the wife is hopeful, when her own husband is her judge, even such a husband as hates divorce. No husband is so loving and so tender of his spouse, as the Lord Christ is of his. One would think it would be a very bad land, which a wife would not willingly go to, where her husband is the ruler and judge.

Moreover, their judge is the *advocate*, 1 John 2:1, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Therefore they need not fear their being put back, and falling into condemnation. What can be more favorable? Can they think, that he who pleads their cause, will himself pass sentence against them?

Yet further, their advocate is their *Redeemer*; they are "redeemed with the precious blood of Christ," 1 Pet. 1:18, 19. So when he pleads for them, he is pleading his own cause. Though an advocate may be careless of the interest of one who employs him, yet surely he will do his utmost to defend his *own* right, which he has purchased with his money—and shall not their advocate defend the purchase of his own blood?

But more than all that, their Redeemer is their *head*, and they are his members, Eph. 5:23, 30. Though one were so silly as to let his own *purchase* go, without standing up to defend his right, yet surely he will not part with a *limb* of his own body. Is not their case then hopeful in death, who are so closely linked and allied to the Lord of the other world, who are "the keys of hell and of death?"

2. They shall have a safe passage to another world. They must indeed go through "the valley of the shadow of death;" but though it be in itself a 'dark and shady valley', it shall be a 'valley of hope' to them—they shall not be driven through it, but be as men in perfect safety, who fear no evil, Psalm 23:4.

Why should they thus fear? They have the Lord of the land's safe conduct, his pass sealed with his own blood; namely, the blessed covenant, which is the saint's death-bed comfort, 2 Sam. 23:5, "Although my house be not so with

God, yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure—for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow." Who then can harm them? It is safe riding in Christ's chariot, Cant. 3:9, both through life and death. They have good and honorable attendants—a guard, even a guard of angels. These encamp about them in the time of their *life*; and surely will not leave them in the day of their *death*. These happy ministering spirits are attendants on their Lord's bride, and will doubtless convey her safe home to his house.

When friends in mournful mood stand by the saint's bedside, waiting to see him draw his last breath, his soul is waited for by angels, to be carried into Abraham's bosom, Luke 16:22. The captain of the saint's salvation is the captain of this holy guard—he was their guide even unto death, and he will be their guide through it too, Psalm 23:4, "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for you are with me." They may, without fear, pass that 'river', being confident it shall not overflow them; and they may walk through that 'fire', being sure they shall not be burnt by it. *Death can do them no harm!* It cannot even hurt their bodies—for though it separate the soul from the body, it cannot separate the body from the Lord Jesus Christ. Even death is to them but 'sleep in Jesus', 1 Thess. 4:14. They continue members of Christ, though in a grave. Their dust is precious dust; laid up in the grave as in their Lord's cabinet. They lie in a grave 'mellowing', as precious fruit laid up to be brought forth to him at the resurrection. The husbandman has corn in his barn, and corn lying in the ground—the latter is more precious to him than the former, because he looks to get it returned with increase. Even so the dead bodies of the saints are valued by their Savior—they are "sown in corruption," to be "raised in incorruption"; "sown in dishonor," to be "raised in glory," 1 Cor. 15:42, 43. It cannot hurt their souls. It is with the souls of the saints at death, as with Paul and his company in their voyage, whereof we have the history, Acts, chapter 27. The ship was broken to pieces, but the passengers got all safe to land.

When the dying saint's speech is stopped, his eyes set, and his last breath drawn, the soul gets safe away into the heavenly paradise, leaving the body to return to its earth, but in the joyful hope of a reunion at its glorious resurrection. But how can death hurt the godly? It is a foiled enemy—if it casts them down, it is only that they may rise more glorious. "Our Savior Jesus Christ has abolished death," 2 Tim. 1:10. The soul and life of it is gone—it is but a 'walking shadow' that may *fright*, but cannot *hurt* saints—it is only the 'shadow of death' to them—it is not the thing itself; their dying is 'but as dying', or 'somewhat like dying'.

The apostle tells us, "It is Christ that died," Rom. 8:34. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, though stoned to death, yet only 'fell asleep', Acts 7:60. Certainly the nature of death is quite changed, with respect to the saints. It is not to them, what it was to Jesus Christ their head—it is not the venomous ruining thing, wrapped up in the sanction of the first covenant, Gen. 2:17, "In

the day you eat thereof, you shall surely die." It comes to the godly without a sting—they may meet it with that salutation, "O death, where is your sting?" Is this Mara? Is this 'bitter' death? It went out full into the world, when the first Adam opened the door to it, but the second Adam has brought it again empty to his own people.

I feel a *sting*, may the dying saint say—yet it is but a bee sting, slinging only through the *skin*—but, O death, where is your sting, your old sting, the serpent's sting, that stings to the *heart* and *soul*? The sting of death is sin—but that is taken away. If death arrests the saint, and carries him before the Judge, to answer for the debt he contracted, the debt will be found paid by the glorious Surety; and he has the discharge to show. The *thorn of guilt* is pulled out of the man's conscience; and his name is blotted out of the black roll, and written among the living in Jerusalem.

It is true, it is a great journey through the valley of the shadow of death—but the saint's burden is taken away from his back, his iniquity is pardoned, he may walk at ease—"No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast," the redeemed may walk at leisure there, free from all apprehensions of danger. 3. They shall have a joyful entrance into the other world. Their arrival in the regions of bliss, will be celebrated with rapturous hymns of praise to their glorious Redeemer. A *dying* day is a *good* day to a godly man. Yes, it is his *best* day; it is better to him than his birth-day, or than the most joyous day which he ever had on earth. "A good name," says the wise man, is "better than precious ointment—and the day of death, than the day of one's birth," Eccl. 7:1.

The notion of the immortality of the soul, and of future happiness, which obtained among some pagan nations, had wonderful effects on them. Some of them, when they mourned for the dead, did it in women's apparel; that, being moved with the indecency of the garb, they might the sooner lay aside their mourning. Others buried them without any lamentation or mourning; but had a sacrifice, and a feast for friends, upon that occasion. Some were used to mourn at births, and rejoice at burials. But the practice of some Indian nations is yet more strange, where, upon the husband's decease, his wife, or wives, with a cheerful countenance, enter the flames prepared for the husband's corpse.

But however *false notions* of a future state, assisted by pride, affectation of applause, apprehensions of difficulties in this life, and such like principles proper to depraved human nature, may influence crude uncultivated minds, when strengthened by the arts of hell; O what solid joy and consolation may they have, who are true Christians, being in Christ, who "has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel!" 2 Tim. 1:10. Death is one of those "all things," that "work together for good to those who love God," Rom. 8:28. When the *body* dies, the *soul* is perfected—the 'body of death' goes off at the 'death of the body'.

What harm did the jailer do to Pharaoh's butler, when he opened the prison door to him, and let him out? Is the bird in worse case, when at liberty, than when confined in a cage? Thus, and no worse, are the souls of the saints treated by death. It comes to the godly man, as Haman came to Mordecai, with the royal apparel and the horse, Esther 6:11, with commission to do them honor, however awkwardly it be performed. I question not but Haman performed the ceremony with a very ill mien, a pale face, a downcast look, and a cloudy countenance, and like one who came to hang him, rather than to honor him. But he whom the king delighted to honor, must be honored; and Haman, Mordecai's grand enemy, must be the man employed to put this honor upon him. Glory, glory, glory, blessing and praise to our Redeemer, our Savior, our Mediator, by whose death, 'grim devouring death' is made to do such a good office to those whom it might otherwise have hurried away in their wickedness, to utter and eternal destruction!

A dying day is, in itself, a *joyful* day to the godly; it is their redemption day, when the captives are delivered, when the prisoners are set free. It is the day of the pilgrims coming home from their pilgrimage; the day in which the heirs of glory return from their travels, to their own country, and their Father's house; and enter into actual possession of the glorious inheritance. It is their marriage day—now is the time of espousals; but then the marriage is consummated, and a marriage feast begun, which has no end. If so, is not the state of the godly in death, a *hopeful* state?

II. Objection—"But if the state of the godly in their death be so hopeful, how comes it to pass that many of them, when dying, are full of fears, and have little hope?"

Answer—It must be owned, that saints do not all die in one and the same manner; there is a diversity among them, as well as among the wicked; yet the *worst* case of a dying saint is indeed a *hopeful* one. Some die triumphantly, in a full assurance of faith. 2 Timothy 4:6-8, "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." They get a taste of the joys of heaven, while here on earth; and begin the songs of Zion, while yet in a strange land.

Others die in a solid dependence of faith on their Lord and Savior—though they cannot sing triumphantly, yet they can, and will say confidently, "The Lord is their God." Though they cannot triumph over death, with old Simeon, having Christ in his arms, and saying, "Lord now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word—for my eyes have seen your salvation," Luke 2:29, 30; yet they can say with dying Jacob, "I have waited for your salvation, Lord," Gen. 49:18. His left hand is under their head, to support them, though his right hand does not embrace them—they firmly believe, though they are not filled with joy in believing. They can plead the covenant, and hang by the promise, although their house is not so with God as they could wish.

But the dying day of some saints may be like that day mentioned in Zechariah 14:7, "Not day, nor night." They may die under great doubts and fears; setting as it were in a cloud, and going to heaven in a mist. They may go mourning without the sun, and never put off their spirit of heaviness, until death strips them of it. They may be carried to heaven through the confines of hell; and may be pursued by the devouring lion, even to the very gates of the new Jerusalem; and may be compared to a ship almost wrecked in sight of the harbor, which yet gets safe into her port, 1 Cor. 3:15, "If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss—but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." There is safety amid their fears, but danger in the wicked's strongest confidence; and there is a blessed seed of gladness in their greatest sorrows—"Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart," Psalm 97:11.

Now, saints are liable to such perplexity in their death, because, though they are Christians indeed, yet they are men of like passions with others; and *death is a frightful object in itself*, whatever dress it appears in—the stern countenance with which it looks at mortals, can hardly fail of causing them to shrink. Moreover, the saints are of all men the most jealous of themselves. They think of eternity, and of a tribunal, more deeply than others do; with them it is a more serious thing to die, than the rest of mankind are aware of. They know the deceits of the heart, the subtleties of depraved human nature, better than others do. Therefore they may have much to do to keep up hope on a death-bed; while others pass off quietly, like sheep to the slaughter; and the rather, that Satan, who uses all his art to support the hopes of the hypocrite, will do his utmost to mar the peace, and increase the fears, of the saint.

And finally, the bad frame of spirit, and ill condition, in which death sometimes seizes a true Christian, may cause this perplexity. By his being in the state of grace, he is indeed always habitually prepared for death, and his dying safely is ensured—but yet there is more necessary to his actual preparation and dying comfortably, his spirit must be in good condition too. Therefore there are three cases, in which death cannot but be very uncomfortable to a child of God—

1. If it seizes him at a time when the guilt of some particular sin, unrepented of, is lying on his conscience—and death comes on that very account, to take him out of the land of the living; as was the case of many of the Corinthian believers, 1 Cor. 11:30, "For this cause," namely, of unworthy communicating, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." If a person is surprised with the approach of death, while lying under the guilt of some unpardoned sin, it cannot but cause a mighty consternation.

2. When death catches him napping. The midnight cry must be frightful to sleeping virgins. The man who lies in a ruinous house, and awakes not until

the timbers begin to crack, and the stones to drop down about his ears, may indeed get out of it safely, but not without fears of being crushed by its fall. When a Christian has been going on in a course of security and backsliding, and awakens not until death comes to his bedside, it is no wonder that he gets a fearful awakening.

3. When he has lost sight of his saving interest in Christ, and cannot produce evidences of his title to heaven. It is hard to meet death without some evidences of a title to eternal life at hand; hard to go through the dark valley without the candle of the Lord shining upon the head. It is a terrible adventure to launch out into eternity, when a man can make no better of it than a leap in the dark, not knowing where he shall land, whether in heaven or hell.

Nevertheless the state of the saints, in their death, is always in itself hopeful. The presumptuous hopes of the ungodly, in their death, cannot make their state hopeful; neither can the fears of a saint make his state hopeless—for God judges according to the truth of the thing, not according to men's opinions about it. Therefore the saints can be no more altogether without hope, than they can be altogether without faith. Their faith may be very weak, but it fails not; and their hope very low, yet they will, and do hope to the end. Even while the godly seem to be carried away with the stream of doubts and fears, there remains still as much hope as determines them to lay hold on the tree of life that grows on the banks of the river. Jonah 2:4, "Then I said, I am cast out of your sight—yet I will look again toward your temple."

USE—

This speaks comfort to the godly against the fear of death. A godly man may be called a happy man before his death, because, whatever befalls him in life, he shall certainly be happy at death. You who are in Christ, who are true Christians, have hope in your end; and such a hope as may comfort you against all those fears which arise from the consideration of a dying hour. This I shall branch out, in answering some cases briefly—

Case 1—"The prospect of death," will some of the saints say, "is uneasy to me, not knowing what shall become of my family when I am gone."

Answer. The righteous has hope in his death, as to his family, as well as himself. Although you have little, for the present, to live upon; which has been the condition of many of God's chosen ones, 1 Cor. 4:11, "We," namely, the apostles, "both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place;" and though you have nothing to leave them, as was the case of that son of the prophets, who feared the Lord, and yet died in debt which he was unable to pay, as his poor widow represents, 2 Kings 4:2; yet you have a good Friend to leave them to; a covenant God, to whom you may confidently commit them. "Leave your fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let your widows trust in me." Jer. 49:11.

The world can bear witness of signal settlements made upon the children of providence; such as by their pious parents have been cast upon God's providential care. It has been often remarked, that they lacked neither provision nor education. Moses is an eminent instance of this. He, though he was an outcast infant, Exod. 2:3, yet became learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, Acts 7:22, and became king in Jeshurun, Deut. 33:5. O! may we not be ashamed, that we do not confidently trust him with the concerns of our families, to whom, as our Savior and Redeemer, we have committed our eternal interests?

Case 2—"Death will take us away from our dear friends; yes, we shall not see the Lord in the land of the living, in the blessed ordinances."

Answer—It will take you to your best Friend, the Lord Christ. The friends you leave behind you, if they be indeed people of worth, you will meet again, when they come to heaven, and you will never be separated any more. If death takes you away from the temple below, it will carry you to the temple above. It will indeed take you from the *streams*, but it will set you down by the *fountain*. If it puts out your candle, it will carry you where there is no night, where there is an eternal day.

Case 3—"I have so much to do, in time of health, to satisfy myself as to my interest in Christ, about my being a real Christian, a regenerate man, that I judge it is almost impossible I should die comfortably."

Answer—If it is thus with you, then double your diligence to make your calling and election sure. Endeavor to grow in knowledge, and walk closely with God—be diligent in self-examination; and pray earnestly for the Holy Spirit, whereby you may know the things freely given you of God. If you are enabled, by the power and Spirit of Christ, thus diligently to prosecute your spiritual concerns, though the time of your life be neither day nor night, yet at evening time it may be light.

Many weak Christians indulge doubts and fears about their spiritual state, as if they placed at least some part of religion in their imprudent practice; but towards the end of life, they think and act in another manner. The traveler, who reckons that he has time to spare, may stand still debating with himself, whether this or the other be the right way—but when the sun begins to set, he is forced to lay aside his scruples, and resolutely to go forward in the road which he judges to be the right one, lest he lie all night in the open fields. Thus some Christians, who perplex themselves much, throughout the course of their lives, with jealous doubts and fears, content themselves when they come to die, with such evidences of the safety of their state, as they could not be satisfied with before; and by disputing less against themselves, and believing more, court the peace they formerly rejected, and gain it too.

Case 4—"I am under a sad decay, in respect of my spiritual condition."

Answer—Bodily consumptions may make death easy—but it is not so in spiritual decays. I will not say, that a godly man cannot be easy in such a case, when he dies, but I believe it is rarely so. Ordinarily, I suppose a cry comes to awaken sleeping virgins, before death comes. Samson is set to grind in the prison, until his locks grow again. David and Solomon fell under great spiritual decays; but before they died, they recovered their spiritual strength and vigor. However, bestir yourselves without delay, to strengthen the things that remain—your fright will be the less, for being awakened from spiritual sleep before death comes to your bedside—and you ought to lose no time, seeing you know not how soon death may seize you.

Case 5—"It is terrible to think of the other world, that world of spirits, which I have so little acquaintance with."

Answer—Your best friend is Lord of that other world. Abraham's bosom is kindly even to those who never saw his face. After death, your soul becomes capable of converse with the blessed inhabitants of that other world. The spirits of just men made perfect, were once such as your spirit now is. And as for the angels, however superior their nature in the rank of beings, yet our nature is dignified above theirs, in the man Christ, and they are all of them your Lord's servants, and so your fellow-servants.

Case 6—"The pangs of death are terrible."

Answer—Yet not so terrible as pangs of conscience, caused by a piercing sense of guilt, and apprehensions of divine wrath, with which I suppose them to be not altogether unacquainted. But who would not endure bodily sickness, that the soul may become sound, and every whit whole? Each pang of death will set sin a step nearer the door; and with the last breath, the body of sin will breathe out its last. The pains of death will not last long; and the Lord your God will not leave, but support you under them.

Case 7—"But I am likely to be cut off in the midst of my days."

Answer—Do not complain, you will be the sooner at home—you thereby have the advantage of your fellow-laborers, who were at work before you in the vineyard. God, in the course of his providence, hides some of his saints early in the grave, that they may be taken away from the evil to come. An early removal out of this world, prevents much sin and misery. They have no ground of complaint, who get the residue of their years in Immanuel's land. Surely you shall live as long as you have work cut out for you by the great Master, to be done for him in this world—and when that is at an end, it is high time to be gone.

Case 8—"I am afraid of sudden death."

Answer—You may indeed die so. Good Eli died suddenly, 1 Sam. 4:18. Yet

death found him watching, ver. 13. "Watch, therefore, for you know not what hour the Lord does come," Matt. 24:42. But be not afraid, it is an inexpressible comfort, that death, come when it will, can never catch you out of Christ; and therefore can never seize you, as a jailor, to hurry you into the prison of hell. Sudden death may hasten and facilitate your passage to heaven, but can do you no prejudice.

Case 9—"I am afraid it will be my lot to die lacking the exercise of reason."
Answer—I make no question but a child of God, a true Christian, may die in this case. But what harm? There is no hazard in it, as to his eternal state—a disease at death may divest him of his reason, but not of his religion. When a man, going on a long voyage, has put his affairs in order, and put all his goods aboard, he himself may be carried on board the ship sleeping—all is safe with him, although he knows not where he is, until he awakes in the ship. Even so the godly man, who dies in this case, may die uncomfortably, but not unsafely.
Case 10—"I am naturally timorous, and the very thoughts of death are terrible to me."

Answer—The less you think on death, the thoughts of it will be the more frightful—make it familiar to you by frequent meditations upon it, and you may thereby quiet your fears. Look at the white and bright side of the cloud—take faith's view of the city that has foundations; so shall you see hope in your death. Be duly affected with the body of sin and death, the frequent interruptions of your communion with God, and with the glory which dwells on the other side of death—this will contribute much to remove slavish fear. *It is a pity that saints should be so fond of life* as they often are—they ought to be always on good terms with death. When matters are duly considered, it might be well expected that every child of God, every regenerate man, should generously profess concerning this life, what Job did, chap. 7:16, "I loath it, I would not live always." In order to gain their hearts to this desirable temper, I offer the following additional considerations.

I. Consider the SINFULNESS that attends life in this world. While you live here, you sin, and see others sinning. You breathe infectious air. You live in pest-house. Is it at all strange to loathe such a life?

1. Your own plague sores are running on you. Does not the sin of your nature make you groan daily? Are you not sensible, that though the cure is begun, it is far from being perfected? Has not the leprosy got into the walls of the house, which cannot be removed without pulling it down? Is not your nature so vitiated, that no less than the separation of the soul from the body can root out the disease? Have you not your sores without, as well as your sickness within? Do you not leave marks of your pollution on whatever passes through your hands? Are not all your actions tainted and blemished with defects and imperfections? Who, then, should be much in love with life, but such whose sickness is their health, and who glory in their shame?

2. The loathsome sores of others are always before your eyes, go where you will. The follies and wickedness of men are everywhere conspicuous, and make but an unpleasant scene. This sinful world is but an unsightly company, a disagreeable crowd, in which the most loathsome are the most numerous.

3. Are not your own sores often breaking out again after healing? Frequent relapses may well cause us remit of our fondness for this life. To be ever struggling, and anon falling into the mire again, makes weary work. Do you never wish for cold death, thereby effectually to cool the heat of these lusts, which so often take fire again, even after a flood of godly sorrow has gone over them?

4. Do not you sometimes infect others, and others infect you? There is no society in the world, in which every member of it does not sometimes lay a stumbling-block before the rest. The best carry about with them the tinder of a corrupt nature, which they cannot be rid of while they live, and which is liable to be kindled at all times, and in all places—yes, they are apt to inflame others, and become the occasions of sinning. Certainly these things are apt to embitter this life to the saints.

II. Consider the MISERY and TROUBLES that attend it. Rest is desirable, but it is not to be found on this side of the grave.

Worldly troubles attend all men in this life. This world is a sea of trouble, where one wave rolls upon another. They who fancy themselves beyond the reach of trouble, are mistaken—no state, no stage of life, is exempted from it. The *crowned head* is surrounded by thorny cares. *Honor* many times paves the way to deep disgrace. *Riches*, for the most part, are kept to the hurt of the owners. The fairest rose lacks not prickles; and the heaviest cross is sometimes wrapped up in the greatest earthly comfort.

Spiritual troubles attend the saints in this life. They are like travelers journeying in a cloudy night, in which the moon sometimes breaks out from under one cloud, but quickly hides her head again under another—no wonder they long to be at their journey's end. The sudden alterations which the best frame of spirit is liable to, the perplexing doubts, confounding fears, shortlived joys, and long-running sorrows, which have a certain affinity with the present life, must needs create in the saints *a desire to be with Christ, which is best of all*.

Consider the great IMPERFECTIONS attending this life. While the soul is lodged in this cottage of clay, the necessities of the body are many—it is always craving. The mud walls must be repaired and patched up daily, until the clay cottage falls down for good and all. Eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like, are, in themselves, but base employments for a rational creature; and will be reputed such by the heaven-born soul. They are 'badges of imperfection', and, as such, unpleasant to the mind aspiring unto that life and immortality

which is brought to light through the gospel; and would be very grievous, if this state of things were of long continuance.

Does not the gracious *soul* often find itself yoked with the *body*, as with a companion in travel, unable to keep pace with it? When the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak. When the soul would mount upward, the body is a clog upon it, and a stone tied to the foot of a bird attempting to fly. The truth is, O believer, your soul in this body is, at best, but like a diamond in a ring, where much of it is obscured; it is far sunk in the vile clay, until relieved by death. I conclude this subject with a few DIRECTIONS how to prepare for death, so that we may die comfortably. I speak not here of habitual preparation for death, which a true Christian, in virtue of his gracious state, never lacks, from the time he is born again, and united to Christ; but of actual preparation, or readiness in respect of his particular case, frame, and disposition of mind and spirit; the lack of which makes even a saint very unfit to die.

First, Let it be your constant care to keep a clean conscience, "A conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man," Acts 24:16. Beware of a standing controversy between God and you, on the account of some iniquity regarded in the heart. When an honest man is about to leave his country, and not to return, he settles accounts with those he had dealings with, and lays down methods for paying his debts in due time, lest he be reckoned a bankrupt, and arrested by an officer when he is going off. Guilt lying on the conscience, is a fountain of fears, and will readily sting severely, when death stares the criminal in the face. Hence it is, that many, even of God's children, when dying, wish passionately, and desire eagerly, that they may live to do what they ought to have done before that time.

Therefore, walk closely with God; be diligent, strict, and exact in your course—beware of loose, careless, and irregular conversation; as you would not lay up for yourselves anguish and bitterness of spirit, in a dying hour. And because, through the infirmity cleaving to us, in our present state of imperfection, in many things we offend all, renew your repentance daily, and be ever washing in the Redeemer's blood. As long as you are in the world, you will need to wash your feet, John 13:10, that is, to make application of the blood of Christ anew, for purging your consciences from the guilt of daily miscarriages. Let death find you at the 'fountain'; and, if so, it will find you ready to answer at its call.

Secondly, Be always watchful, waiting for your change, "like unto men that wait for their Lord—that when he comes and knocks, they may open unto him immediately," Luke 12:36. Beware of "slumbering and sleeping, while the bridegroom tarries." To be awakened out of spiritual slumber, by a surprising call to pass into another world, is a very frightful thing—but he who is daily waiting for the coming of his Lord, will comfortably receive the 'grim messenger', while he beholds him ushering in him, of whom he may confidently say, "This is my God, and I have waited for him." The way to die

comfortably, is, to die daily! Be often essaying, as it were, to die. Bring yourselves familiarly acquainted with death, by making many visits to the grave, in serious meditations upon it. This was Job's practice, chapter 27:13, 14, "I have made my bed in the darkness." Go and do likewise; and when death comes, you shall have nothing to do but to lie down. "I have said to corruption, You are my father—to the worm, You are my mother and my sister." You say so too; and you will be the fitter to go home to their house. Be frequently reflecting upon your conduct, and considering what course of life you wish to be found in, when death arrests you; and act accordingly. When you do the duties of your station in life, or are employed in acts of worship, think with yourselves, that, it may be, this is the last opportunity; and therefore do it as if you were never to do more of that kind. When you lie down at night, compose your spirits, as if you were not to awake until the heavens be no more. And when you awake in the morning, consider that new day as your last; and live accordingly. Surely that night comes, of which you will never see the morning; or that morning, of which you will never see the night. But which of your mornings or nights will be such, you know not.

Thirdly, Employ yourselves much in weaning your hearts from the world. The man who is making ready to go abroad, busies himself in taking leave of his friends. Let the mantle of earthly enjoyments hang loose about you; that it may be easily dropped, when death comes to carry you away into another world. Moderate your affections towards your lawful comforts of life—let not your hearts be too much taken with them. The traveler acts unwisely, who allows himself to be so allured with the 'conveniences of the inn' where he lodges, as to make his necessary departure from it grievous. Feed with fear, and walk through the world as pilgrims and strangers. Just as, when the corn is forsaking the ground, it is ready for the sickle; when the fruit is ripe, it falls off the tree easily; so, when a Christian's heart is truly weaned from the world, he is prepared for death, and it will be the more easy to him. A heart disengaged from the world is a heavenly one—we are ready for heaven when our heart is there before us, Matt. 6:21.

Fourthly, Be diligent in gathering and laying up evidences of your title to heaven, for your support and comfort at the hour of death. The neglect thereof mars the joy and consolation which some Christians might otherwise have at their death. Therefore, examine yourselves frequently as to your spiritual state; that evidences which lie hid and unobserved, may be brought to light and taken notice of. And if you would manage this work successfully, make solemn, serious work of it. Set apart some time for it. And, after earnest prayer to God, through Jesus Christ, for the enlightening influences of his Holy Spirit, whereby you are enabled to understand his own word, and to discern his own work in your souls; examine yourselves before the tribunal of your own consciences, that you may judge yourselves, in this weighty matter. And, in the first place, let the marks of a regenerate state be fixed from the Lord's Word—have recourse to some particular text for that purpose; such as Prov. 8:17, "I love those who love me." Compare Luke 14:26, "If any man

comes to me, and hates not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Psalm 119:6, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all your commandments." Psalm 18:23, "I was also upright before him; and I kept myself from my iniquity." Compare Romans 7:22, 23, "For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man—but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." 1 John 3:3, "Every man that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as he is pure." Matt. 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit—for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Phil. 3:3, "For we are the circumcision, which worship," or serve "God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

The sum of the evidence arising from these texts, lies here—a real Christian is one who loves God for himself, as well as for his benefits; and that with a supreme love, above all persons, and all things; he has an weighty and impartial regard to God's commands; he opposes and wrestles against that sin, which of all others most easily besets him; he approves and loves the holy law, even in that very point wherein it strikes against his own beloved lust; his hope of heaven engages him to the study of universal holiness; in which he aims at perfection, though he cannot reach it in this life; he serves the Lord, not only in acts of worship, but in the whole of his conversation; and as to both, is spiritual in the principle, motives, aims, and ends of his service; yet he sees nothing in himself to trust to, before the Lord; Christ and his fullness are the stay of his soul; his confidence is cut off from all that is not Christ, or in Christ, in point of justification or acceptance with God, and in point of sanctification too. Everyone, in whom these characters are found, has a title to heaven, according to the word. It is convenient and profitable to mark such texts, for this special use, as they occur, while you read the Scriptures, or hear sermons.

The marks of a regenerate state thus fixed, in the next place impartially search and try your own hearts thereby, as in the sight of God, with dependence on him for spiritual discernment, that you may know whether they be in you or not. When you find them, form the conclusion deliberately and distinctly; namely, that therefore you are regenerated, and have a title to heaven. Thus you may gather evidences. But be sure to have recourse to God in Christ, by earnest prayer, for the testimony of the Spirit, whose office it is to "bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God," Rom. 8:16. Moreover, carefully observe the course and method of providence towards you; and likewise, how your soul is affected under the same, in the various steps thereof—compare both with Scripture doctrines, promises, threatenings, and examples—so shall you perceive if the Lord deals with you as he usually does unto those that love his name, and if you are going forth by the footsteps of the flock. This may afford you comfortable evidence. Walk tenderly and circumspectly, and the Lord will manifest himself to you, according to his promise, John 14:21, "He that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will

love him, and will manifest myself to him." But it is in vain to think of successful self-examination, if you be loose and irregular in your conversation. Lastly, dispatch the work of your day and generation with speed and diligence. "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep "Acts 13:36. God has allotted us certain pieces of work of this kind, which ought to be dispatched before the time of working be over, Eccl. 9:10, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might—for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, where you go." Gal. 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." If a passenger, after he is got on shipboard, and the ship is getting under sail, remembers that he has omitted to dispatch a piece of necessary business when he was ashore, it must needs be uneasy to him—even so, reflection in a dying hour upon neglected seasons, and lost opportunities, cannot fail to disquiet a Christian. Therefore, whatever is incumbent upon you to do for God's honor, and the good of others, either as the duty of your station, or by special opportunity put into your hand, perform it seasonably, if you would die comfortably.

Taken from Thomas Boston's "Human Nature in its Fourfold State"