

# **A Sermon,**

**PREACHED AT FREEHOLD, NOV. 25, 1824,**

ON

## **THE DEATH**

OF THE

**REV. JOHN WOODHULL, D. D.**

LATE PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF  
FREEHOLD, NEW-JERSEY.



BY THE

**REV. ISAAC V. BROWN, A. M.**



**Princeton Press :**

**PRINTED BY D. A. BORRENSTEIN.**

**1825.**

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*At a meeting of the Session of the First Presbyterian Congregation of FREEHOLD, it was unanimously*

**“RESOLVED,—**

*That the thanks of this Session be given to the  
REV. ISAAC V. BROWN, for the excellent and appropriate Sermon delivered by him, at the Funeral of their late venerable and beloved pastor.”*

**“RESOLVED,—**

*That a copy of the Sermon be requested of  
Mr. Brown for publication.”*

[True extracts from the minutes of the proceedings of the Session.]

NATHANIEL S. RUE, *Clerk.*

*Freehold Dec. 1824.*

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L. B. NOTEDON

# A Sermon,

&c. &c.

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## REVELATION II, 10.

“BE THOU FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH, AND I WILL GIVE  
THEE A CROWN OF LIFE.”

BLESSED words of encouragement and consolation, from the great Head of the Church, to his feeble, tempted, and persecuted servants—“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!”—These words are addressed by him who is “the first and the last, who was dead and is alive,” to the minister of the Church in Smyrna:—but, in their application, they reach to the end of time, and afford seasonable support to all the ministers of Christ. In the first commission given, Jehovah pledges his presence—“Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end!” (Mat. xxviii. 20)—In the words before us, he tenders to his faithful servants, all the glories of heaven—“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!”

The ministers of Jesus are engaged in a very laborious, responsible, momentous service, but they serve an omnipotent and kind master. They are encompassed with infirmity, opposition and many trials—but great is the reward, if found faithful: “for faithful is he that promised.” (Heb. x. 23.)

The text presents for consideration—

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I. The character a Gospel minister should sustain—  
“be thou faithful unto death.”

II. The reward he may expect—“and I will give thee  
a crown of life.”

I. The character a Gospel minister should sustain—  
“be thou faithful unto death.”

I shall consider fidelity, in this holy office, as requiring—

1. Suitable qualifications for it ;
2. A proper discharge of its duties.

Suitable qualifications for the sacred office.

1. Piety is indispensable.

Nothing can induce men to make the sacrifices called for in this holy vocation—faithfully to discharge its arduous duties—patiently to endure its self-denials and conflicts, but lively faith in the great truths of the Gospel, producing love to God, benevolence to man, and a truly constraining sense of obligation to the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith, connecting earthly toils with heavenly crowns, brings the man of God to feel “the powers of the world to come,” fills him with firmness in difficulty, strength in weakness, patience and calmness in the deepest trials. Piety, in a Gospel minister, subdues the fear of man, fortifies him against the charms and the powers of the world, furnishes for his conduct, the most exalted object—the glory of God—and an animating principle full of power, the love of souls. The one, the star that directs his course—the other, the invisible but potent spring that impels him to action. Possessing in his own mind, “the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for,” he can and he will give evidence of the affecting reality and awful importance of religion, and persuade men by the terrors of the Lord and the glories of his kingdom. Being himself practically versed in the tumultuous and contradictory operations of depravity and

penitence—pride and humiliation—earthly desire and heaven-born devotion, he can testify, from experience of the love of God and his spirit's holy teachings, and thus most effectually touch and subdue the attentive hearer. Himself a convert from sin to God, and truly subject to the sanctifying and constraining power of religion, while he utters truth and speaks of duty, he will enforce his sacred lessons by irresistible commendations and arguments, from the holiness, consistency, and devotion which characterise and govern his own life and manners.

In a word, in a faithful minister, piety must be the directing influence and existing principle—it must govern in study and in effort, in prayer and in preaching, by the sick bed and in the solemn conference, in the hidden man of the heart, and in the covert actions of the life.

## 2. Good natural talents are imperiously required.

The work of the ministry is a vast concern, and calls for the exercise of strong mental powers. Estimating it on the same principles with any other great enterprise, it demands high natural endowments, in those who bear its chief functions. The counsels of God must be unfolded—his character developed—the rights of his empire discussed and made visible—the abysses of his providence enlightened—the provocation he sustains from rebellion exposed—his justice in human condemnation vindicated—his mighty plan of reconciliation carried into effect—the equity and sufficiency of its provisions searched out and exhibited—the whole statute book of his kingdom, with its precepts and promises, menaces and mercies, explored and treasured up, adapted and commended powerfully, and attractingly, to aliens, full of enmity, sophistry, and inveterate resistance. Even angels are represented as prying into these great mysteries. No range of thought so exalted, no sphere of inquiry so unbounded as the Christian minister's—no other earthly employment so variegated, extensive and complex as his. The knowledge of God and

the study of souls, the care of individual churches in connexion with all the interests of Zion, are involved in this great work. Caution, intrepidity, quick discernment, lofty and expanded views, strong recollection, inflexible firmness, untiring patience, readiness of utterance, aptness to teach, industry, and above all *prudence*, are strongly called for, in this sacred service.

It must be admitted that many not possessing genius, or high susceptibility of improvement, more than common powers of eloquence, or extraordinary capacity for useful exertion, have been employed in this work, without disgrace. Some of this character have even been used by God as means of accomplishing much good—nay, we allow, that it is possible for God to work by the feeblest instruments in building up his kingdom. Notwithstanding, as a general principle in the Church, we maintain that good intellectual powers, and a considerable share of native prudence, are necessary to secure to the Christian ministry, respectability and success. Men, whose piety was unquestioned, but whose talents and discretion were estimated very low, have in many instances, proved not only dangerous and troublesome, but seriously afflicting and noxious to the family of Christ. Not every sanctified man is qualified to minister and bear rule in the Church. Not the most fervent zeal will compensate for the want of mind and prudence. These both are necessary to control the irregular sallies of misguided feelings and of affections partaking of a religious nature, but mingled with principles less pure and augmented by fires less sacred. Imprudence mars the most honest efforts to do good, and eclipses the brightest talents, often rends the body of Christ and proves deeply offensive and injurious.

In investigating and promulgating the plan of salvation, the plenary lights and aids of the spirit, are no longer enjoyed;—and even under the influence of the best human culture, accompanied with the sanctification of the spirit,

without good natural endowments, men can never be qualified for the lofty trust and arduous services committed—for that exalted and sublime fidelity contemplated in our text.

3. Competent knowledge\* is an essential qualification.

The age of extraordinary illumination by the Divine spirit having ceased in the Church, extensive knowledge is necessary to understand and to communicate with dignity and effect, the counsels of God. Piety has maintained her sway in the world and accomplished her victories, chiefly, as a means under God, by associating with her own integrity and fervor, useful and extensive science. And what has been the basis of her respectability and success in the past, must be her dependance in the future. The minister of Jesus has a work full of extent and variety before him—requiring all the united accomplishments

\* The opinion, very prevalent in some other denominations, and considerably popular in some portions of our own, that good natural sense and genuine piety, without literary accomplishments, are ample qualifications for public teachers of religion, we consider not only highly unreasonable and injudicious in itself, but seriously dangerous and hurtful to the Church. We all unite, in employing the most able and accomplished men to manage our secular concerns, and to prescribe for our bodily health. On what principle of reason or common sense is it, that any should be willing to commit the interests of their souls, and the welfare of the great earthly community of God, to instruments untaught and incompetent? God is able indeed to work by the feeblest instruments in accomplishing his purposes. But, in the ordinary course of his providence, he operates by means wisely adapted to his ends. And the more extensively the means are fitted for any proposed object, by previous training and discipline, the greater is the prospect of success in pursuing that object. An enlightened, as well as sanctified ministry, is, on ordinary principles, most conducive to the success of the Gospel—unless we espouse the absurd and pernicious dogma, that “there is no more natural connexion between the means of grace and the conversion of a sinner, than between the sounding of the trumpets which encompassed the city of Jericho and the falling of its walls”—an opinion which evinces as little rational scriptural knowledge and piety, as it does of good sense and sound philosophy. However, while we maintain the importance and necessity of an enlightened as well as holy ministry, we heartily embrace the apostle’s doctrine—“neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth: but God that giveth the increase.” 1 Cor. iii. 7.

of science and of grace. His object is not only to pour light into the minds of the thoughtless and ignorant—and to alarm the impenitent, by detecting sin and portraying its terrors—and to guide the anxious inquirer to the strong hold—and to confirm the faith, obviate the difficulties, and augment the consolations of the humble believer; but he must consider himself set for the defence of the truth; as a faithful and well armed soldier of Christ, he must resist the attacks of infidelity, by knowledge and eloquence, thwart the artifices of the adversary, silence the cavils of sophistry, “lift up the standard of the Lord,” and confound the impious machinations which wit and philosophy, falsely so called, have attempted against the Gospel. The times in which we live—the advanced state of natural and moral science—the general diffusion of literature and taste—the widely extended privileges of education and knowledge among all classes of people, demand high cultivation and improvement in the Christian orator. To sustain the dignity of the pulpit, and to secure to its holy ministrations respectful and cordial reception in the world, the state of society must be regarded and the taste and feelings of hearers must be accommodated—not by altering the tone of Christian morals, nor by withholding or disguising the plain and solemn truths of God—but by delivering them in a style of cultivation and attractiveness, that will win and not repel the hearer—that will aid and not obstruct the Gospel.

The sanctuary should be enlightened especially with the knowledge of the word of God—with this, the sacred teacher should labour peculiarly to furnish himself. The holy Scriptures are the charter of all our hopes and the basis of God’s kingdom in this world. Here is recorded the law to direct in prescribing the external form of the Church, and in cultivating her internal excellence. This is the code which defines the character and manners of her children, and contains the truth which is to form them to

fidelity on earth, and to nourish them for eternal life in heaven. The Christian minister then, must make the word of God, his most profound and diligent study. And to mount up as nearly as possible to the fountain of light from which this word of truth and grace proceeded, he must have recourse to the original tongues, in which it was at first delivered to man. This will render peculiar aid in illustrating the idioms and other difficulties which occur in Biblical research.

It may be thought by some, that acquiring a competent knowledge of the sacred Book is an easy task and soon accomplished. The Bible is indeed a volume not of great extent :—it has been judiciously translated into many tongues, and rendered into our own, with peculiar fidelity:—abundant helps in this sacred study are now enjoyed :—a large proportion, also, of this volume consists of historic detail, which involves little difficulty, in exposition:—moreover, its precepts and doctrines, though lofty and sublime, are not obscure to the candid and intelligent reader:—indeed, its most exalted subjects are placed, so far within the compass of the human mind, as to furnish no insurmountable impediment to the understanding, nor offence to reason, even in unlettered men—so that Christians may, with ordinary capacities and means, obtain intelligent and consistent views of the great principles of truth and duty revealed from heaven. But it is required of one who is to preside in the religious instructions of the Church, that he be “ a scribe thoroughly instructed unto the kingdom of Heaven, mighty in the scriptures, rightly dividing the word of truth,”—so that the whole in proper order may become “ profitable, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness.”\* His knowledge of the scriptures should be profound and critical. He must be acquainted with all the excellence and peculiarity of this

\* Mat. xiii. 52; Acts xvii. 24; 2 Tim. ii. 15; ib. iii. 16.

most ancient and sacred Book—be able to edify, encourage, and comfort believers by communications from his “treasury of things new and old.” He must be prepared, when necessary, to draw illustrations and confirmations of holy writ, from a knowledge, of language, of the manners and customs of ancient eastern nations :—of modern travels and discoveries, of recent improvements in the sciences—indeed, to render all the stores of biblical and oriental literature, tributary to the overthrow of infidelity and the promotion of truth and piety.

At the same time, the sacred teacher must approach the divine word, not only as a critic and a scholar, but with the docility and humility of an humble disciple, and with the true love and devotion of a sincere believer ; that his knowledge may be sanctified, and his mind truly enlightened in the knowledge of the glory of God and the truth of Jesus. For this it is that will give to his public discourses and ministrations an unction of the spirit unspeakably delightful to his own heart, peculiarly interesting to the pious, and more persuasive and convincing, to the impenitent than the most potent argument and captivating eloquence.

The servant of Christ, endowed with competent natural talents, accomplished with knowledge, and enriched by grace—trained and disciplined for the holy office and regularly inducted, sees before him an arduous work, feels a trust committed to him above that of kingdoms. He must speak to dying men, and treat with them on eternal interests, as in the name and in the sight of the living God. Deeply impressed, he dwells profoundly on the weighty inquiry “ what wouldest thou have me to do ? ” “ How shall I most successfully employ in thy blessed service, the qualifications thou hast granted me ? This brings me to consider fidelity,

2. As it relates to a right discharge of duty.

In delivering the counsels of God, fidelity requires—

### 1. Plainness and simplicity of speech.

It is a common and palpable mistake of public speakers, deplorably prevalent among the preachers of the gospel, that, whenever called to exercise this part of their office, they must appear in a style of communication and modulation of voice, wholly different from the usages of common life, assume a new garb for their thoughts, exhibit a studied and elevated form of expression, and give decisive marks of scholarship and rhetorical accomplishment, as things of prime importance.

The language of the sacred scriptures is the best model for a teacher of sacred truth. The style of the pulpit should be adapted, and its tones and manners conformed, as nearly as possible, to the simplicity, of the conversation and intercourse of respectable human society. The faithful preacher will aim to make himself intelligible and interesting to the most plain, and uneducated portion of his audience, in the assurance that then the more cultivated will be enabled with ease to comprehend his discourses. The Bible does indeed present subjects of the utmost majesty and importance, requiring profound investigation and affording scope for lofty eloquence—but in its great design and in its principal features it is adapted peculiarly to the humble:—and both the example and command of Christ and his Apostles, require his ministers to deliver their messages, not “in words of man’s wisdom,” *but* with the most studied and uniform simplicity. To the success of the gospel, it is necessary that its heavenly doctrines, which angels survey with astonishment and delight, should be brought down to the capacities of the unlettered and humble. That preacher, who spends the hours of public instruction, in pouring forth great swelling words, ebullitions of empty and ostentatious declamation—or who occupies his hearers with critical, or controversial speculations, discussions which from abstruseness or refinement are above the powers and improve-

ments of the ordinary attendants on the sanctuary, deviates awfully from the course of sacred honesty and plainness which the "master of assemblies" pursued himself, and by his inspiration, prescribed for others. The ablest selection of curious and perplexing questions, or disentanglement of vain metaphysical subtleties and the graces of gesture and charms of imagery, can never, in the Christian ministry, with innocence, be substituted for substantial truth and simple integrity, never calm the anxious and feed the hungry soul. The sparklings of wit, the chilling speculations of philosophy and the refinements of learning, when they usurp the plan of simple truth and piety, only puzzle and bewilder the understanding of the hearer, excite at best a vacant gaze of admiration, while they often paralyze feelings of deep religious impression and fatally extinguish the fervors of devotion. The gospel, the source of sacred light and heat, is a stranger to things of this sort, and he who deals out such matters from the sacred desk, cannot possess right views of sacred truth, of the importance of eternity, of the infinite value of souls, of his own tremendous responsibility. True dignity and sublimity are always found clothed in the simplest guise. True earnestness of heart employs the simplest modes of expression. Sincerity and simplicity are not indeed, wholly inconsistent with ornament—but they court it not. If they admit it, it is not as the offspring of refinement in composition, but as the honest effusion of a moved and ardent spirit. The sacred volume possesses many noble instances of high ornament in writing, of bold, figurative, impassioned eloquence—but it is always necessary to the subject, full of illustration, and crowned with the inimitable grace of simplicity. Deep argumentation, also, drawn from the character of God and the nature of man, and the truths of revelation, we conceive to be abundantly sanctioned by the example, especially of the Apostle Paul. But his argument is always conducted in a manner the plainest

possible, and best adapted to the common capacities and improvements of mankind.

2. Fidelity in a christian minister, will require great promptness and zeal in commending the truths and mercies of God to the hearts of men.

Paul's most solemn and impressive admonition to Timothy, should never be forgotten ;—" I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and his kingdom ; preach the word, be instant, in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine." (2 Tim. iv. 1, 2 ) The work of the ministry, properly understood and deeply felt, must call forth and engage actively in this great business, all the powers and faculties of the mind. It must be admitted, there are striking diversities in the temperament and susceptibility of different men. Some, possessing a quick and lively sensibility, are easily excited, and apt to sustain an elevated gradation of Christian fervor—while others, more calm and philosophic, by nature, show, comparatively, a low degree of that warmth of feeling, animation and fervor in frames of devotion and actions of life, which characterise the former. But the truly pious Christian minister, whatever may be his native temperament of spirit, his powers of expression, his degree of knowledge and cultivation, will be excited to earnest and vigorous exertions, in this great work. To his faith, the great objects of religion, and interests of eternity, will stand out prominent and visible every hour—upon his heart and tongue, they will exert a commanding and irresistible influence. The glory of God, the restoration of a ruined world, the love of Christ, his sufferings, death and resurrection, his heavenly exaltation, universal government, future judgment and final glory, are subjects, which cannot fail deeply to impress the believing mind, to awaken its liveliest sensibilities, to quicken and invigorate its every movement in the path of duty. A realizing view of

the guilt, wretchedness and impotence of a world that lies in ruins, and of the crimes and infatuation of deluded sinners, connected with a just sense of the righteousness and majesty of Almighty God, and of the fearful destiny that awaits the ungodly, must powerfully arouse the tender sympathies, and stimulate the well-directed efforts of all who stand as ambassadors of Christ, if they possess the spirit of their station. Alive to the interests of dying souls, and constrained by the love of Christ, they will loudly proclaim liberty to the "prisoners of hope." They will strive to emulate, though it may be at an humble distance, the fidelity of Noah—the zeal of the royal prophet—the impassioned strains of Jeremiah—the tender evangelical fervor of Isaiah—the exalted ministry of the great Apostle to the Gentiles—and above all, the devoted, pre-eminent example of the teacher sent from God. In these heaven-inspired preachers, no false fire glows. Theirs is a model of that pure love to God, and compassion for souls—admired by angels and approved of God!—which should inflame the heart, direct and animate the labours of every minister of Christ. Every ambassador of Jesus should be able, in the retrospect, to say as Paul said to the Thessalonians, (1 Thes. ii. 8) "So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us;" and to the Elders of Ephesus—"You know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and how I have kept back nothing that was profitable to you, but have taught you publicly, testifying repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts, xx. 19—21.) This high regard to God's honour, and affecting solicitude for the souls of men, must be experienced, in a considerable degree, by those who possess a clear view of the realities of eternity. It is both

an evidence and an ornament of piety ; especially is it a spirit peculiarly becoming a Christian minister ; a spirit which his daily reflections upon the obligations of his office, and converse with the solemn and affecting truths of religion, should cherish and confirm. This is the temper, also, which most directly and extensively endears the Christian ministry to the hearts of the people, and secures with them, the deepest impression and most cordial acceptance of the word and ordinances of God.

3. Fidelity in Christ's ministers, requires constancy, and as far as possible, universality of exertion, in their holy vocation.

“ Be thou faithful unto death !” The call, to this sacred office, demands an unreserved sacrifice and a permanent devotedness to the cause of Christ. The ministry of the New Testament, like the Priesthood of the old, requires an absolute, and irrevocable consecration to the solemnities of the sanctuary. The sacred teacher must not restrict his labours to the house of God, nor to the Lord's day, but give himself to the functions of his office, as opportunities and necessities are presented, at all times. As far as is consistent with domestic duty and private study, he must endeavour to make his active and public services abound. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the great model of eloquence, and master of teachers, proclaimed the truths of his embassy in public and in private, in large assemblies and in small ones. His “ master's business” engrossed all his powers, and he “ went about” doing good.

The Church, then, is not exclusively the school in which a faithful teacher in Christ's family, is to administer his instructions—the sacred desk not the only stage on which he is to exhibit his character and employ his powers. The labours of the pulpit, though of the highest importance, require, to render them effectual under the divine blessing, unceasing exertion in the every-day care and instruction of the flock. In succession, every private dwel-

ling should become a temple for devotion, in which the sacred pastor may serve as priest at the altar, and while assisting to offer the sacrifice of prayer and praise, may proclaim the mercy of the gospel, and, thus bring to every house, in turn, the salvation of God. This is the testimony of Paul respecting his own ministry—"I have taught you publicly, and from house to house."

In the necessary intercourse with the world, there is a delicate interest to be managed—a difficult line to be observed. There is danger, either of religion's assuming, in the lives of her ministers, a rigid and repulsive stiffness and gloom, an enthusiastic and affected sanctity; or, of her sinking into too close a conformity to the levities, fashions and courses of the world. Without impairing her majesty, or polluting her purity, she must stoop and become accessible to all. The imperfect worldly support afforded to the ministry of religion, will often compel them to participate in the ordinary occupations of life. And, to secure the respectful affection and confidence of all classes, they must enter with freedom and cheerfulness into the familiar friendly intercourse of society. That the ignorant may be instructed, the immoral admonished, and the believing edified, the public preachers of the gospel, must exhibit in their conversation and example the salutary savour and influence of piety. We do not mean, that it is required of them, in the social interview and friendly visit, to be always pressing upon every circle, without judgment or discretion, at unseasonable times and places, the truths and experiences of piety; but, that they should stand ready to introduce such serious reflections as the occasion may call for, and to give such a direction to the current of thought and conversation, as will comport with their own sacred character, impose a check upon things light and vain, and prove salutary to all who may be present.

But opportunities constantly occur, which a faithful minister will devote to the private instruction of his peo-

ple, in visits and interviews, stated and occasional, endeavouring, face to face, to awaken their consciences and to interest them in the great concerns of immortality. To the *poor*, the *widow*, the *aged*, the *anxious*, the *afflicted* and *feeble* of his flock, he will look with an eye of liveliest sensibility, and to such be ever ready, even at the expense of time and ease, to bestow his most prompt and affectionate counsels and comforts.

The faithful pastor will labour with special care to form the youth of his charge to knowledge and virtue, to have them reared "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The young constitute the most interesting portion of Christ's visible flock. The *seed of life*, sown in this tender and susceptible soil, may be expected to spring early and produce much fruit:—and the labourer himself may reasonably anticipate, from his pious culture, a rich reward, both on earth and in heaven. How interesting a spectacle is the faithful minister of Jesus, far advanced in years, in the midst of a flock raised under his own hand, looking to him as children to a father, venerating his character and his counsels, gratefully appreciating his kind labours, affectionately alleviating his burdens, strengthening his hands and following his steps! Ah! it is not wonderful, that the sudden dissolution of a union cemented by such endearing intercourse, and hallowed by services very long continued, and by prayers and benedictions many thousand times repeated, should clothe every countenance with solemn regret and confirm the sorrow by sighs and tears!

To the faithful servant of Christ there remains a glorious recompense, which, as proposed—

II. We proceed, briefly, to consider—"I will give thee a crown of life!"

It is but little we know with certainty of the heavenly world. It is not possible for language definitely and adequately to represent to us the nature or the degree of happiness to which the children of God will there be advanced.

We are slow of heart to believe and to apprehend those great realities now distant from us, and out of the reach of our observation and experience. And yet the Holy Spirit has not designed to leave us in the dark on this most interesting subject. The sacred writings give many precious intimations of future *rest*, and *peace*, and *light*, and *glory*, among the sons of God—but they speak most strongly and most frequently with the aid of figures and images—images, indeed, drawn with admirable skill, from objects best adapted to impress and elevate our thoughts, and to endear the prospects of the just. And I find no figure more significant, and employed more frequently to shed light on the destiny of God's people, than that made use of in our text; “a crown”—“a crown of life!”—Crowns and kingdoms are high sounding distinctions in the ears of mortals. In this world, they strongly attract human attention, and irresistibly carry away the thoughts and desires of mortals; and as applied to the heavenly state, they possess an import worthy our attentive consideration. This “crown” imports—

#### 1. Victory.

The force of this will be best perceived when we consider the condition of God's children in this life. Here all are in a state of trial and conflict :—and of believers, it may most truly be said, their life is a warfare. Sin is their enemy—the world opposes their progress—Satan is a formidable adversary. They experience within them a continual strife between the corruptions of nature and the principles of grace. So that they seem surrounded with foes, in an enemy's country, where adversaries, seen and unseen, keenly dart their arrows at them. They are conscious of weakness, burdens, exposure—are often in bondage to sin, to the world, and to the fear of death.

The ministers of the Gospel are men of like passions with others—they are beset with infirmities, and bear a large share in this strife. As they stand by profession pre-

eminent in the great work of opposing sin and Satan ; in the first rank "on the Lord's side," they often suffer most severely in these unavoidable conflicts. The enemy levels at them his most malignant darts and fatal strokes. Who is sufficient to stand in such a contest? Even the Apostle Paul exclaimed—"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. vii. 24.) Let the "man of God" take courage. Hear the voice of the great Master—"Lo I am with you alway!" (Mat. xxviii. 20.) And hear again—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!" Yes—behold the hour of victory is at hand, the season of release from bondage and tumult is fast approaching. The opposers and the oppressors of Christ's ministers, and his people, shall lose their aim and give up their groaning captives. A mighty triumph shall ensue. Then shall be sung a new song—"Sin shall not have dominion over me." (Rom. vi. 14.) "Death is swallowed up in victory." (1 Cor. xv. 54.)

A crown imports—

2. Dignity and honour.

With the possession of a crown, among mortals, is associated wealth and splendour, courtiers and attendants, exaltation and state. Magnificence and homage are the birth-right of Princes. Hence, they are viewed with reverence, as raised far above their loftiest and most distinguished subjects. What exaltation and fame shall crown those who come off conquerors, and "more than conquerors," through the great Captain of salvation! "Surely the righteous shall not be moved forever;—he shall be in everlasting *remembrance*." (Ps. cxii. 6.) "To him that overcometh," saith our blessed Lord, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my father in his throne." (Rev. iii. 21.) O! what elevation and glory, to share in the high distinctions of the Lord of life! How near, does this blessed declaration,

bring the faithful servant of Christ, to the throne of God! How transformed into his image, how present forever with the Lord, must they be, who sit upon his throne. Holy ambition can court nothing nobler—the imagination, enlightened by faith, can mount no higher—“I will give thee a crown of life!”

This crown imports—

### 3. Authority and dominion.

That they who serve Christ faithfully, and follow him through difficulties on earth, will be signally distinguished by him in the season of retribution, he has, directly and by just inference assured us. The words just quoted, for another purpose, clearly imply dominion and authority. “To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my father in his throne.” The following passage of St. Paul is of similar import—“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” and, “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.) The address of our Lord to his disciples, inculcates the same truth—“Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Luke xxii. 28, 29, 30.) The precise nature and extent of the dominion and influence to which the saints will be advanced in heaven, and the particular acts of authority which they will be commissioned to perform, it would be presumption to attempt to designate. It is sufficient to be persuaded that they will possess dominion, and exercise authority, corresponding with the glory of their crowns.

A crown, in sacred language, denotes—

### 4. Reward.

The reward implied may relate to personal excellence and fidelity, exertions made, services rendered, difficulties

overcome, or successes obtained in any prescribed way. Thus conquerors, in the public games of the Greeks and Romans, were distinguished. "They *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible." 1 Cor. ix. 25. As a temporal wreath recompensed the successful competitor in these ancient exercises, so an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance, reserved in heaven, is to reward the faithful Christian. Our Lord Jesus Christ is presented to St. John in vision, as bearing the name "faithful," and wearing on his head "many crowns," as a reward of his wonderful triumphs in conducting the affairs of his Church, on earth. The Apostle Paul rejoiced in the assurance of his *crown* as the reward of his fidelity. "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 which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me, at that day." (2 Tim. 4. 7.)

Thus the faithful servants of Christ—their labours, their sacrifices, and sufferings, in the cause of their master, shall be rewarded with *a crown*. Should any desire to know in what this crown is to consist—in reply we may adopt the language of the Apostle Paul—"For what is our hope, or joy, or *crown* of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." (1 Thes. ii. 19, 20.) "Therefore my brethern, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and *my crown*, so stand fast in the Lord." (Phil. iv. 1.) Believers, on earth, are a glorious and delightful ornament and reward of ministerial fidelity ;—and their presence, in heaven, will be rendered most sweetly and powerfully conducive to the honour and transport of those blessed servants of Christ, to whose pious labors, under God, they owe their entrance into glory.

But in regard to the nature of this crown there is—

5. Finally, something peculiar implied in the term "life."

“Be thou faithful and I will give thee a *crown of life*.” In another place—“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive *the crown of life*, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” (Is. i. 12.) No doubt, this form of expression is intended to signify something of the infinite excellence, transcendent superiority, and everlasting duration of the happiness of the saints, and especially of faithful ministers of the New Testament. “The crown of life,” implies every thing that can render life, in heaven, holy, exalted, and delightful forever—the highest exercise of the best faculties, in their most improved state, upon the noblest objects, without the least possible interruption, in an eternal continuance:—it implies the noblest favours that a God of infinite perfection and love can bestow upon a fallen, but enlightened, sanctified, glorified creature: it is the consummation, the eternity, the crown of spiritual life and glory, in the presence and image of Almighty God. The crowns of earth sparkle only for a season—they are but other names for splendid crimes, secret jealousies, and corroding fears; but the crown of Christ’s ministers, like the glory of God, is incorruptible, undefiled and cannot fade away. “When the chief Shepherd shall appear, they shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” 1 Pet. v. 4. The gracious manner of conveying their *crown* will forever endear and magnify the gift. “I will give thee a crown of life.”

\* A short detail of facts relating to the early history of the deceased, accompanied by some general remarks on his character, shall close our discourse.

The Rev. Dr. John Woodhull was born\* in Suffolk coun-

\* Dr. Woodhull’s father, surnamed John, was a man of wealth, probity, and distinction, connected in marriage with Elizabeth Smith, daughter of William Smith, Esq. of St. George’s Manor, Long Island. He had eight sons and one daughter. Dr. Woodhull was the second child by birth. The family of this name emigrated from Great Bri-

The family of this name emigrated from the West Indies to the American Colonies, near Appomattox, Virginia, in the year 1783. The Rev. Dr. Woodhull was the second child by birth of the Colony of New York.

ty, on Long Island, Jan. 26, 1744. He received his classical instruction, preparatory to College, in a Grammar school, under the care of the Rev. Caleb Smith, his maternal uncle, who resided at *Newark Mountains*,\* in this State. In the commencement of his education, when about sixteen years of age, Mr. Woodhull was seriously inclined, and importunate with God, for his blessing. While in the College of New Jersey, soon after, under the Presidency of the eminently learned and pious Dr. Finley, it pleased the great head of the Church, to pour out his spirit, in a remarkable manner, upon the youth assembled there. Almost every student was solemnly impressed, and many became pious. It pleased God, at this period, to manifest himself very graciously to his soul. His mind was oppressed, for some time very deeply, with convictions of sin and apprehensions of divine wrath. The relief he obtained was sudden and delightful. After returning from prayers in the College Hall, his mind exceedingly solemn and impressed with the danger of his state, while walking in his room and looking ardently to heaven for deliverance, God was pleased graciously to shine forth, and reveal his Son as the hope of glory, to the soul, of his waiting servant. The greatness, and excellence and mercy, of God, in Christ, were strikingly presented in this first view, producing peace and joy inexpressible. Mr. Woodhull soon gave evi-

tain to Long Island, at an early period in the settlement of this country, and are descended from illustrious ancestors, through a long line, which has been preserved entire from the Norman Conquest, A. D. 1066. Dr. Woodhull had six children. One son died in infancy at Lancaster. William Henry, a young man of fine talents and ardent piety, trained to mercantile business, fell a victim to the yellow fever in New York, 1798, in his 20th year. Sarah, the only daughter, was early called to be an heir of glory, and soon admitted to her inheritance. The unhealthfulness of the climate of Mississippi, to which place she removed with her husband, Major William Gordon Forman, soon brought her delicate frame to the dust. Three sons survive, all professional men, respectable and useful.

\* This place is now called *Orange*.

dence of warm and established piety, so that when he called on Dr. Finley, to converse on the subject of the approaching communion, a business committed to the President of the College at that time, the Dr. scarcely waited for the young convert to express his desire, before he lifted both hands and exclaimed—"O, go, go, and the Lord go with you."

At this season, his meditations on divine subjects were often profound and delightful. It was customary, among the students of College, to retire to the adjoining ground, for purposes of prayer and devotion. On one of these occasions, Mr. Woodhull's meditations became so intense that he was unconscious of surrounding objects. His mind dwelt particularly upon the *benefits of afflictions*. The subject was presented to him, in an uncommonly luminous and impressive manner, so that he became absorbed with the view, till at length he walked against a heap of stones in the field, which roused him from his heavenly contemplation—when he immediately lifted his hand and exclaimed with a loud voice—"Lord, if such be the fruit of afflictions, I will never complain!" How well he has observed this resolution, formed in the fields of Princeton sixty years ago, they who have known him can testify.

In the year 1766, he received the first degree in the arts, and immediately proceeded to Fags Manor for the purpose of pursuing Theological studies with the Rev. John Blair. While thus engaged, he was strongly solicited by some pious young men, who had been his class-mates in college, from New England, to come over and study with them, under the direction of an eminent divine of that region, alleging that they enjoyed there *superior light*. They pressed the invitation so urgently, that he resolved on this change of situation, and went home to obtain his father's approbation. This was granted, the arrangements made, and time set for his departure from Long Island. The morning came and he awoke, he thought, as well as

usual, and sprang with alacrity out of bed:—but, in attempting to dress, he found himself unable to stand—he made a second and third effort in vain, and was forced to lie down, when he was siezed with an alarming fever, which confined him there many weeks. His sickness was severe, his recovery very slow. This dispensation of providence, he considered of great importance, as influencing, materially, the whole course of his future life. He returned to Mr. Blair; finished his preliminary studies, and, on the 10th of August, 1768, was licensed, by the Presbytery of New Castle, to preach the Gospel of Christ.

Dr. Woodhull, frequently remarked, that he thought his preaching, while a licentiate, was more remarkably and visibly blest, than it has ever been since. On one occasion, a great awakening took place, in an evening meeting, at the house of Mr. John Love, a pious Scotchman of Fag's Manor, where Mr. Woodhull preached very unexpectedly. About sixty persons, of those present, became pious, and most of them were young. He was considered an eloquent and interesting candidate for the sacred office, and attracted much attention in the districts he visited. Of the several calls, which he had under consideration at the same time; a sense of duty inclined him to prefer that of Laycock Congregation, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where, on the 1st of August, 1770, he was ordained to the *Holy ministry*. In 1772, he was united in marriage, to Miss Sarah Spafford, of Philadelphia. With this pious and excellent lady he lived more than half a century.

In 1779, Mr. Woodhull was translated from his charge at Lancaster, to the large and respectable Congregation\* of

\* This Congregation was regularly organised, June 3, 1730. Before this, it had nominally existed a short time and enjoyed the Pastoral labours of the Rev. Joseph Morgan. During his ministry, the Congregation worshipped, principally, in the *Scotch Meeting*

*A. C. Spafford*  
*of Philadelphia*

Freehold, New Jersey. In 1780, he was elected a Trustee of the College of New Jersey, at Princeton. To this institution he unceasingly devoted his most faithful attention. In the year 1798, he received the degree of *Doctor of Divinity* from *Yale College*—a tribute of respect, of which it was universally admitted, he was eminently worthy.

His fame, as a preacher of the Gospel, was already extensive, and his influence in ecclesiastical judicatories well known. His eminence and usefulness were both increased, by his uncommon diligence and fidelity in conducting, for many years, near his residence, a *Grammar School*, which sent forth a succession of accomplished scholars, a good proportion of whom have shone with distinction in the learned professions, and some have occupied offices of dignity and trust in the nation. His high character as a *Theological Teacher* was widely diffused. A great number of candidates for the sacred office, from different and distant parts of the Church, during a period of thirty years, availed themselves of the advantages of his pleasant situation—his hospitable mansion—his kind, parental attentions—his well selected library—and his richly furnished mind. Labors of this sort, he declined after the establishment of the Theological Seminary, at Princeton. In the prosperity of this institution he felt a

*House*, which stood several miles east, from the site of the present Church. On the 19th of November, 1730, the Rev. John Tennent was ordained to the Holy ministry in this Congregation, and installed its pastor. He was a very pious, eloquent, laborious, and successful minister of the Gospel. His course in the Church was splendid and useful, but transient. He died on the 23d of April, 1732, little more than twenty five years old, universally and deeply lamented. The Congregation continued vacant till September 28th following, when the Rev. William Tennent, was prevailed upon to settle there. His eminently pious and faithful ministrations were long continued and greatly blessed among that favored people. To this distinguished man of God, after a short vacancy, succeeded the Rev. Mr. John Woodhull, the subject of this notice.

deep interest, and, in the direction of its affairs, bore a part for many years.

But the highest encomium we can give our excellent and respected friend, whose face after this day we shall see no more on earth, may be couched in few words. He was an eminently *able, faithful, and beloved* minister of Jesus Christ.

In drawing the outline of ministerial fidelity, in the preceding part of our discourse, we so far pourtrayed the character of that venerable man whose remains lie before us, that we shall attempt very little more.

His previous qualifications, for the great work in which he was engaged, were of the most valuable kind and promising character, and he possessed them in an eminent degree.

Of his piety, we have already said as much as our limits will permit—unless we merely add, what all have observed with surprise and pleasure, that his zeal increased as his years declined:—he seemed, indeed, to make haste to fill up the measure of his usefulness, and to take possession of his crown.

His intellectual endowments were, by nature, unquestionably of the first order. By native soundness of judgment, deepness of penetration, and extent of view; comprehensiveness of mind, and tenaciousness of memory; mildness of disposition, dignity of aspect, and suavity of manners; fertility of mental resource, and masculine powers of eloquence; prudence in difficulty, patience under injury, perseverance in enterprise, and benevolence to the wretched, he was placed by the hand that formed him, in the first grade of his species. And his acquired furniture for the sacred office, was rich and appropriate. In his early days, he studied with great zeal. Mathematical science absorbed his mind—classical reading was his amusement—and History his delight, through the College course. Indeed, he so impaired his strength, by close application, at this

period, as seriously to endanger his health. The time spent with the Rev. Mr. Blair, was laboriously devoted to Theological studies, preparatory to the work of the ministry. His engagements afterwards in New Jersey, as Teacher of languages and of candidates for the sacred desk, made him familiar with the whole circle of Classicks and led him thoroughly to explore the treasures of sacred literature. He was an accomplished *divine*—a general scholar, a sound critic. His knowledge was of the most useful stamp, adapted to practical purposes. He was not, one of those who wear away their lives in the closet, in study or in ease :—his great excellence consisted in prompt, untiring and useful action. He has been heard to say, that he spent his days *non in legendo, aut in scribendo, sed in agendo*:—not in reading and writing, but in abundant labours for the cause of Christ. He thought and pondered much—but was winged when the call of Christ came. He was born and formed his habits as a minister of Jesus, in other days. When the Church in New Jersey was young and destitute, in many parts almost shepherdless, his heart and his flesh were nerved by the Lord, to perform an incredible amount of labours, besides the care of his own flock, in organizing Churches, establishing the principles of orthodox religion, and presbyterian Church government, reconciling differences and repairing desolations in the congregations, raising up and sending forth labourers into the vast field then unoccupied.

The churches looked to him as their counsellor and father, in Christ—and they have long since, from ample experience, by universal suffrage, conferred upon this apostolic man, the imperishable distinction of being one of the most orthodox and evangelic divines of the last and present century.

Dr. Woodhull's style of preaching, was of the most engaging and useful kind. Simplicity and earnestness, were his highest ambition. He used to say to his stu-

dents—*Think deeply, but speak plainly.* There was mingled with his simplicity, an elevation, even a sublimity, in words, in matter, in manners, truly impressive and affecting. His eloquence was of the dignified and commanding, more than of the soft and insinuating kind. And yet he was always tender, persuasive and pathetic. What added unspeakable force to his ministry, you can all testify, he lived as he taught, gave a lovely exemplification of the duties he enjoined. In condescension, meekness, charity, benevolence to the poor, kind attentions to the afflicted, his life was an open volume of instruction.

His short seasons of relaxation from active service, he spent principally in musing on the providence of God, surveying the progress of public affairs, forming plans of benevolence and usefulness in the church and in the world. He delighted in lending his fostering care to institutions conducive to the prosperity of the church, and the welfare of mortals—and he was always happiest when most busily employed in doing good. He has often been heard to say in his latter days, that he did not wish to outlive his usefulness. In this desire his master has graciously indulged him. Although his health continued firm till near the close of his life, his departure was sudden. He received, indeed, very recently, some tender admonitions to be ready. A few weeks since, an older brother,\* a man venerable, too, for piety and services, as well as years, was committed to the dust. And but a few days ago, did our departed friend follow to the grave an amiable and pious granddaughter.† He has quickly gone to join them in the

\* William Woodhull, Esq., of Chester, New-Jersey.

† Miss Cornelia Neilson Woodhull, daughter of the Rev. George S. Woodhull, of Princeton, N. J.—This amiable and excellent young lady, was born at Cranbury, in New Jersey, May 16, 1803.—From her childhood she was remarkable for her prudence, and correct demeanour. Her last illness was severe, and of several months continuance.—Towards the close of it, she frequently remarked, “that it was good for her that she had been afflicted.”—Her hope

upper temple, and to share with them the "*crown of life*." In the plans of God, it was necessary that he should be removed to the church on high, and none of us has a right to complain, however bereaved and afflicted. We have enjoyed his presence and his labours long—very long—in the church below, and he is now removed to a state which is *far better*. He is present with the Lord and exalted

of an interest in the Saviour, was occasionally so strong, as to give her great consolation and encouragement, yet she often expressed her fears, lest she should be deceiving herself.—On the day before she died, the great enemy of our race, made his last attack. It was fierce and terrific. A few minutes after she had said with great fervency, "Now, now I think I am not deceiving myself, now," Satan came to worry and torment her. Terror and dismay were depicted on her face, while in an agony she exclaimed, "I fear I shall be lost—how shall I be able to endure it—I know that I cannot live—I have come to the Saviour so lately, I fear he will not receive me." She was told, that this was the work of Satan, and in a short time, after a prayer had been made for her, the great enemy retired, and she was suffered to remain quietly, for some time.—Suddenly, she appeared to be sinking down in the bed,—her parents, and her aunt, immediately came to her. She opened her eyes, and in the most impressive manner said—"If I die in one of these fainting turns, don't mourn but rejoice—I am the happiest creature in the world. *I am going to the Saviour*."—Her eyes beamed with celestial joy—her smile was beautiful and serene—and the bloom of health and youth, for a few minutes, so strongly painted on her cheeks, that the appearance of disease had vanished. At this moment, her younger brothers came into the room. On seeing them, she said, "Come, see what the Saviour can do."

A few hours after this, she called her father to her, and in a feeble whisper said, "Think, that you are near your dying daughter. Angels are around about me. I am going to the Saviour—I have no doubts about it—Don't grieve for your daughter."—She then called her mother to her, and said nearly the same words.

She died on the 5th of November, 1824, in the 22d year of her age.—The Almighty Redeemer, gave her a victory more splendid and glorious, than that of the most potent earthly conquerors. It was He who made this feeble girl smile and triumph in death, and to Him let all the glory be ascribed.

While this triumphant dying scene, gives the greatest consolation to surviving relatives and friends, its warning voice reaches those, who are in the days of their youth. O! that it might not speak in vain!—Be ye ready also—prepare to meet thy God—Believe in the Almighty Saviour, and ye also shall rejoice and triumph for ever.

on a throne. There is he associated, in the most blessed manner, with many dear relatives and earthly friends, with whom he took sweet counsel in the church on earth. And no doubt, the number of his friends and relatives in heaven, is much greater than in this world. Here he had become, comparatively, a stranger. Most of the acquaintances and companions, of the morning and mid-day of life, had already departed. A new world had arisen around him. He has now gone to renew the blessed intercourse between kindred spirits, interrupted by death, and to dwell for ever near the Lord.

When so great and good a man falls in the midst of his usefulness, in the full possession of his powers and zeal, even when covered with the hoary whiteness of four score years, we are called to mourn as for a Josiah, to make lamentation as for a Stephen. The Church in general is bereaved of a *burning and shining light*—the Presbytery of New-Brunswick mourn the loss of a *Father*—Bible Societies deplore the departure of a steady adherent and able advocate—Seminaries of learning, and institutions of piety and benevolence, will sensibly feel on this solemn occasion—the county of Monmouth will cherish deep and unfeigned regret—the State of New Jersey gives up to-day, to the dust and to God, a patriot, enlightened, ardent, inflexible—one who has long shone splendidly in the bright constellation of her illustrious citizens. A man above his fellows—a Christian, pre-eminent in every grace—a benefactor of the poor—a friend of mankind—a minister of the first magnitude in Christ's Kingdom—a revered teacher and venerable father in Israel has fallen. But it is God who has done it—we will be still and know that he is God.

This congregation sustains an irreparable loss. It is a solemn and affecting event, to be deprived of the able and faithful services of a spiritual pastor. You have enjoyed peculiar advantages, and enjoyed them long. Almost all

of you now present in this large assembly, have lived all your lives under the ministry of this distinguished servant of God. Far the greater part have been brought up as children around him. What exalted privileges! What obligations do you owe to God for his mercy! How great improvements in knowledge and in grace should you have made! This happy connexion is now closed for ever—but for all these things God will bring you into judgment. On earth you shall see his face and hear his voice no more—but remember the lessons he has taught—recall the holy and affecting importunity with which he has so often pressed upon you the calls of the Gospel. Hear the voice that now speaks to you from the mouth of the grave. Children and youth, call to mind, and deeply lay to heart, the solemn instructions, prayers and benedictions, your departed father has so often and so tenderly bestowed upon you. Christians! this is sacred ground, consecrated by the pious labours of eminent and faithful servants of Christ. Hallow it still, by your humble submission—your fervent prayers, and your exemplary lives. And “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him, in glory.”  
—AMEN. †