



Rev. G. W. Musgrave,
with the affectionate
regards of
J. G. Winchester.
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A companion for the sick

A
COMPANION
FOR
THE SICK.

ALTERED FROM
WILLISON'S "AFFLICTED MAN'S COMPANION."
WITH ADDITIONS: AND A SELECTION OF
APPROPRIATE POETRY.

BY REV. S. G. WINCHESTER,
Pastor of the Sixth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

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PREFACE.

THE subject of this book, however melancholy it may appear to some, yet is necessary to all; seeing the word of God, and our own experience do assure us, that “man who is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble;” and that he “is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward.” Nay, God’s dearest children are not exempted from this common fate. We see what is the character that God gives his church, Isa. liv. 11, “O thou afflicted, and tossed with tempest, and not comforted!”

If in this world, then, we must look for tribulation, it is highly necessary for every man to seek direction how to provide for it, and behave under it so as he may glorify God, edify others, and attain to eternal happiness at last. The tribulations we have to look for here are manifold; but among those that are outward, I know none about which men ought to be more thoughtful and concerned, than bodily sickness, that usual harbinger of death, and which ushers the way to judgment.

This is a subject not much handled in public sermons, for these are delivered only to them that are in health, the sick being unable to attend them. Wherefore it seems the more necessary to handle it in writing, so that the afflicted may have a book in their houses, and at their bedsides, as a monitor to preach to them in private, when they are debarred from hearing sermons in public.

And though sometimes sermons may be very suitable to the case of the sick and afflicted; yet, alas! the most part are careless and forgetful hearers of these things while they are in health and prosperity, as reckoning the evil day at some distance from them. A book then, such as the following, being with them in time of sickness and affliction, may, by the divine blessing, be useful to bring to their remembrance those counsels and admonitions which they very much neglected in the time of their health.

Again, ministers of the Gospel though ever so much inclined to attend the sick, yet by reason of disability, and multiplicity of other work, cannot be always with them to direct and comfort them. But such a book as this they may have still at hand to consult with.

And in regard to the afflicted, as they are,

for the most part, not in a situation to read for themselves, it would be a most charitable work for friends or neighbours that attend them, to lay hold on proper seasons for reading such a book as this in their hearing, and especially such chapters or sections as they judge most suitable for them. Thus you might be helped in some measure to exonerate your consciences, and do your last offices of kindness to your sick and dying friends, when you can serve them no longer in this world.

Moreover, let us look upon all temporal storms and calamities, as warnings to prepare for a more awful storm that we must all meet with, namely, the storm of death and judgment; let us stand habitually prepared for that storm, and then other storms will not so much affect us. If it be asked, What we shall do to be safe in the time of that trying storm? the answer is, Let us see that we be among the broken in heart, or sincere penitents, who heartily grieve for all known sins: that we be true believers in Christ, who trust in nothing but his righteousness and merits for justification and salvation: that we be born again, and made new creatures by a saving change both in heart and life: that it be our great business to clear up our evidences of peace

with God through Christ, and our title to the mansions which he has purchased by his blood. O that God's judgments, when they are in the earth, were means to awaken us to flee from the wrath to come, to Christ our refuge! When the floods of great waters are swelling up to the brim, our only safety is to secure a hiding-place in Christ's wounds.

Let us follow the example of Noah, who, when he saw the flood coming, took warning, and prepared himself an ark for saving himself and his household, Heb. xi. 7. Let us even imitate the Egyptians that feared the Lord; they, when warned of the dreadful storm of hail that was coming on the land, made their servants and cattle to flee into the houses, Exod. ix. 20. God has in mercy provided chambers for his people to hide themselves in when storms are coming, even the chambers of his attributes and promises, and the chambers of Christ's wounds and intercession; in these only we can find safety: let us then enter into them by faith, when he invites us, Isa. xxvi. 20, 21.

Seeing, in these evils days, we have so many harbingers and forerunners of death before our eyes, it will be highly our wisdom to keep ourselves still in a waiting posture, always ready and willing to die.

What is there in this weary land to tempt us to desire to abide in it? Is it not a land overwhelmed with sin and sorrow? O believers, are you tost with tempests here? Seek ye the wings of a dove, that you may flee away, and be at rest. Be habitually desiring to depart, that you may be with Christ. Surely for you to die is gain, yea, infinite gain! What are the imaginary pleasures of this world to the real happiness of the next? Though the struggles of death be grievous to nature, yet the gain of dying should reconcile you to it. You do not hesitate at the trouble of putting off your clothes at night to gain a little rest to your bodies; and why should you hesitate at unclothing yourselves of the garment of flesh at God's call, to gain everlasting rest to your souls, and the fruition of Christ's glorious presence forever? Let the thoughts of this gain put you upon using all means to get your hearts weaned from the love of the world, and its comforts. Keep the mantle of earthly enjoyments hanging loose about you, especially in these calamitous times, that so it may be easily dropped when death comes to carry you to the eternal world. O for more of the lively faith of that world, and of him that is the Lord and purchaser of it!

INTRODUCTION.

MAN, when he first came from his Maker's hands, was a holy and innocent creature, pure from sin, and consequently free from sickness and trouble, and enjoying uninterrupted health and prosperity both in body and soul. But no sooner was he tainted with sin, than he became liable to all sorts of miseries, temporal, spiritual, and eternal: his soul being the residence of sins and lusts, his body became the receptacle of sickness and diseases. And seeing God's own children have the relics of sin and corruption in them, while in this world, they are not to expect exemption from such afflictions; and the infinitely wise God sees meet to make use of bodily distempers to correct the corruptions, and try the graces of his people, and to promote both their spiritual and eternal advantage. Hence it is said of Lazarus, John xi. 3, "Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." He was beloved, and yet sick. Sanctified and healthy souls may have weak and sickly bodies, as had Gaius, 3 John 2. Notwithstanding, the

case is sometimes most trying and exercising to the best of God's people: and they are never more ready to question God's love, or quarrel with his providence, than under heavy sickness and bodily distress. It is therefore highly important whether families or private persons, to inquire how they ought to behave under or after afflicting sickness; and how they shall provide for such an evil time before it comes.

As God is wont to lighten our darkness, says Drelincourt, so he makes use of death to cause his infinite wisdom to shine and appear in all his creatures. Sin has brought forth death, and death, on the contrary, as a most fortunate parricide, kills and destroys its parent, sin: for it is death that totally roots out of our souls all corrupt affections.

Moreover, God, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. xiii. will have all his children pass through the same path, to take possession of his eternal inheritance, and enter by the same gate into his royal palace. All the faithful in the Old Testament are gone already this way, through many tribulations, Acts xxiv. They have arrived at the kingdom of God, and through death, they are come to the abode of life and immortality.

An important reason of this our destiny,

is, that God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren; he will have us to be baptized with his baptism, and drink in his cup, and enter into bliss by the same gate, through which he has already passed. Through shame and disgrace he has arrived to glory; and through death he has entered into life. He has drunk of the bitter waters, before he tasted of the river of celestial joys; and he went down into the grave, before he would ascend to the right hand of God.

Although it is appointed unto all men once to die, Heb. ix. yet death has no cause to triumph, because the chief advantage is not on that side.

In the first place, Jesus Christ, our head, has encountered death, and overcome it; he has pursued it into its trenches, and baffled it in its own fortification: death thought to have devoured him, but it has been devoured itself. As fish are taken by the hook that they think to swallow; and as the bees hurt those whom they sting, but do greater harm to themselves; for they break their stings and lose thereby their lives: thus death, by fixing its sting in the humanity of Jesus Christ, has put him to a great deal of pain

for a time, but it has thereby lost all strength and vigor for ever.

The miserable Jews, for fear of the Romans, delivered to them our Lord Jesus Christ, their brother according to the flesh, bound like a malefactor. When hell saw him nailed to the cross, and afterwards laid in a grave, it greatly rejoiced the devil, and his angels began to sing songs of triumph. But it was altogether impossible that the prince of life should be detained in the prison of death. He has not only broken out of the grave by his infinite power, but has also trampled under feet all his most furious enemies, and overcome millions of infernal fiends. And to declare how life and death were in his power, he baffled death, when he was, as it were, a prisoner, shut up in his dungeon. He has broken open the gates of this black prison, and torn in pieces all his fetters: for when he was yet in the grave, he raised to life many that were dead, who were seen in the holy city; and yet at present he holds in his hand the keys of death and of hell. Therefore, as children rejoice at their father's victory, and as the subjects are concerned in the prosperous proceedings of their king, and as the members are the better for the glory and honour of their head; thus may

we glory in the most notable victories and famous triumphs of Jesus Christ, who is our father, king, and head. We may also justly glory, that we are lords of death, and that we have overcome it in the person of our great God and Saviour. I say this after the apostle Paul, That God hath quickened us together, and raised us together, and made us sit together in heavenly places with Jesus Christ, Eph. ii. 5. 6.

Therefore, being befriended with the grace of God, and armed with the virtue of his Holy Spirit, let us show our courage and defy death; let us look it in the face without fear, laugh at all its threats, and encounter it without dread: for it is now like an insolent soldier without weapons; it is like a bee without its sting; it is like an old lion that roars, but has lost all its claws; it is like a snake that would convey its poison, but has no venomous teeth left, having been pulled out by him who has bruised the serpent's head.

If you consider nothing but death's exterior, its face and fearful appearance, its frigid eyes, its meagre body, its ironed hands; you cannot perceive any difference between the death of God's children, and that of the most wicked. But if you lift up the mask, and examine the death of the one, and of the

other more exactly, you will meet with as great difference as between Heaven and Earth, the paradise of God and hell: for as Moses' brazen serpent, which he lifted up in the desert, had the form and appearance of a burning serpent, but nothing of the poison and fire; so the death of the faithful appears as the death of other men, but has not the deadly and pernicious consequences; for it is not only a sign and testimony of God's grace and favour, but the beginning of our deliverance, and the cure of all diseases. As Moses, when he had cast wood into the waters of Marah, they had the same colour, but not the same bitterness and unpleasant taste: so the death of God's dearest children has the same tincture and appearance as before, but Christ's cross has taken away the danger, the trouble, and extracted its distasteful bitterness, and changed it into unspeakable sweetness. As Pharaoh was drowned with all his army in the waters of the Red sea, but the children of Israel found a secure and pleasant passage into the promised land; for when they arrived upon the other shore of that dreadful sea, they sung unto God songs of triumph and thanksgiving: so death opens its jaws to devour the reprobates, it is an abyss where they can find no bottom; but to the children

of God it is a favourable passage into an eternal bliss; as soon as they are gone through, they arrive at the place of assurance, joy, and rest, where God furnishes them with songs of triumph and thanksgiving to the Lamb. Rev. i. 15.

Balaam the prophet was called to curse the people of God but he blessed them, contrary to the vain expectation of Balak king of Moab. Thus death has been brought into the world by the devil, to destroy and utterly abolish the holy seed; but God, by his infinite goodness and wisdom, has changed it into salvation and blessing. Let us therefore not be any longer puzzled to find out the meaning of Samson's riddle; "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness," Judg. xiv. For the Church of God, to whom Christ has discovered the most excellent secrets of his kingdom, teaches us to seek the sweetest comforts out of this old Lion. As Samson pulled down the temple upon himself to his own destruction, so sin brings on death which destroys sin itself.

COMPANION

FOR

THE SICK.

CHAPTER I.

SECTION I.

The first inquiry of the soul when the body is afflicted, should be, *why has God visited me with this sickness?*

AN infinitely holy and gracious God has various and wise ends in afflicting the children of men, whether they be converted or unconverted; which ought to be duly considered by all, and especially by those who are visited with sickness.

1. God sends sickness, to awaken in us the spirit of prayer and supplication, and make us more earnest and importunate in our addresses to the throne of Grace. There is a great difference between our prayers in health and in sickness; between

our humiliations in prosperity, and in adversity. In prosperity, we pray heavily and drowsily, but adversity adds wings to our desires, Isa. xxvi. 16. "Lord in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." Though they were backward enough to prayer before, yet they pour it out most freely now. The very heathen mariners cried aloud to God in a storm. What a famous prayer did Manasseh make when he was under his iron fetters! We find it thrice mentioned, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 13. 18, 19. And the voice of fervent prayer, is what the Lord desires to hear.

2. Another end is, to loose our hearts from the things of this world, and cause us to look and long for heaven. When we enjoy health and ease in this world, we are apt to say with Peter on the mount, "it is good for us to be here;" but when distress cometh, God's people will say with the Palsmist, Psal. lxxiii. 27, "It is good for me to draw nigh to God." When things here go well with us, we are apt to think ourselves at home; but when trouble arises, we begin to say, "arise, let us depart, this is not our rest." Though heaven was much out of sight and out of mind before, yet, when afflicting sickness comes, the poor be-

liever will sigh, and say with David, Psal. lv. 6, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."

3. God designs to make the world bitter, and Christ sweet to us. By such afflictions, he lets men see, that the world is nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit; that riches avail not in the day of wrath: then it is, that they may see the insufficiency of the world to relieve them: that, as one says, "A velvet slipper cannot cure the gout: a golden cap cannot drive away the head-ach; nor a bed of down give ease in a fever." And as the world turns bitter, so Christ grows sweet to the believer. In time of ease and health, Christ is often very much neglected and forgotten. As the disciples, while the sea was calm, suffered Christ to sleep with them in the ship, thinking they might make their voyage well enough without his help; but when they were ready to be drowned, then they see their need of Christ, they awake him, crying, "Master, save us, or else we perish." So the best of saints, when all is easy about them, are prone to suffer Christ to sleep within them, and so to neglect the lively actings of faith on Christ; but when the storm of afflic-

tion begins to arise, and they are ready to be overwhelmed with distress, then they cry, "None but Christ, none but Christ."

4. God visits with sickness and distress, in order both to prove and improve his people's grace. Deut. viii. 6. Rev. ii. 10. Grace is hereby both tried and strengthened.

1st. Such afflictions prove both the truth and strength of our graces, as they serve to try if we love God for himself; and if we can endure and hold out in serving him, waiting and depending upon him, notwithstanding discouragements. That faith which will not suffice for a little affliction, will not suffice for a great one. Peter had faith enough to come upon the sea at Christ's call; but as soon as the waves began to swell, his faith began to fail, and his feet to sink, till Christ mercifully caught hold of him, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Matth. xiv. 31. Little did he think his faith was so weak till now.

2dly. They tend to improve our graces also, by strengthening them. They serve as a whetstone to sharpen faith, so that the soul is made to renounce earthly shelters, and to embrace God in Christ, as its only refuge and portion. They excite to repentance and serious mourning for sin; for, like the winter frost and snows, they make the fallow

ground of our heart more tender. They prompt us to heavenly mindedness, self-denial, and patient waiting on God. Yea, the experience of God's people can attest it, that grace is never more lively than when under affliction. David never found himself better, as to his spiritual-state, than when he was persecuted and hunted as a partridge on the mountains; and hence says, Psal. cxix. 71, "It 's good for me that I have been afflicted."

5. God's aim is, to awaken us to redeem time, to prepare for removing doubts, and to clear up our evidences for heaven. In the time of health we are apt to trifle away time, to loiter in our journey, and forget that we are pilgrims on the earth; wherefore God sends sickness as his messenger, to remind us of our duty.

Now it highly concerns us, when sickness attacks us, to consider and meditate upon these ends for which God brings on distress; and pray earnestly that they may be accomplished in us; that so our sickness shall not be unto death (spiritual or eternal,) but to the glory of God, and good of our souls.

SECTION II.

Let all who are visited with sickness and distress search for the Achan in the camp, and inquire diligently what is the ground and cause of God's controversy with them.

It has been the practice of God's people in Scripture times, to inquire into the cause and meanings of God's rods which have been laid upon them. So David, 2 Sam. xxi. when the land of Israel was three years under the stroke of famine, he inquired into the meaning of it. So Job is exceedingly desirous to know why God set him up as a mark for his arrows, Job vii. 20. and hence it is that he makes that petition, Job x. 2. which is most suitable for every man in distress, "show me wherefore thou contendest with me."

I grant, indeed, that God sometimes visits his people with affliction, for the trial and exercise of their grace, and for their spiritual instruction, more than for the correction of their sin. But sin being the original and foundation of all affliction, it is safest when it is our own case, and most acceptable to God, to look on sin as the procuring cause. Or if our sins have not immediately procured the present affliction, yet the best of God's children must own that they

have at least deserved it. We see the sin of the Corinthians is mentioned as the cause of their sickness, 1 Cor. xi. 30, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you." The Psalmist concludes the very same thing, Psal. cvii. 17, 18, "Fools, because of their transgressions and their iniquities, are afflicted; their soul abhorreth all manner of meat: and they draw nigh unto the gates of death." But ordinarily, by sickness, the Lord points at some one sin in us, more than another; some Jonah in the ship, that has raised the storm, which the Lord would have us to search out and throw over board without delay.

But how shall we discover and find out the particular sin for which God afflicts us with sickness and distress?

1. Study the Lord's word and the chastisements there recorded, which he has inflicted upon people for their sins; and inquire if you be guilty of the like. Observe what has been God's mind to his people, and what sin he has pointed to them when they have been brought under such a rod: and so you may learn his mind to you, Rom. xv. 4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning."

2. Consider what is the sin which conscience most accuses you of, in your most

serious and solitary hours. Conscience is God's deputy, and your bosom-monitor, whose voice, perhaps, you have little regarded in the day of health; wherefore God has sent a sharper messenger, to second the voice of conscience. Hear now the voice of the rod, for it is the same with the voice of conscience. In the day of prosperity, carnal profits and pleasures made such a noise, that the voice of conscience could not be heard: wherefore God has brought on the silent night of adversity, that his deputy may obtain audience. Well then, give ear; what saith conscience now? May you not hear it saying, as Reuben to his brethren in distress, "Spake I not to you in the day of health, do not commit such a sin, and do not delay repenting for such a sin; but you would not hear?" O man, let conscience get a hearing at last as it got with the patriarchs, when they were brought to distress in Egypt, and made them confess their sin in selling Joseph, Gen. xlii. 21, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us."

3. Consider what are those evils, that others have observed in you, whether they

be friends or foes. Hearken to what a Christian friend notices in you, either when speaking to you, or to others about you. "Let the righteous smite me, (saith David,) and it shall be a kindness." Yea, do not disregard what evil enemies say of you: as David obtained good by the malicious reproaches of Shemei, in the day of his affliction, so may you in the time of distress; for sometimes malice itself will speak truth. Enemies are sharp-sighted to spy out our faults, and so may, through the divine blessing, prove monitors to us, both with respect to sin and duty.

4. Consider the nature and circumstances of your distress. Oftimes the affliction is so suitable to the transgression, that we may clearly read our sin written on the forehead of our punishment, as in the case of Adonibezek, and many others. And also you may be helped to find it out by the Lord's timing of the rod to you. Was it sent when you were under much formality in duty? or when you were eagerly pursuing the things of the world? or when you were under the power of some prevailing lust or other? Then the rod comes to reprove you, and to wake you to the evil thereof.

5. Consider what is the sin that has been formerly the most affrighting to your

thoughts, and perplexing to your conscience, when you have been in the immediate view of death and a tribunal. It is very likely, (if you have not truly repented of it,) that is the sin which God now intends to awake you to see the evil of, that you may sincerely mourn for, and turn from it, looking to God in Christ for pardon and mercy.

Ah! (saith one,) it is my lot to die under a dumb and silent rod: I do not understand its language, I cannot hear its voice, I cannot find out the sin that is pointed at by it; what course shall I take?

1. Be deeply humbled under this trial, and bewail your case before the Lord; for it very much aggravates the affliction to God's people, when they know not the language of it. Hence was it that Job lamented so heavily, that his way was hid, and he knew not the reason of God's contending with him, Job iii. 23.

2. A believer's case may be sometimes so dark, that it requires a great deal of spiritual art and wisdom to enable him to hear the voice of the rod, and understand its language. Hence it is said, "He is a man of wisdom that seeth God's name upon it," Micah vi. 9. Now, this wisdom must only come from above; therefore,

3. Go to God, and earnestly beg for this wisdom, that you may know his mind, and the meaning of the rod. Do as Rebekah, when the children struggled in her womb, she went to inquire of the Lord, saying, "Why am I thus?" Gen. xxv. 22. Cry to God to give you his Spirit, to teach and enlighten you to see sin in this evil, and the particular evils you are guilty of. This was Job's course in his affliction? "Show me, (says he,) wherefore thou contendest with me. That which I see not, teach thou me. Make me to know my transgression and my sin." There is no better way for a prisoner to know the reason of his confinement, than to ask the magistrate who committed him. God is a wise agent, and can give the best account of his own actions.

4. If you cannot find out the particular sin for which God afflicts you, then labour to repent of every known sin, and cry for pardon, of every unknown and forgotten sin also. Do that out of wisdom, which Herod did out of malice, who, because he could not find out the babe Jesus, killed all the children of Bethlehem, that he might be sure to kill Jesus among them. Let us seek the utter ruin and death of all our sins, that we may be sure to destroy that sin for which God afflicts us.

5. Study to exercise a strong faith, and a humble submission, while God keeps you under the silent rod. Believe firmly, that God is just, though you know not for what he contends. And however long he thinks fit to make you walk in the dark, resolve humbly to wait on him, and commit yourself to him, who has many times guided the blind in the way they knew not.



SECTION III.

When any fit of sickness attacks you, think seriously upon death, and make diligent preparation for it.

1. Set about self-examination work. Inquire if you be in Christ or not; if you be yet far off from God, or if you be brought near by the blood of Jesus. And see that you be impartial in this search, and willing to find out the truth of this important question. Be not foolishly tender of yourself, and apt to believe that you are safe, when it is not so; for in this way thousands ruin themselves forever. But be willing to know the worst of your case, and thoroughly to understand your soul's danger, then you may be moved to take the right way to escape it. Wherefore take a view of the marks of Christless and unconverted per-

sons set down in God's word, and judge yourself by them: And consider also the signs of true grace there recorded, and see if they be applicable to you or not.

2. If after inquiry you find your state is bad; that you have been a lover of the world, more than of God; you have minded your body more than your soul; you have lived in the neglect of Christ; allowed yourself in known sin: O then be convinced of your inability to help yourself, and your need of Christ to help you. And labour to be deeply humbled before God, under a sense of your sin and folly. "Ah, how foolishly, how rebelliously, how unthankfully have I acted? I have abused God's mercies, and left undone the work for which I was made, and preserved, and enjoyed the Gospel. Oh! I had all my time given me, to make preparation for endless eternity, and I have never minded it, till now that sickness, the harbinger of death, is come upon me: and now, what shall I do to be saved?" Well, then, in order to convince and humble you the more, cast back your eyes upon the sins of your nature, and of your past life; view them in their nature, number, aggravations, and deservings. O do not so many years of sin need a very deep humiliation? O do

you not stand greatly in need of such a person as Christ, to be your Saviour and Ransomer from such a vast number of sins? O their weight will press you eternally down to the lowest hell, if left to yourself, and laid upon your back.

3. O sinner, are you deeply humbled, and desirous of mercy upon any terms? Believe then, that your case is not remediless, but that there is a sacrifice provided for your sins, and an able and all sufficient Saviour in your offer. Believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and became flesh to be a surety for you; that he is both able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. Though your sins, your dangers, and your fears, be ever so great, yet he is able and willing to save. O flee at once to this refuge city, whose gates are open to receive you. Trust your soul upon Christ's sacrifice and meritorious blood, for mercy and salvation. Apply humbly to him, that he may teach you the will of God, reconcile you to his Father, pardon your sins, renew you by his Spirit, and save you from eternal wrath.

4. Give up yourself to God in Christ, by way of covenant and solemn resignation. Every man does this sacramentally in bap-

tism; but you must also renew it personally and explicitly, and thereby give a cordial and voluntary consent to the covenant of grace. Acquiesce cheerfully in the Gospel way of salvation through Christ and his righteousness; and accept of God in Christ, as your portion. Make choice of God your Father, as your reconciled Father in Christ; and God the Son, as your Redeemer and Saviour; and God the Holy Ghost, for your Sanctifier, Guide, and Comforter. And likewise give up yourself, soul and body, and all you have, to be the Lord's; engaging, in Christ's strength, to live for God, and walk with him in newness of life. And study to do all this deliberately, unfeignedly and cheerfully. Though, perhaps, you have done this hypocritically at former times, you have profaned God's covenant, and behaved unsteadfastly and perfidiously therein; yet now endeavour to be sincere with God for once.

5. Be living daily in the exercise of faith and repentance: renew the acts thereof frequently, in proportion to your renewed sins and guiltiness. Cleave close to Christ, your High Priest and Surety, and be ever washing in his blood. Come death when it will, let it find you at the fountain, always looking to, and making use of Jesus

Christ. You have great need of Christ every day of your life, more especially in sickness; but most of all at a dying hour. O what need will you have of Christ, then, as an Advocate with God, when the question is to be determined, Where your mansion is to be assigned, through all eternity, whether in heaven or hell? O then, be looking always to Christ, with the eye of faith. Live in the constant thoughts of this blessed Mediator. Let him be first in your thoughts in the morning, and last in your thoughts at night.

6. Be striving to mortify every sin and lust, both outward and inward. Be dying to sin daily, that so you may not die for sin eternally. O that sin may be daily losing its strength, and dying in you! so that it may be certainly dead before you. Pray earnestly, that your sins may die, before you die: for, if they die not before you, but out-live the dying body, they will live eternally to sting and torment the never-dying soul.

SECTION IV.

Be not anxious for recovery to health ; but leave the issue of the present sickness to the will and pleasure of the infinitely wise God.

Remember, O man, thou art the clay, and God is the potter; he is the absolute Lord of thy life and times, therefore learn to adore his sovereignty over thee, and all thy enjoyments. David did so, when he said, "Lord, my times are in thy hand," Psal. xxxi. 15. And indeed they are only best in his hand, for he best knows how to dispose of them. The prophet saith, Isa. xxx. 18, "The Lord is a God of judgment, blessed are they that wait for him." Judgment there signifies wisdom: The Lord is a God of wisdom, and will order and time all things well; and therefore it becomes us quietly to wait for his pleasure, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." It is taken notice of, as a great sin in the Israelites, that they waited not for his counsel, but limited the Holy One of Israel. Psal. lxxviii. 41. What an unaccountable folly and presumption is it, for the worms of the earth, to seek to limit the Sovereign of heaven to their measure! It becomes us at all times, and especially in sickness and affliction, to have low, submissive

thoughts of ourselves, and highly exalted thoughts of God's sovereignty, such as Nebuchadnezzar had, Dan. iv. 35, "And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" We should therefore refer all to his wise determination, and be willing to die or live, as he shall be pleased to appoint. I remember to have read of a godly woman, who, in her sickness, being asked by one, whether she was most desirous to die, or to live? She answered, 'I have no choice in that matter, but refer myself to the will of God.' 'But, (said the other) suppose God should refer it to you, whether to die or to live, which of them would you choose?' 'If God (replied she) should refer the matter to me, I would even refer it back again to him.' It becomes thee, O man, to be entirely resigned to the will of thy Maker, and to stand like a sentinel in thy station, ready to move, as thy great General and Commander shall give order concerning thee. It would be pleasant and acceptable to God, to see thee more desirous to be delivered from sin, than from sickness. For sin is a far worse disease, than any

sickness in the world! beg importunately, that the great Physician may cure this woful soul-disease, and let him do with the body what he pleases. This was David's practice in his affliction, Psal. xxv. 18, "Look upon my affliction, and my pain, and forgive all my sin." As for his pains and afflictions, he asks no more, but that God would regard them, and look upon them, and do with them as he thought fit; but, as for his sins, no less will satisfy him than a pardon, and blotting them entirely out, so that they might be remembered no more.



SECTION V.

Bind yourself with holy purposes and resolutions, in Christ's strength, to be more watchful against sin, more diligent in duty, and to improve the time of health better, if God shall be pleased to restore it again to you.

When God is visiting your iniquities with rods, and pleading a controversy with you for your omissions and slackness in duty, he expects that you will return from your backslidings, and set about a serious reformation and change of life. Hosea v. 15, "I will go, and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and

seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early." See then that you open your ear to discipline: study to answer God's call and expectation, and in his strength resolve to enter upon a new life. "Surely now it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement. I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more," Job, xxxiv. 31, 32. Now is the season you should say with Ephraim, Hosea, xiv. 8, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

Having duly examined yourself, and searched out your sins, you ought to put a bill of divorce into each of their hands. Deliberately resolve against all your sins, whether secret or open; and especially resolve against your darling and beloved sins, those sins which do most easily beset you. Resolve also against all temptations to sin, and particularly against the snares of bad company, whereby you have been formerly enticed; say now with David, Psal. cxix. 115, "Depart from me, ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God."

You must not only propose to forsake all sin, but also to mind every known duty: that you will make religion your one thing

needful; the pleasing of God, the chief business of your life; that you will set the Lord always before you, give him your heart in all duties, aim at nearness and communion with God in every one of them; and still press forward to the full enjoyment of God in heaven through eternity.

Resolve also, through grace, that you will, in a special manner, mind secret duties, which the eyes of men do not observe, and those duties which conscience most upbraids you for neglecting. And you that are heads of families, resolve to make more conscience of family religion, of worshipping God with your families, both morning and evening; instructing your children and servants in the knowledge of Christ; and recommending religion and godliness to all round about you, whether relations or strangers.

And if you would have your resolutions effectual, see that they be accompanied with a deep sense of your insufficiency to perform them in your own strength. Bear always in mind the corruption and deceitfulness of your own heart, and make all your resolutions in an humble dependence on the sufficiency of Jesus Christ your Surety. Observe the apostle Paul's advice to his son Timothy, 2 Tim. ii. 1, "Be strong in the

grace that is in Jesus Christ." All your stock, O believer, is in his hand, so that without him you can do nothing; but, through Christ strengthening you, you are able to do all things.

SECTION VI.

Set your house in order, by making your *latter* will, and settling your domestic and secular affairs while you have freedom and capacity for doing it.

After the heart is set in order, the next work is to set your house in order, according to God's counsel to Hezekiah, Isaiah xxxviii. 1. It is recorded of the patriarch Abraham, that he was careful to settle the affairs of his family before his death, Gen. xxv. 5, 6. He disposed of his estate to Isaac, and legacies to the sons of his concubines. It is too general a fault, that men delay and put off making their wills, as they do their repentance, to the very last, and so too frequently never make them at all. Consider the evil of deferring or neglecting this necessary affair: for if you, upon whom God has bestowed means, shall die intestate, your estate may descend otherwise than as you intended; much of it may be spent in tedious law suits: such differences may fall out among relations, that

should live in friendship and mutual affection, as cannot be healed; some of them may be reduced to extreme want, when a small legacy might have put them in a way of living; and many such inconveniences may follow. Well then, if your neglect should bring on these evils, and involve posterity in endless strifes and contentions; may you not justly fear that the guilt thereof will pursue you into another world, whose wretched carelessness was the occasion of all that mischief?

Pray, what is the reason that men put off this affair? Is it not, because they do not incline to think so seriously on death, as this will occasion them to do? Does not this smell of abominable earthly-mindedness, and speak as if a man desired all his portion in this life, and cared not for a better? and that he is so far from preparing for death, that he cannot endure to think of it? Alas, that this worldly disposition should so far prevail among us! But surely there is no wise man who will say, that the putting off the thoughts of death will keep death at the greater distance; or that preparing for death, and making our wills, will bring on death the sooner.

It were surely best to order our affairs seasonably; yea, do it in time of health,

rather than delay it to a sick bed, or a death bed; for either you may be snatched off suddenly, and have no time for it; or you may be taken with such a disease as shall seize your tongue, so as you cannot express your mind; or seize your understanding, so as you cannot rationally dispose of your effects. And though none of these should happen, yet certainly it proves a great disturbance to a dying man, to be casting up, ordering and settling the affairs of his family, when he should be securing a heavenly mansion for his soul, and clearing up his evidences of salvation. It is great wisdom to settle this affair at once; that you may have as little to do with the world as may be, and all occasions of distraction to your immortal soul may be prevented, when it is near its removal to an eternal and unchangeable state.

Moreover, in settling your secular affairs, observe these following advices: 1. Make your wills cheerfully, and freely lay down whatever you enjoy, when God calls you to it. Praise God that you had these things while you needed them; and when you have no longer use for them, leave them without repining, to those that come after you. Look not back to Egypt when you are upon your march to Canaan.

2d. See that you deal justly, in providing for your family, paying all your just debts, and making restitution, if you have wronged any. Abhor all designs of defrauding any of your lawful creditors: for if your last act should be unjust, you leave a blot upon your name here; and since you cannot repent of this wickedness, it being among your last deeds, you expose yourself to a fearful doom in the world whither you are going.

3d. In settling your estates, see that God and good uses, be not forgotten nor left out. When you are leaving the world, and can glorify God no longer here by your words or actions, see to honour the Lord with your substance, by leaving some part thereof to a charitable use. I know it is a work of charity to give for maintaining the bodies of the poor; and especially the poor of God's people, who belong to his family; but it is much more pious and charitable, to leave something for propagating Christian knowledge in dark places, for educating poor children to read the Scriptures, and instructing ignorant souls in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is much to be lamented, that so many rich men among us die, and leave nothing to such pious uses. The liberality of Papists on their death beds, may give a se-

vere reproof to many professed Protestants. Shall the proud conceit of merit, and the imaginary fear of purgatory, prompt men to do more this way, than the certain persuasion of the love of God in Christ, and the well grounded hope of eternal life through the alone merits of Jesus Christ? O what a reproach is this to our holy religion!

4th. It might be much to the glory of God, and good of souls, that a greater part of our testaments and latter wills should consist of solemn charges, and exhortations and blessings to our children, or those to whom we bequeath any legacy; so as they can never open our testaments, or look into them, but they might hear something that may make impressions on their souls, for their spiritual edification, and for quickening them to the diligent practice of both family and personal godliness.

CHAPTER II.

SECTION I.

Justify God in the greatest afflictions which befall you.

THOUGH God should condemn you, see that you acquit him, and say, he is righteous in all his dealings. When the Church was

under the heaviest distress, she finds cause to justify God, Lam. i. 18, "The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against his commandment." So does the godly Nehemiah, Neh. ix. 33, "Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly." The same does holy David acknowledge, Psal. cxix. 75, "I know O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me." Now, in order to bring you to this agreeable frame, and to convince you of the equity and justice of God in his dispensations, however heavy and long your distress may be, I shall lay before you the following considerations:

1st. Consider the infinitely holy and righteous nature of that God who smiteth thee, Psal. cxix. 137, "Righteous art thou, O Lord: and upright are thy judgments." We presume it of a righteous man, that he will do righteous things; and shall we not much more believe so of a holy and righteous God? We cannot be infallibly certain that a righteous man will always do so; for a righteous man may leave his righteousness, because the creature is mutable: but God is immutably righteous; so that we may be confident of it, that the Judge of all the earth will do right, for it is

impossible he can do otherwise, Zech. iii. 5, "The just Lord is in the midst thereof, he will not do iniquity." He will not, he cannot; for it is contrary to his nature.

2d. Consider that God never brings on any affliction without a cause, 1 Cor. xi. 30, "For this cause many are sick." He has still just ground for the heaviest affliction, from your sins and provocations, and may always say to you, as to Israel, Jer. ii. 17, 19. "Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord." There is still ground enough for affliction, to be found in the best of God's people; and therefore it is said, Lam. iii. 33, "For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." No; it is our sins that oblige him to it. As Christ whipped the sellers of oxen and sheep out of the temple with a whip, (as is generally thought,) made of their own cords: so God never scourgeth us but with a whip made of our own sins, Prov. v. 22, "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins." If we consider

the mighty God as a Lord dispensing grace, then we find he acts sovereignly, and according to his will and pleasure, Matth. xi. 26, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." But, if we consider him as a Judge dispensing judgments, he never does it without a previous cause on the creature's part. God's treasure of mercy is always full and ready to be let out to them that seek it; but his treasure of wrath is empty till men fill it up by their sins, Rom. ii. 16, "Thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath." We do always provide fuel for God's wrath before it kindle and break out upon us.

3d. Consider farther this instance of God's equity, that when there is a cause given, God does not presently take it, but continues to threaten often, and warn long, before he execute the sentence of his word. He sends lesser strokes as warnings of greater, if we repent not; and he repeats his warnings many times, both by word and providence, before he smites. Yea, even when repeated warnings are slighted, he delays a long time; and waits to be gracious, Isaiah xxx. 18. And when man's obstinacy and incorrigibleness arrive to such a height, that he can spare no longer; yet, how loth is he to give them up to severe judgments!

Hos. xi. 8, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." When the Lord has sinners in his arms, ready to give them up to severe judgments, yet he makes a stand, and would fain be prevented before he proceed to his strange work; for so he calls his acts of judgment, Isa. xxviii. 21. Acts of mercy are most agreeable and pleasant to God, Micah vii. 18, "He delighteth in mercy:" but judgment is his strange act, and his strange work.

4th. Consider that when at last he sends strokes on us, they are always lighter than we deserve; he exacts not the whole debt that sinners owe to his justice, as Ezra acknowledges, Ezra, ix. 13, "Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve." The stroke he there is speaking of, was a most heavy judgment; fearful ruin and desolation came upon Jerusalem, and the whole land of Judah; the city and temple were burnt to ashes, the people carried captives to a strange land, and treated as bond slaves among the heathens; yet, says the holy man, "Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve." That is to say, it

is true, we have been carried to Babylon, but in justice we might have been sent to hell: our houses were burnt, but our bodies might have been burnt too: we have been drinking water, but we might have been drinking blood: we have had grievous burdens on earth, but we might have been groaning in hell: we were banished from the temple, but we might have been eternally banished from God's presence." We think it a great favour among men, when any punishment is mitigated, when the sentence of death is changed into banishment, or when banishment is turned into a fine; or a great fine is made smaller. And will you think God deals rigorously with you, when he lays you on a sick-bed, when he might justly have laid you in hell, and poured out all his wrath upon you there? You but taste of the brim of the cup, when God might cause you to drink of the bottom and dregs of it.

Have you not cause then to acknowledge God's justice, nay, even his mercy too, in his dealings with you, however severe they may seem to be? May you not, with good reason say, any thing less than hell is a mercy to such an ill-deserving creature as I am? If even a hard-hearted Pharaoh, under distress, went so far as to own the

Justice of God, *Exod. ix. 28*, “I have sinned; the Lord is righteous:” shall any professed Christian fall short of that obstinate Egyptian?



SECTION II.

Labour still to be sensible of God's hand under heavy affliction, and beware of stupidity and unconcernedness under it.

It is a sin to faint under heavy affliction, but it is a duty to feel it, *Heb. xii. 5*, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.” The Apostle there would caution against two extremes which every Christian under the rod should be careful to avoid, 1. Despising or making light of affliction. 2. Sinking or desponding under affliction. We are in great danger of running into the one or the other. As to the first, we may be said to despise the chastening of the Lord when we do not observe God's hand in our affliction, so as to reform the things whereby he was displeased: or when we resolve to abide the trial, by the strength of our own resolutions and stout heartedness, without looking to God for supporting grace: or when we become stupid and insensible

under the heavy and long continued rod. This despising and slighting of the rod, is not patience, but stupidity; it is not Christian magnanimity, but a stoical temper of mind, most sinful and provoking to God. We see how angry God is with sinners when his strokes are not felt, Isa. xlii. 25, "He hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it hath burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." Jer. v. 3, "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved: thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return." There is little hope of a scholar minding his lesson, who is regardless of whipping. It is a dreadful sign to be like Pharaoh, sleeping in our sins, when God is thundering in his wrath. He that will sleep when his house is on fire, or lie still in bed, as if he were not concerned, may assuredly expect to be consumed in its flames. As David could not bear it, when the messengers he sent to the Ammonites out of good will, were affronted and despised; neither will God endure it, when the messengers he sends to sinners are slighted; for he that slights a messenger, affronts his master. Those who

make light of affliction, make light of God that sends it, and make light of sin that procures it.

Remember, every affliction is a messenger from God, and deserves a hearing from you. It comes to you with such a message as Ehud did to Eglon, Judges ii. 20, "I have an errand from God to thee, O king:" I have a message from God to thee, O Christian, O sinner. Well, lend an ear, and hearken with reverence and attention to this errand; say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth, what wouldst thou have me to do?" Believe that God speaks as really to you by his rod, as by his word; therefore he says, "Hear ye the rod." God spake as truly by his ten plagues to Egypt, as he did by his precepts to Israel. And if the calm voice of the word were more regarded, we should hear less of the rough voice of the rod. As Gideon took briars and thorns of the wilderness, and with them taught the men of Succoth, who would not be taught by fairer means, Judges viii. 16, so God takes the sharp prickles of sore afflictions, to teach you his statutes, when you will not be taught by softer methods. Beware then of grieving God's Spirit, by turning stupid and insensible under sharp or long continued trials: but the more

pains God is at with you by his rod, hearken the more carefully to his voice; and labour to make the greater proficiency in the school of affliction, where he thinks fit to continue you; that so you may inherit that blessing, Psal. xciv. 12, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law."

SECTION III.

Beware of misconstruing God's dealings towards you,
and of charging him foolishly.

We are apt to believe Satan's suggestions under heavy trials, and to entertain wrong thoughts of God and his dispensations. Now, these you ought to guard against: as, for instance, 1st. Beware of harbouring atheistical thoughts, as if there were no Providence, no wise Governor of this lower world, no distinction between the good and bad; and that it is to no purpose to be religious, like those mentioned in Mal. iii. 14, "Ye have said, it is vain to serve God: and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinances, and walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts!" Yea even the Psalmist, when he begins to compare his own sharp trials with the ease and prosperity of

the wicked, is tempted to think all religion in vain, and say, Psal. lxxiii. 13, 14, "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." But these are nothing but the hellish suggestions of Satan, that irreconcilable enemy of God and precious souls, against which we should closely stop our ears.

2. Beware of charging God in your hearts with rigour or injustice in his dealing, like these, Ezek. xviii. 25, "Yet ye say, the way of the Lord is not equal." How highly unjust and injurious, are such thoughts of Him who is the Judge of all the earth, and cannot but do right!

3. Beware of thinking that heavy afflictions always speak wrath in God against thee: No, sometimes they speak forth love, and God may be carrying on a design of mercy to your soul, *viz.* to subdue your strong lusts, and draw you nearer to himself. As for those who think that the smarting rod, and divine love, cannot dwell together, let them read that passage, Heb. xii. 5, 6, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou

art rebuked of him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

4th. Beware of desponding and distrustful thoughts of God, under sharp afflictions. Some are ready to raze the foundation, quit their interest in God, and the promises, and cast away their hope and confidence; saying with Gideon, Judges vi. 13, "Oh, my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this evil befallen us?" So David was ready to draw a hasty conclusion, Psal. xxxi. 22, "I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes." But this was the effect of unbelief; for "he that believeth will not make haste."

SECTION IV.

Under sore trouble and distress, labour to exercise a strong and lively faith.

It was a noble and heroic resolution in that holy man Job, under his singular trials, Job xiii. 15, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." *q. d.* Let my strokes be ever so heavy, yet I will not let go of his word and promises; I will not raze these foundations of my hope. It was the way the Psalmist kept himself from sinking under his heavy burdens, Psal. xxviii. 13,

“I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord, in the land of the living.” Consider but a little, the noble influence that faith has to strengthen and support the soul under sore trials.

1st. Faith seizes the great Gospel promise of salvation in and through Jesus Christ, and thus secures the soul’s main interest through eternity; which may make the soul easy in every lot.

2d. Faith views God in Christ at the helm in the greatest storm, and thus it “endures, as seeing him who is invisible.” Heb. xi. 27.

3d. Faith casts the soul’s anchor upon the Rock of Ages, and stays itself on God, and the faithful promises; whereby the soul is eased and unburdened of its fears and melancholy apprehensions, Psal. iv. 22. Isa. l. 10.

4th. Faith brings new strength and auxiliary supplies of grace from heaven, when the former supplies are exhausted and spent; wherof David had the sweet experience. Psal. xxvii. 13. As God plants and actuates grace in the soul, so he is pleased to come in with seasonable supplies and reinforcements to the weak and decaying graces of his people, according to their present exigencies and pressures. And

thus from time to time, he feeds the believer's lamp with fresh oil, gives more faith, more love, more hope, and more desires; and thus he gives power to the saint, and strengthens the things which remain, when ready to die.

5th. Faith keeps the soul from sinking under heavy trials, by bringing in former experiences of the power, mercy, and faithfulness of God to the afflicted soul. Hereby was the Psalmist supported in distress, Psal. xiii. 6. Psal. lxxxvii. 4. O, saith, faith, remember what God hath done both for thy outward and inward man; he hath not only delivered thy body when in trouble, but he hath done great things for thy soul; he hath brought thee out of a state of dark nature, entered into a covenant relation with thee; he has helped thee to pray, and many times has heard thy prayers and saw thy tears. Has he not formerly brought thee out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay, and put a new song into thy mouth, and made thee resolve never to give way to such unbelieving doubts and fears again? And how unbecoming is it for thee now to sink into trouble?

6th. Faith supports the soul, by giving it a pleasant view and a prospect of a happy termination of all trouble; when it shall be

admitted to see and dwell with Christ hereafter. Thus was Job supported in his greatest distress, Job xix. 25—27, “For I know that my Redeemer liveth; and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold,” &c. A believing view of the soul’s meeting with its Redeemer, and receiving a crown of glory from Him at last, is an excellent support to a Christian under the heaviest affliction; and so it was to Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

7th. Faith gives great support, by the encouraging representations it makes of Christ, and of his present concern for the believer while under affliction. As, for instance, 1. Faith represents Christ to a believer under trials, as sympathizing with him under his distress, feeling his pain, hearing his groans, bearing his burdens, and ready to relieve him in his own appointed time, which it well becomes him to wait for.

2. Faith represents Christ as putting his almighty arm under the believer’s head, and conveying invisible strength to support and hold him up, under his greatest pressures.

3. Faith represents Christ as pleading the afflicted believer’s cause with God, and

answering all the charges of the law, the challenges of conscience, and accusations of Satan against him.

4. Faith represents Christ as standing by the furnace, as a refiner, where his gold is melting; carefully overseeing the trials of his people, that they may work for their good; and ready to bring them out thereof, when they are sufficiently purified from their dross.

5. Faith represents Christ as smiling on his people under the cross, whispering peace into their ear, and saying, "Well done good and faithful servant."

SECTION V.

Labour to bear with patience whatever load of trouble the Lord appoints for you.

We will perhaps observe some who are strangers to religion contentedly enduring very painful evils; and this they may do by virtue of a natural hardness, and resolution which some are endowed with, or on account of arguments furnished by human prudence: this is only patience as a moral virtue, which some attain to. But it is patience as a spiritual grace, or a fruit of the Spirit, which we must aim at under our trials; that we may bear them contentedly

from divine principles and to divine ends. Now this grace of patience we most earnestly beg from God under heavy afflictions, for it is only he that must work it in us; and therefore he is called the God of patience, Rom. xv. 5. And in order to your attaining this grace, I shall lay before you the following considerations, which may be useful, through the Lord's blessing, for that end.

1st. Consider the patience of our Lord Jesus Christ under sufferings inexpressibly greater than yours. When it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief; how patiently did he bear it all? According to that remarkable word, Isa. liii. 7, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Now Christ suffered as an example of patience, though this was not his chief design; and surely all the members of the body should study to imitate the head in patience. Did your blessed Saviour patiently endure such agonies and pressures of wrath for you; and will you decline to undergo some short pains or sickness in obedience to his commands?

2d. Consider God's sovereignty over you. He is the great Potter, and you are

his clay: and why may he not do with you as he pleaseth? If your children offend you, you chastise them, and perhaps do it sometimes without reason; yet how ill do you take it when they refuse to submit? How will you drive and spur your horses under you, and it may be sometimes unreasonably? Yet they bear all quietly, and make no resistance. Shall they take blows from their master, and will not you from your Maker, who has far more power over you? If any accuse you of cruelty to your children or beasts, you do not take it well, because you think you may do what you will with your own, and no man has a right to quarrel with you: but has not God a greater property in you, than you in your children or cattle, and will you not patiently submit to your wise and absolute sovereign?

3d. Consider your sins as the meritorious cause of all your afflictions, however severe they may be. If you have right thoughts of your sins, and of their aggravations, your mind may be composed to a patient submission to God's hand: if sin be heavy on you, all your afflictions will be light. Luther gives this as a reason why he slighted the rage of the Pope and emperor, and all his outward troubles: they are all little to me, because sin is so weighty on

me. Hence it was that Paul complained not at all of his sufferings, as great as they were: but he cried out much of his sins, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Sense of sin swallows up the sense of affliction, as the ocean does little brooks. For with whom should you quarrel, but yourself, when you bring troubles on yourself? This consideration should bring you to resolve and say with the prophet, Micah vii. 9, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him."

4th. Consider how sharp soever the pains are you are called to bear, yet they fall infinitely short of what you have deserved at God's hands. It is of his infinite mercy that death and everlasting destruction have not been your portion long since; and that you are not now suffering under the extremity of his indignation in the bottomless pit, together with the devil and his angels. And consequently, whatsoever falls short of this, is truly a great mercy; and is so far from being a ground of quarrelling, that the greatest sufferer on this side hell, has just cause to adore God's clemency in dealing more favourably with him than he deserved.

5th. Compare your case with others

that have been, or presently are in distress. Consider how many there are, far more pious and devoted to God than you, who suffer greater and longer evils than you do, and who are deprived of the temporal comforts which you enjoy. You do not suffer as much as you might, nor as much as Christ suffered for you, nor as much as you justly deserve to suffer. Do not say there is none so hardly dealt with as you are: for you know not the affliction of others. Consider duly the trials of that eminent saint Job, in all the circumstances thereof, and see if you can say that your sorrow is near so great as his sorrow was. Again, compare your case with that of the damned in hell, who lie down in endless flames, so that they have no rest day nor night, but the smoke of their torment ascends forever: and think what a blessing it is, that you are yet in a state of salvation, and not delivered over to these everlasting burnings, which were the due demerits of your sins, and to which you might long ago have been justly condemned, had it not been for the patience and long-suffering of Almighty God, who wants to be gracious to guilty sinners. When you consider these things, instead of being dissatisfied with the divine dispensations, you have cause to bless God, that matters are not

worse with you; and that you are kept out of hell to this day, where thousands, no more guilty than you, are now in endless despair.

SECTION VI.

Guard against repining complaints and discontented murmurings against the providence of God, under heavy sickness and affliction.

To deter you from these murmurings and complaints in trouble, I shall lay before you the following considerations: 1st. They who deserve the worst, do commonly complain and murmur most, and are most ready to think they are hardly dealt with. The unthankful Israelites were still murmuring. Ambitious Absalom was discontented. Bloody Haman, in the midst of all his greatness, cries out, "What doth all this avail me?" But humble Jacob said he was not worthy of the least of all the mercies and truth which God had showed him. And holy Job blessed God, and patiently submitted when he took from him, as well as when he gave to him.

2d. Murmuring is a sin that God takes special notice of, and looks on as an injury and affront done immediately against himself, Numb. xiv. 27, "I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which

they murmur against me.” He that gives ear to the groan of his own spirit, also hears the grumblings of yours, and will reckon with you for them.

3d. It can in no wise benefit or relieve us in distress. I may say of sinful complaining, (as Christ of sinful care,) Which of you, by complaining, can add one cubit to his stature? What ease or relief can you get by contending with God? Nay, instead of easing you of your burden, it will make it the heavier; as a child the more he struggles with his parents, the more he is beaten. The Israelites were once within eleven days journey of Canaan; but by their murmurings, they provoked God to lead them a forty years march in the wilderness before they could reach it.

4th. Whatever be your distress, there is no just ground for complaints. Remember that word of the afflicted church, Lam. iii. 39, “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” A man living, a man upon the earth, a man out of hell, has no cause to complain, whatever be his affliction. For let him compare his sin and punishment together, he will find there is no proportion; sin is a transgression against the infinite God; punishment is but an affliction upon the finite

creature: sin strikes at the very being of God; but punishment only at the comfort of the creature. So that whatever your punishment be, you have more cause to give thanks than complain; and to say with Ezra, "Thou hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve." It might have been a thousand times worse, if strict justice had been the rule: it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed.

5th. When you murmur under sickness, you quarrel with the messenger of that sovereign God, who gave you your lives, and can take them again when he thinks fit; and we know messengers ought not to be maltreated or abused, whatever be their commission, and far less when they are sent upon a good design. Now if you consider the design of this messenger, and his errand to you, instead of fretting and quarrelling at his coming, you ought rather to bless God that sends such a suitable harbinger and forerunner to tell you that death is approaching, and that he is willing to take so much pains to wean you from the world, and make you ready to depart by long continued trouble; when he might have seized you in a violent manner, and driven you away by main force, without using any means to obtain your consent. Have not

many, who were most unwilling to die at the beginning of a sickness, been brought, by the increase and continuance of it, to be well satisfied to leave the world, and long to be with Christ? And was not this for their advantage?

Besides what I have already said, I shall add some few remedies for the cure of this murmuring spirit.

1st. Look on your murmurings as worse than all your pains and troubles; these are but afflictions from God, but those are sins, greivous and provoking to God.

2d. Remember the judgments which murmuring has brought down from heaven upon sinners. Miriam was smitten with leprosy for it; Dathan and Abiram were swallowed up alive: fiery serpents, plagues, and exclusion from Canaan, were Israel's judgments for this sin, 1 Cor. x. 10, "Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer." The arrows which murmurers shoot against heaven, do soon return upon their own heads.

3d. Whatever your sufferings be for the present, yet still believe your case might be worse. The troubles that light upon the body are not so terrible as those that light on the soul, Prov. xviii. 14, "A wounded

spirit, who can bear?" They are nothing to what your innocent Saviour suffered upon the cross, yea nothing to what some martyrs have endured for the truths of the Gospel.

4th. Get very low thoughts of yourself, and a very deep sense of ill-deservings for sin. O! should a fire brand of hell murmur for temporal afflictions?

5th. Be still examining thyself, rather than censuring God. Does God seem to neglect you? say, alas it is most just! Have not I neglected him, and given a deaf ear to his calls many a day?

6th. Bear in mind that these troubles will not last, there is a great change near; either they will issue in life or death. If life, you will be ashamed you had no more patience when sick; if death, then, if you belong to Christ it will give a finishing stroke to all troubles and complaints, and heaven will make amends for all. But if you be not in Christ, whatever your afflictions be now, troubles a thousand times worse are awaiting you in another world: death will turn your crosses into pure un-mixed 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. You now fly

out in a passion, and say, you are not able to bear what you complain of: but consider, if you will not obediently bear God's rods now, you will then bear more, whether you will or not; and God will make you able to bear more, when there will never be any hopes of relief.

7th. Study to give vent to your sorrows in a way of prayer and praise. An oven stopped, is the more hot within; but the breath of prayer or praise gives ease. If we did complain more to God, we should complain less of God. What a mercy is it, that you have still God to go to? Improve the privilege, confess unworthiness, and beg the grace of patience and submission out of Christ's full treasures. Be also praising God for mercies received; and however bad your case is, bless God it is not in hell, you are in the land of hope.

CHAPTER III.

SECTION I.

Let believers especially guard against fainting or desponding under God's afflicting hand.

For preventing and helping this evil of fainting under affliction, let believers consider,

1. These heavy trials are all needful for you. Deep waters are not more needful to carry a ship into the haven, than great afflictions are, to carry the vessels of our souls into the port of bliss. Strong wind and thunder are frightful, but they are necessary to purge the air. One of the sharpest calamities that ever befell Israel, was the Babylonish captivity, yet even this was in mercy to them; for the Lord saith, Jer. xxiv. 5, "I have sent them out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good." Strange! Of freemen to be made prisoners, and that in a strange land among the heathen; to be removed far from their own houses, vineyards, friends, nay, and from the temple of God and his ordinances; and yet all this for their good! why? they were hereby effectually weaned and broke off from their darling sin of idolatry.

2. Consider, that your affliction, however

heavy it be, will soon have an end; Isa. lvii. 16, "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made." The goldsmith will not let his gold lie any longer in the furnace than it is purified. The wicked have a sea of wrath to drink; but, O drooping believer, take comfort; you have but a cup of affliction, which will soon be exhausted. The time is near when all thy trials shall have an end: in heaven there is no cross, no complaint, no tears nor sorrows for ever.

3. Faint not, O child of God; for these afflictions are all the hell which thou shalt have; thou hast nothing to fear hereafter. Judas had two hells, one in time, by terror in his conscience, another after this life, which endures to eternity: but all the hell that a believer has, is but this light affliction, which is but for a moment.

4. Desponding or murmuring in affliction is evil in any, but in none is it so bad as in the children of God. It very ill becomes their covenants, their privileges, their hopes. Have they resigned and given up themselves and all they have to God, by a solemn covenant, and will they fret when he disposes of them? Didst thou not say, O believer, in the day when thy heart was stung

with sin, and the terrors of God made thee afraid, O let me have Jesus Christ for my Saviour and portion, and I will be content, though I should be stricken with boils like Job, or beg my bread with Lazarus? Now, God tries you if you will stand to your word: O beware of retracting. Has not that soul enough, who has an all-sufficient God for his portion? If God be yours in covenant, that comprehends all things.

5. It discomposes and unfits the soul for any duty. It is ill sailing in a storm, so it is ill praying when the heart is in a storm of disquiet and despondency.

6. Your fainting under affliction, and your drooping, as if the consolations of God were small, are enough to cause others to stumble at religion, and make them call the truth of it in question. When they see those that profess religion, and have often declared that their rejoicing is in Christ Jesus as their portion, begin to sink and despond under outward affliction, O may they not be tempted to say, "Where is the truth of religion? Where are those divine supports and consolations we have often heard of?"

Lastly; O then seek to get faith revived, and strengthened, and resolve with Job to trust in God, though he should slay you.

This would be of noble use to keep the heart from sinking under pressures of affliction, as the Psalmist found it to his sweet experience, Psalm xxvii. 13, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

In order still further to reconcile you to the afflictive dispensation with which God has been pleased to visit you, consider that all afflictions, of what kind soever, proceed from God. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. Isaiah xlv. 7. They spring not from the dust; are not the effects of a random-chance, but the appointment of an all-wise, all-foreseeing God, who intends them for the good of his creatures. This, I think, says Hervey, is the fundamental argument for resignation, and the grand source of comfort. This should be our first reflection, and our sovereign support. He that gave me my being, and gave his own Son for my redemption, he has assigned me this suffering. What he ordains who is boundless love, must be good: what he ordains who is unerring wisdom, must be proper.

This reconciled Eli to the severest doom that ever was denounced. It is the Lord; and though grievous to human nature, much

more grievous to parental affection, yet it is unquestionably the best; therefore I humbly acquiesce, I kiss the awful decree, and say from my very soul, "Let him do what seemeth him good." 1 Sam. iii. 18.

This calmed the sorrows of Job, under all his unparalleled distresses. The Lord gave me affluence and prosperity; the Lord has taken all away: rapacious hands and warring elements were only his instruments; therefore I submit, I adore, I bless his holy name.

This consolation fortified the man Christ Jesus, at the approach of his inconceivably bitter agonies. The cup, which, not my implacable enemies, but my Father, by their administration, has given me, shall I not drink it? It is your Father, your heavenly Father, who loves you with an everlasting love, that has mingled some gall with your portion in life. Sensible of the beneficent hand, from which the visitation comes, may you always bow your head in patient submission; and acknowledge with the excellent but afflicted monarch Hezekiah, "Good is the word of the Lord concerning me." 2 Kings xx. 19.

All afflictions are designed for blessings; to do us good at the latter end, however they may cross our desires, or disquiet our

minds at present. Happy (says the Spirit of inspiration, and not wretched) is the man whom God correcteth, Job v. 17.; and for this reason, because his merciful chastenings, though not joyous but grievous, yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. Heb. xii. 11, "God's ways are not as our ways." The children whom we love we are apt to treat with all the soft blandishments, and fond caresses of profuse indulgence; and too, too often it is to their hurt, if not to their ruin. But the Father of spirits is wise in his love, and out of kindness severe. Therefore it is said, "Whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Heb. xii. 6. Would you not be a child of that everlasting Father, whose favour is better than life? Affliction is one sign of your adoption to this inestimable relation. Would you not be an "heir of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away?" Affliction is your path to this blissful patrimony. Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven, Acts xiv. 22. Would you not be made like your ever-blessed and amiable Redeemer? He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief?

and every disciple must expect to be as his master.

Perhaps, you may think your affliction peculiarly calamitous; and that if it had been of some other kind, you could more cheerfully submit, more easily bear it. But you are in the hands of an all-wise Physician, who joins to the bowels of infinite love, the discernment of infinite wisdom. He cannot mistake your case. He sees into remotest events; and though he varies his remedies, always prescribes with the exactest propriety to every one's particular state. Assure yourself, therefore, the visitation which he appoints, is the very properest recipe in the dispensatory of heaven. Any other would have been less fit to convey saving health to your immortal part, and less subservient to your enjoyment of the temporal blessings, which may, perhaps, be yet in store for you.

Should you inquire what benefits accrue from afflictions? Many and precious. They tend to wean us from the world. When our paths are strewn with roses, when nothing but music and odours float around, how apt are we to be enamoured with our present condition, and forget the crown of glory, forget Jesus and everlasting ages? But affliction, with a faithful though harsh

voice, rouses us from the sweet delusion. Affliction warns our hearts to rise and depart from these inferior delights, because here is not our rest. True and lasting joys are not here to be found. The sweeping tempest, and the beating surge, teach the mariner to prize the haven, where undisturbed repose awaits his arrival. In like manner, disappointments, vexations, anxieties, crosses, teach us to long for those happy mansions, where all tears will be wiped away from the eyes, Rev. xxi. 4; all anguish banished from the mind; and nothing, nothing subsist, but the fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

Afflictions tend to bring us to Christ. Christ has unspeakable and everlasting blessings to bestow; such as the world can neither give nor take away; such as are sufficient to pour that oil of gladness into our souls, which will swim above the waves of any earthly tribulation. But are we not, dear reader, are we not most unhappily indolent and inattentive to these blessings, in the gay hours of an uninterrupted prosperity? It is very observable, that scarce any made application to our divine Redeemer, in the days of his abode with us, but the children of affliction. The same spirit of supineness still possesses mankind. We

undervalue, we disregard the Lord Jesus, and the unspeakable privileges of his Gospel, while all proceeds smoothly, and nothing occurs to discompose the tenor of our tranquillity. But when misfortunes harrass our circumstances, or sorrows oppress our minds, then we are willing, we are glad, we are earnest, to find rest in Christ.

In Christ Jesus there is pardon of sins. Sin is a burthen incomparably sorer than any other distress. Sin would sink us into the depths of eternal ruin, and transfix us with the agonies of endless despair: But Christ has, at the price of his very life, purchased pardon for all that fly to him. He has borne the guilt of their sins "in his own body on the tree," 1 Pet. ii. 24. Have they deserved condemnation? He has sustained it in their stead. Are they obnoxious to the wrath of God? He has endured it as their substitute; he has made satisfaction, complete satisfaction for all their iniquities, Rom. iii. 25, 26. So that justice itself, the most rigorous justice, can demand no more. Oh! that distress may prompt us to prize this mercy! may incite us to desire ardently this blessedness! then it will "be good for to have been afflicted." Psal. cxix. 71.

Christ has obtained for us the gift of the Holy Spirit, Gal. iii. 2, to sanctify our

hearts, and renew our natures. An unrenewed, carnal mind, is ten thousand times more to be lamented, more to be dreaded, than any external calamities. And nothing can cure us of this most deadly disease, but the sanctification of the Spirit. This divine Spirit alone is able to put the fear of God in our souls, and awaken the love of God in our hearts, Jer. xxxii. 40. His influences suggest such awful and amiable thoughts to our minds, as will be productive of these christian graces. This sacred principle subdues our corruptions, and conforms us to our blessed Redeemer's image. How is this best gift of heaven disesteemed by the darlings of the world, who have nothing to vex them? But how precious is it, how desirable, to the heirs of sorrow? They breathe after it, as the thirsty hart panteth for the water-brooks. They cannot be satisfied without its enlightening, purifying, cheering communications. This is all their request, and all their relief, "that the Spirit of Christ may dwell in their hearts, Rom. viii. 9; may enable them to possess their souls in in patience, Luke xxi. 19, and derive never-ending good from momentary evils. If any be afflicted, let him pray. Dear sufferer, fly to God in all your adversity, pour out your complaints before him in

humble supplication, and show him your trouble. Psal. cxlii. 2. When I am in heaviness, says a holy sufferer, I will think upon God, Psal. lxi. 2; his omnipotent power, his unbounded goodness, whose ear is ever open to receive the cry of the afflicted. When the Psalmist was distressed on every side, without were fightings, within were fears, the throne of grace was the place of his refuge; I give myself to prayer, Psal. cix. 3, was his declaration. This method, we read, Hannah took, and you cannot but remember the happy issue, 1 Sam. i. 10. Let me entreat you to imitate these excellent examples; frequently bend your knees, and more frequently lift up your heart, to the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation; not doubting, but that through the merits of his dear Son, through the intercession of your compassionate High Priest, he will hear your petitions, will compassionate you under all your tribulations, and make them all work together for your infinite and eternal good.

SECTION II.

Believers have great reason to praise and bless God even in the midst of their sickness.

We should in every thing give thanks. 1 Thess. v. 11. Job blessed God when he had taken away his greatest comforts. Job i. 21. David, when speaking of his afflictions, says to God, "Thou art good and dost good." So Paul and Silas prayed when they were scourged and imprisoned.

1. The believer has reason to praise God, for the mercies of his past life.

2. You should praise God that in your greatest trouble you have a High Priest to sympathize with you, and provide mansions for your reception above.

3. Praise God that he has sent such suitable harbingers as sickness and trouble, to warn you of the approach of death. He might have called you away suddenly without any such warning. God in mercy thus gradually prepares the mind of the believer, for his eventful and happy change.

4. It is a matter of praise to God, that your troubles and afflictions are proportioned to your strength. "He knoweth our frame." And as a "father pitieth his child, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." You are not and shall not be tempted above

what you are able to bear; a way of escape shall be made.

Though your pains and sorrows be severe, yet God's grace is sufficient for you. As your days, so shall your strength be. Christ is your righteousness and strength. With Christ strengthening you, you suffer as well as do all things.

5. You have great reason to praise God that his strokes are so much lighter than you deserve; that your sick bed, is not hell; that your fever is not everlasting burnings; and that your pains are not eternal torments.

Instead of afflicting you for a few days, weeks, months, or years, he might have made your whole life, from the cradle to the grave, one uninterrupted scene of misery and affliction.

6. You should praise God that he has dealt out affliction to you with a more sparing hand, than he has to thousands of others, who were no worse by nature, and perhaps far better in their walk and conversation. Your sufferings cannot compare with Christ's, nor can they compare with those of many servants of God, whose history is on sacred record.

7. Praise God for the promises he has left on record for your encouragement and support under his chastening hand, and for the many assurances he has given that he

is dealing with you in love. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Heb. xii. 11, 12. Therefore "my son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Remember that "all things work together for good to them that love God:" and that "these light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Hence David said, "It was good for me to be afflicted: for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have learned to keep thy word." Ps. cxix. 67.

SECTION III.

Let the children of God, when visited with sickness, set about actual preparation for death and eternity.

Preparation for death may be said to be of two kinds, *habitual* and *actual*. Habitual preparation is that state in which saving faith places us. Actual preparation is

that state of mind, which consists in a sense of pardon and reconciliation, and a readiness to depart, esteeming it far better to be with Christ. All believers are in the state of habitual preparation; they are so by their union by faith to Jesus Christ, and by their sanctification through the influences of the Holy Ghost. A sweet sense of forgiveness, and an enlightened willingness to die, are greatly desirable on a death-bed. But beware of the idea that this species of preparation should be delayed till death. The season of health is the most proper and best adapted to such a work. To guide you in making this actual preparation, observe the following directions:

1. Seeing that sickness is appointed of God for his people's good, and particularly for fitting them for a better world; labour earnestly to reap the benefit of sickness, seek God's blessing upon it, that thereby you may be helped to discover more of the evil of sin, that you may hate and abhor it the more, and that you may see more effectually the vanity and vexation of the world, and get your heart loosed from all the things of time, and brought to a willingness to depart, that you may be with Christ.

2. Seeing the time of sickness and death is the time of your greatest need, beg earnestly of God, for your Redeemer's sake,

such special assistance, influences and operations of his Holy Spirit, as he knows needful for you in your present low and weak condition, in order to carry on and complete your actual readiness for meeting with himself at death, and entering into the invisible world, and being fixed unalterably in your everlasting state.

3. Renew the exercise of repentance, and of faith in the blood of Christ, for removing all grounds of quarrel and controversy between God and your soul. And in order to this, review your past life, and look into your heart also, and search out every predominant sin and idol of jealousy; for if there be any iniquity regarded in your heart, and unrepented of by you, it may occasion no little anguish and bitterness of spirit in a dying hour. Well, when you have discovered sin, humbly confess and bewail it before the Lord, and ask forgiveness for it, through the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, which cleanseth from all sin. Yea, make confession of all your sins, and particularly reflect upon the fountain and spring of them, viz. your original sin. Know the plague of your own heart, and mourn over it, mourn for the loss and mispending of much precious time. Mourn for the unprofitableness of your life. Now, when the axe is laid to the root of the tree

by sickness, it is high time to mourn for your unfruitfulness under the means of grace, and waterings of the Holy Spirit. Mourn for your sinning against such light and love as have been many days displayed to you in the glorious Gospel. And in a special manner, mourn for your sins of omission, which commonly are but little minded by us. Thus mourn for all your sins, till you water your couch with tears. It is most suitable that death should find every man, even every child of God, in the exercise of mourning and repentance: for they that thus sow in tears, shall eternally reap in joy. But see that your tears run much from the Gospel channel, and flow from the believing views of a crucified Christ, whom you have pierced by your sins. And in the midst of your mourning, be still aiming to take faith's hold of the clefts of this rock, for sheltering your soul from the guilt of past sins; say, "Lord Jesus, I have no refuge but thy wounds, no fountain but thy blood, no covert but thy righteousness. And seeing thou freely makest offer of thy merits for my protection, and invitest even the chief of sinners to come unto thee, saying, Look unto me, and be ye saved. Lord, I embrace the offer, and flee to thee to cover me." O believer do this, not once or twice,

but do it a hundred times over; do it as long as thou hast breath. Be still breathing to the very last, after a crucified Jesus for relief against the guilt of sin, which thou art always contracting, and wilt be, till the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved.

4. In order to your actual readiness to go forth to meet the bridegroom, when coming to you by death, you must do as the wise virgins, Matth. xxv. 7, "Arise and trim your lamps." As it is not enough to have a fair lamp of a profession, so it is not sufficient to have only the oil of grace in the lamp; nay, to have it burning in some degree. It is requisite at this time, that the soul be actually ready; the lamp must be trimmed, which imports, 1st. A supplying it with more oil; you must seek to have your grace increased, to have new degrees, new strength, and new supplies of grace given you from God, to fit you for the last conflict with your spiritual enemies, and especially the last enemy, death. 2d. It imports a stirring up of the oil, and raising the wick higher: So there must be an excitation of grace, which may be in a low declining condition: you must endeavour to stir and raise it up to a more lively exercise, and more elevated acts. Stir up the gift that is in thee: make the oil burn clear

and shine bright. Bring faith, love, repentance and holy desires, to a lively exercise. 3d. This trimming imports the cleansing of the lamp, by taking away the dead ashes that hinder the light, or prevent its burning so clearly as it otherwise would. So you must labour to take away the dead ashes of corruption, that hinder the shining of grace: remove all unbelief, earthliness, deadness, self, and formality, and whatever else suppresses the exercise of faith, love, and heavenly-mindedness: let all these dead ashes be snuffed away by repentance and mortification. As you ought to strive earnestly against all these heart evils in time of health, so now labour to give them a death stroke when death's harbinger gives you a summons.

5. Be diligent in gathering and summing up all your evidences for heaven and eternal life, that so you may not venture into the dark valley at an uncertainty. The comfort of dying will much depend on the clearness of your evidences; it is therefore your wisdom to examine them carefully, and see if you can say, "I know in whom I have believed; I have consented with my soul to the method of salvation laid down in the covenant of grace. I am desirous that the glory of it should be eternally ascribed to the

free grace of God, and the creature be wholly abased in his sight. I have chosen God for my portion, and Christ for my only Saviour; and the happiness which I aim at, is to enjoy God in Christ forever. And in order thereto, I depend on the Holy Spirit to apply the redemption which Christ has purchased, to me, and to sanctify me perfectly. There is no sin but what I hate and desire to part with. I would rather have more holiness, than to have health and all the pleasures in the world. I earnestly desire the flourishing of Christ's kingdom, and prefer Jerusalem to my chiefest joy." If your evidence be clear, you may cheerfully take death by the cold hand, and welcome its grim messengers, and long to be gone that you may be with Christ. You may say as Psalm xxiii. 4, "When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." You may go off the stage with the Psalmist's words in your mouth, Psalm xxxi. 5, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit, for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth."

6. Labour earnestly to overcome the love of life and fears of death, so as to be content to part with all things here at God's call. O believer, what is there in this earth to tempt thee to hang back, when God

calls you to depart ! while you are here, you may lay your account with many losses, crosses, disappointments, griefs, and calamities of all sorts. Friends will fail you, enemies will hate you, lusts will molest you, Satan will tempt you, and the world will deceive you. Death is the way that the dearest of God's saints, and all the cloud of witnesses have gone before you; yea, the Lord Jesus, your head, hath trod this path, and hath taken the sting out of death, and hath paved a way through its dark valley that his people may safely follow him. Has the captain of your salvation gone before you, and will any of his soldiers shrink to follow him? Are you content to remain always at the same distance from him, and to enjoy no more of his presence than now you have? are you satisfied to live for ever with no more knowledge of God, no more love to Christ, no more holiness or heavenly-mindedness than at present you have? Do you not groan under your remaining ignorance, deadness, wanderings, pride, passion, unbelief, selfishness, worldliness and other sins and lusts that here beset you? And are you not desirous to go to the place where you will be eternally free of them, all, and where you shall never complain of a dull, dead, and senseless frame of heart, or of any

heart-weariness or wandering in duty any more? For the heart shall then be as a fixed pillar in the temple of God, and shall go no more out: the eternal adoration and praises of God shall be the soul's delight and element forever. By such considerations strive to conquer the fears of death and desires of life, which are often great clogs to the people of God in their preparations for dying.

7. Be often meditating upon the heavenly glory which shortly all believers will see and enjoy. Be much in the contemplation of the glorious company above; behold Christ upon his glorious throne, at the right hand of God; and Abraham, David, Peter, Paul, and all the rest of the faithful ones, with their crowns of righteousness, triumphing in their Redeemer. Think, O believer, how happy will that day be, when thou shalt meet with thy father, and brethren, and thou shalt see thy elder brother on the throne ready to pass sentence in thy favour. With what sweetness will that sentence sound in thine ears, *Come ye blessed of my Father, &c.* What frame wilt thou be in, when he sets the crown of glory on thy head? O eternally free love! wilt thou cry, "O Saviour thou didst wear a crown of thorns, that I might wear a crown of glory; thou didst groan on the cross, that I

might now sing. Wonderful free love, that chose me, when thousands were passed by; that saved me from ruin, when my companions in sin must burn in hell for ever." Think how ravishing it will be to meet with your godly acquaintances in heaven, with whom you prayed, praised, and conversed here! Will you not then cry out, "O my brethren, what a change is here! this glorious place is not like the poor dwellings we had on earth; this body, this soul, this state, this place, our clothes, our company, our language, our thoughts, are far unlike those we had then! The bad hearts, the body of death, the corruptions and temptations we then complained of, are all now gone. We have no more fears of death or hell, no more use for repentance or prayer, faith or hope; these are now swallowed up in immediate vision, eternal love, joy and praise."

8. It would be also very suitable at this time, in order to your actual readiness for death, to be frequently looking out and longing for Christ's coming. As Abraham stood in his tent door, ready to go forth to meet the angels that were sent unto him, so should the believer keep himself in a waiting posture at this time. He should be like the loving wife, that longs and looks for the

coming of her absent husband, according to his letters to her. By this time (thinks she) he will be at such a place, and against such a time he will be at another place, and so in a few days I will see him. It is the character of believers, they are such as love his appearing, 2 Tim. iv. 8. They desire his coming, Cant. viii. 14, "Make haste, my beloved: even so come Lord Jesus, come quickly." Believers should look upon themselves as pilgrims here, wandering in a wilderness, absent from home, and at a distance from their father's house; and in time of affliction, it is very proper for them to be crying as David does, Psal. lv. 6, "O that I had wings like a dove? for then would I fly away, and be at rest; I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest." "O when shall the time of my pilgrimage, and the days of my banishment be finished, that I may get home to my country and friends above! Oh! my Lord is gone, my Saviour hath left the earth, and entered into his glory! my friends and brethren are gone to their blessed rest, where they see God's face, and sing his praise for ever: and how can I be willing to stay behind when they are gone? Must I be sinning here, when they are serving God above? Must I be groaning and sighing, when they

are triumphing and dividing the spoil? Surely I will look after them, and cry, O Lord how long? when shall I be with my Saviour and my God?"

SECTION IV.

Let believers in time of sickness endeavour all they can, to glorify God, and edify those that are about them, by their speech and behaviour.

If ever a child of God be active to promote the honour and glory of God, it should be in time of sickness, and when death may be approaching. And there is good reason for it; for 1st, This may be the last opportunity that ever you shall have to do any thing for God, and therefore you should study to improve it to the utmost. Heaven, to which you are going, is the place where you shall receive your reward; but you can have no access there to advance God's glory, by commending God and Christ and religion to sinners, or weak believers. Upon this account many of God's children have been content to suspend their heavenly happiness for a while, and to stay upon the earth for some longer time. I have read of a certain martyr, when going to suffer, who expressed some sorrow that

he was going thither, where he should do his God no more service, to wit, in the sense above explained. And of another, that said, "if it were possible that there could be a place of any grief in heaven, it would arise from the Christian's considering, that he did so little for God while he was upon earth."

2. The holy speech and conduct of dying believers may, through the blessing of God, make deep impression upon the hearts of unregenerate men that are witnesses to them. Those who have derided the people of God for the strictness of their lives, and despised their counsels and reproofs, as proceeding from humour or preciseness, yet having begun to notice their words and actions, when they have seen them on sick-beds, and on the borders of eternity, have other thoughts of religion and holiness than formerly they had. Now they think the man is in good earnest, and speaks the thoughts of his heart: and if ever he can be believed, it must be now. It is most convincing to carnal persons, to see believers bearing up with patience in their sickness, to hear them speaking good of God, commending his ways, and rejoicing in God as their portion, in the midst of their sharpest pains: to see them behaving as

those that are going to dwell with Christ, smiling and praising God, when friends are sighing and weeping about them. This inclines them to think, surely there must be a reality in religion, between the death of the righteous and of the wicked. Hence a wicked Balaam wished to die the death of the righteous, and to have his last end like his. It left a conviction upon that young man's conscience, who said to his loose companion, after they had visited godly Ambrose on his death bed, and saw how cheerful he was, and triumphing over approaching death. "Oh that I might live with thee, and die with Ambrose!" Nay, such sights might draw them not only to desire to die the death of the righteous, but also to resolve to live their lives. If carnal men saw believers going off the stage with such confidence and joy, as becomes those that are entering into eternal rest with Christ, and those that are going out of a howling wilderness to a glorious Canaan; it might be a powerful invitation to them to go and seek after the same felicity.

3. This likewise would be very edifying and confirming to all that fear God. How much would it contribute to establish them in the practice of holiness, and to quicken them in their diligence in serving and glo-

rifying God in the days of their health, to hear a dying believer say, "Of all the time which I have ever lived, I have no comfort now in reflecting upon one hour, but what I spent in the service of God. Where I to begin my life, I would redeem time more carefully than ever. One hour in communion with God is far sweeter than many years spent in worldly pleasures. Come here, then, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul. O taste and see that God is good."

1st. You do this work by your patience under pain, and submission to God's will, with respect to the event, whether life or death. It is stumbling to others, to see believers fretful in trouble, and unwilling to leave the world, when God calls them. But it is most convincing and confirming to see them freely resigning themselves to God's disposal, saying, "Let God himself choose for me: he is wise, and knoweth best what is needful and most proper for me; I have no will but God's will." For any man to desire to live when God calls him to die, or to desire to die when God calls him to live, is equally a sin of cowardice: for he that desires to live, is afraid to look death in the face; and he that desires to die, would flee from some calamity,

and take shelter in death. But he is the most valiant man that can die willingly when God would have him die, and live as willingly when God would have him live; this is true Christian valour.

2d. By pious exhortations and warnings to those that are about you. It may be the last occasion you may have of glorifying God this way: O do not loose the season which may be usefully improved for the good of souls. For thus a believer may bring more honour to God, and more advantage to precious souls by his sickness and death, than ever he did by all his health and life in the world; for their speeches have more weight with people at such a time than at any other. Hence the patriarchs, knowing the prevalency of such words, do urge Joseph with Jacob's dying charge, Gen. i. 16, 17, "And they sent a messenger unto Joseph saying, Thy father did command before he died saying, so shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren," &c. And as we ought to be ready to give good counsel to all when we lie on sick beds, so especially we should be concerned for children and near relations: they are more affected than others with our sickness, and so they will be with our sayings; our admoni-

tions may do them good, when we are mouldering in the dust.

SECTION V.

Let the children of God labour to fortify themselves against all Satan's temptations and assaults, which they may expect to meet with in time of sickness and affliction.

A time of affliction is commonly a time of temptation: for the old serpent knows the fittest seasons for assaulting the children of God; and he will not be wanting to improve this opportunity to advantage. When Pharaoh heard that the people were entangled in the wilderness, he pursued them: so when Satan sees a soul entangled with distresses and troubles, he thinks it the time to make an attack. He seeks to winnow and sift away the believer's grace, and therefore he comes when the corn is being threshed by the rod. When Job was smitten in his estate, health, and all other comforts, then this coward falls upon him, and tempts him to impatience, murmuring, and wrong thoughts of God.

At this time, O believer, you have special need to be on your guard. Reckon always, when sickness or trouble comes, the prince of this world comes also. Stand

then to your defence, and put on your armour, especially the shield of faith, that you may be able to quench the fiery darts of the devil. You have need at this time to put in practice our Lord's direction, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Pray for wisdom and skill to counteract him, and that you may not be ignorant of his devices, and pray particularly for grace to make you proof against all his false representations of God and his providence to you; for he that dared to represent Job falsely to an all-seeing and all-knowing God, will with much boldness represent God falsely to you, who see and know so little. He will be ready to tempt you to think that God is angry with you, and dealing with you as an enemy. Thus was Job tempted, Job xxxiii. 19, 11, "Behold he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy: he putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths." But observe what Elihu answers, "In this thou art not just; God is greater than man. Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters." Satan, your malicious enemy, will not fail to attack you at this time, with all his might; for though he may know he cannot keep you out of heaven, yet he will labour to render

your passage towards it as dark, tempestuous, and uncomfortable as he possibly can. But it is the believer's happiness that this cruel enemy is under a strong chain, and cannot do all he would; for Jesus Christ is the good shepherd who has undertaken for all his sheep. Nevertheless, by his wise permission, this adversary may sometimes give great disturbance to a dying saint; which calls you to the greatest diligence and watchfulness at this time. It is the observation of one, that as the devil is most busy at the conclusion of a duty, as of prayer, that the Christian may be most disturbed and distracted when he is to close all in the name of Christ, and so all his desires be frustrated: so he is most busy in the conclusion of our days, and when death is at hand, seeking by temptations, distractions, and false imaginations, to do us all the mischief he can, and all because he knows his time is short; according to that word, Rev. xii. 12, "The devil is come down, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." He may fitly be called the wolf of the evening, mentioned in Jer. v. 6, because he comes forth most fiercely in the evening of men's lives, to set upon their precious souls. Yea, so busy is he sometimes with believers under danger-

ous sickness, seeking to overthrow their faith and assurance, that it is the observation of a good man, that he seldom saw a sick saint, followed close with temptations, recover of that sickness; for Satan, knowing he has but little time, proves as uneasy to him as he can. Hence that great man of God, Mr. Knox, said, when he came to die: "In my life time the devil tempted me to despair, casting my sins in my teeth: but now in my sickness, he tells me, I have been faithful in the ministry, and so have merited heaven: but blessed be God, who brought these texts into my mind, 'Not I but the grace of God in me. What hast thou that thou hast not received?' " The children of Israel never met with such fierce opposition from their enemies, as when they were about entering into the promised land.

CHAPTER IV.

SECTION I.

Seek to attain to a willingness to die, and leave the world with joy.

IT is no wonder that a wicked man, or one that has no interest in Christ, should be unwilling to die: because he is affrighted with the guilt of past sins, and the fears of future torments; and it is impossible to be rid of these till he become a true believer in Christ. No man has ground to welcome death but the believer; yet it is to be regretted that so many of them should appear unwilling to leave this world, which is nothing to them but a wilderness and weary land. Lot's soul was vexed and troubled in Sodom, yet he was loath to leave it; so some believers, when called to leave a vexing world, show much hankering towards it, and linger behind. This proceeds partly from nature, which dreads a dissolution, and partly from the weakness of grace. But O let all God's children labour to overcome this aversion, and go forth to meet death half-way, and bid it welcome. And for their help in this matter, I shall lay before them the following reflections:

1st. Consider how little reason a believer has to be much in love with this present life. 1. It is a sinful life, sin dwells in your nature, breaks out in your life, and pollutes all your duties. How often have you groaned under this burden? and should you not be glad to be eternally delivered from it? 2. It is a life of diseases and infirmities; and should you not be willing to be cured of them all at once? 3. It is a life of temptation, Satan is still harrassing you, and should you not be desirous to be out of his reach? 4. It is a life of persecutions from the wicked: they hate, reproach, and injure you many ways: and is it not desirable to be "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest?" 5. It is a life of clouds and darkness, your sun is often veiled, and your evidences obscured, which occasions many bitter complaints; and should you not desire that time when the day shall break, and all shadows fly away? 6. It is a life of calamities and fears: it is like a stormy sea, where one wave rolls upon another; and when one calamity is past, we often fear a greater is coming; and sometimes the heavens turn so black and gloomy, that we fear a hurricane of judgments is ready to destroy us: and should you not bless God, when he comes by death

to protect your souls, and set you out of harm's way? It is in mercy that God takes away the righteous from the evil to come, Isa. lvii. 1. So dealt he with Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 20, "I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be put into thy grave in peace, and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I shall bring upon this place." So is it observable that Methuselah died the very year before the flood: Augustine a little before the sacking of Hippo: Pareous just before the taking of Heidelberg. Luther observes that all the apostles died before the destruction of Jerusalem. And Luther himself died before the bloody wars broke out in Germany. Thus God frequently hides his people from the temptations and troubles that are coming on the earth. Why? Because he sees many of them not prepared to endure them: and therefore he in mercy takes them away from a tempting and sinning world, to a land of holiness and rest. While we are here, we live in a world that lies in wickedness; every sense of the body betrays the soul into sin: the poor soul can scarce look out at the eye, and not be infected; nor hear by the ear, and not be distracted; nor smell at the nostrils, and not be tainted; nor taste at the tongue, and not

be allured; nor touch by the hand, and not be defiled.

O believer, what is this life that thou art so fond of? it is but a living death, or a dying life. It is full of grief for things past, full of labour for things present, and full of fears for things future. The first part of our life is spent in folly: the middle part is overwhelmed with cares: and the latter part of it is burdened with infirmities and age. And what do we gain by the prolonging of this life? nothing but to do more evil, see more evil, and suffer more evil. And should a Christian be unwilling to be rid of these grievances?

2d. Consider that dying is appointed as the way, and the only way to glory; there is no way to enter the promised land, but by crossing the Jordan of death. And should not a stranger desire to be at home with his friends, though he has a rough way and stormy sea to pass? Is there any home like heaven, where your incomparable friend Christ is? O what a happiness is it to be with Christ, and to see him as he is? how happy do you think Peter, James and John were, in being taken up to Mount Tabor, to be eye-witnesses of their Saviour's transfiguration? But, O believer, death procures a greater happiness to you; it conducts you

to your home, to mansions in the skies prepared for you; it ushers you to Mount Zion, where you shall not only see your Saviour whiter than the snow, and brighter than the sun, but yourself transfigured with him, made like him, and eternally secured of his presence. The three apostles saw but two prophets; but you shall see all the prophets, all the apostles, all the patriarchs, all the martyrs, all the holy persons you once conversed with on earth, and in general all the saints in heaven, each of them shining as the sun; and how sweet will their company be? O how soon will the trifles of the world vanish, and all its pleasures be forgotten, when once the believer gets a view of that captivating glory above! When the shepherds heard but some few notes of the angel's song, who praised God at the nativity of our Saviour, they immediately left their flocks, and ran to Bethlehem to behold the child Jesus lying in the manger; but much more cause has a believer to leave all the pleasures of the world, and run to behold an exalted Jesus sitting on the throne of his glory, with all his saints and angels singing praises around him.

If Cato and Cleombrotus, two heathens, after reading Plato's book on the immortality of the soul, died voluntarily, the one

fell on his sword, the other broke his neck from a precipice, that they might the sooner come (as they fancied) to partake of these joys; what a shame is it for Christians, who have a far surer and clearer discovery of these things from God's own book, to be found unwilling to enter into these heavenly joys, when their blessed Redeemer calls them thither?

3d. Consider how willing Christ was to come from heaven to earth for you; and should you be unwilling to remove from earth to heaven for him? yea, for yourselves, for the gain is yours? O did Christ assume our nature, become obedient to death, and purchase an inheritance for you with his blood; and will you be backward to go and take possession of it? O for a Christ-like obedience at death!

Lastly. Consider what a reproach is cast on Christianity, by a believer's unwillingness to die. For Christian's to pray, and speak much of Christ, of heaven and glory, and yet be unwilling to enter into that glory; what is it but a mistrusting of God, and a tempting of the world to think there is no reality in religion.

In order to attain to this willingness to die,

1. Frequently put forth acts of faith upon the righteousness of Christ; and believe

that Christ died to bring in a perfect righteousness for believers, that they all might be complete in him. Now why should a believer be afraid to appear before God in Christ's righteousness, which is so pleasing and acceptable to him? Rev. xiv. 4, 5, they are said to be "without fault before the throne of God." If a believer were to appear before God in his own righteousness, clothed with his own duties and performances, it would be dreadful to think of dying; but to have the white garment of an elder brother to put on, gives another view of death. Alas, it is our neglecting the daily exercise of faith in the righteousness of Christ, that makes the thoughts of death so unwelcome.

2d. When you attain to peace and reconciliation with God, labour to preserve it. Be stating and clearing accounts with God every day, and watch against those sins that wound conscience, waste comfort, and grieve the Spirit of adoption. When we think God is displeased with us, we will be afraid of going to him.

3d. Study more self-denial of the enjoyments of this life, and to use them with a holy indifference; otherwise there will be an unwillingness to leave these things.

4th. Labour to be deeply sensible of the

burden of indwelling sin and corruption, and their workings in your heart; and this will make the thoughts of death welcome, because it eternally delivers you from it.

5th. Seek further discoveries of the loveliness of Christ, and the daily exercise and increase of your soul's love to him; for it is the nature of love to long after communion with the person that we love.

6th. Make death familiar to you by the frequent forethought of it. Retire often from the world to think of dying, when you are in best health.

7th. Be much taken up in the sweet employment of praising God, and exalting the worthy Lamb that was slain; and this will incite you to be there, where this is the continual work.



SECTION II.

Endeavour to overcome the fears of death.

‘What is there formidable in death, says an elegant writer, which our ever-blessed Redeemer has not taken away? Do the pangs of dissolution alarm us? should they be sharp, they cannot be very long; and our exalted Lord, with whom are the issues of death, knows what dying agonies mean. He

has said, in the multitude of his tender mercies, 'Fear thou not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness,' Is. xli. 10. This promise authorises us to say boldly, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff comfort me,' Ps. xxviii. 4.

Are we afraid to enter into a strange, invisible, unknown world? It is the world into which our divine Master has gone; where he has prepared everlasting mansions for his people, John xiv. 2.—Luke xvi. 22. and has appointed his angels to conduct us thither. Having such a convoy, what should we dread? and going to our eternal home, where our all-bountiful Redeemer is, why should we be reluctant?

Are we concerned, on account of what we leave? We leave the worse, to possess the better. If we leave our earthly friends we shall find more loving companions. We shall be admitted among the 'innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly of the church of the first-born, that are written in heaven.' Heb. xii. 22, 23, Do we leave the ordinances of religion,

which we have attended with great delight? leave the word of God, which has been sweeter to our souls than honey to our mouths? We shall enter into the temple, not made with hands, and join that happy choir, who rests not day nor night, saying 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. Rev. iv. 8. And if our Bible is no more, we shall have all that is promised, we shall behold all that is described therein. If we drop the map of our heavenly Canaan, it will be to take possession of its blissful territories. 'That city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.' Rev. xxi. 23. O, blessed, for ever blessed, be the grace of our God, and the merits of his Christ! We shall exchange the scanty stream for the boundless ocean; and if we no longer pick the first ripe grapes, we shall gather the copious, the abounding, the never-ending vintage.

Do we fear the guilt of our innumerable sins? Adored be the inexpressible loving-kindness of God our Saviour! Our sins have been punished in the blessed Jesus; 'The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all.' Isa. iii. 6. He his own self bare our sins, in his own body on the tree. 1 Pet. ii.

24. So that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. Rom. viii. 1. O! that we may be enabled, with the apostle, to make our boast of this Saviour, and triumph in this faith! ‘Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us.’

Is judgment the thing that we fear? To the pardoned sinner it has nothing terrible. The Lord Jesus, who keeps his servants from falling, ‘presents them also faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Jude verse 24. Observe the sweet expressions, presents faultless,—and with exceeding joy. Justly therefore does the apostle reckon it among the privileges of the Christians, that they are come to God the Judge of all: Heb. xii. 23. for the Judge is our friend, the Judge is our advocate, the Judge is our propitiation, the Judge is our righteousness. And is it not a privilege to come to such a Judge, as will not so much as mention our iniquities to us, but condescend to take notice of our poor unworthy services; who sits on the great tribunal, not to pass sentence of damnation upon us, but

to give us a reward;—a reward of free grace, and of inconceivable richness?

‘Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, saith your God. Speak you comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for her Redemer, her all-gracious Redeemer, hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.’ Isa. xl. 1, 2. May the God of our life and salvation make these scriptures be unto you as a staff in the traveller’s hand, and as a cordial to the fainting heart, that you may be strong in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ; that you may glorify him in death, and glorify him for death; because death will introduce you into his immediate presence, where you shall be sorrowful no more, sinful no more, at a distance no more; but be joyful, and be like our Lord; love him with all your soul, praise him to eternity. Let us then be of good cheer; soon in our heavenly Jerusalem we shall meet again. Because God is faithful, inviolably faithful and infinitely merciful, who hath promised.

But after death comes judgment, and is this terrible? Consider who is the Judge. Was the father that begat you, was the mother that bare you, or the friend that is as your own soul; was any of these to be

the judge, and to pass the sentence, you would not be apprehensive of rigorous proceedings, you would expect all possible clemency. Mercy in this case, would rejoice against judgment. But, to our unspeakable comfort, we are informed by the Scriptures, that a glorious person, far more merciful than a father, far more compassionate than a mother, far more affectionate than a friend, is to decide our doom; even the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us with an everlasting love; who declares that a woman may forget her sucking child, much sooner than he forget to be merciful to those that put their trust in him: for thus it is written, ‘God hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, even Jesus Christ.’ Acts xvii. 31.

The Judge calls himself our husband, the bridegroom of poor believing souls. And will the bridegroom deliver to destruction his own bride, whom he has bought with his blood, and with whom he has made an everlasting covenant? Isai. liv. 5.

The Judge vouchsafes to be our advocate. And will he condemn those for whom he has long interceded? will he condemn those for whom he poured out his prayers when he was on earth, and on whose behalf he

has constantly pleaded in the presence of God? 1 John ii. 1.

The Judge condescends to be our head, and calls the weakest believers his members. And did any one hate his own body? Did ever any one delight to maim, or take pleasure to ruin his own flesh, and his bones? Col. i. 18. 1 Cor. xi. 27.

The Judge has been our victim, the sacrifice for our sins. And will he consign those to damnation, for whom he endured the agonies of crucifixion? If he has given himself for us, will he not with this gift freely give us all things? give us pardon at that awful day? give us the crown of glory which fadeth not away? Heb. ix. 14. 26.

Further, to confirm your faith, and establish your hope, it will be proper to consider, what you have to plead. The proud Pharisee made his abstaining from gross iniquities, and his punctuality in some external performance, his plea. The blinded Jews went about to establish their own righteousness, and depended on this broken reed for acceptance. But we have a surer foundation, whereon to build our comfortable expectations.

If arraigned on the foot of guilt; great guilt; manifold guilt; aggravated guilt; long-contracted guilt; we have an atone-

ment to plead, a sacrifice of unknown value, a propitiation glorious and divine. We have the blood of the Lamb to plead; blood that taketh away not one sin, or a few sins, or a multitude of sins only; but (O delightful truth!) taketh away all, all, all sins. Yes, it taketh away all sins from the believer, be they ever so numerous; all sins, be they ever so heinous. 1 John i. 7. Rev. i. 5.

Should the law take us by the throat, and make that severe demand, "Pay me that thou owest." It is paid, we reply, by our divine Surety. An incarnate God has been obedient in our stead. In the Lord, the Lord Redeemer, have we righteousness. And can the law insist on a more excellent satisfaction? Does not this magnify the law and make it honourable? By the obedience of one (this is Christ) shall many be made righteous. Is. xlv. 24. Rom. v. 19.

Should it further be urged, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; is not holiness the thing that we have longed for? Is it not true, we have not attained to holiness; spotless and undefiled holiness; neither could we, in the regions of temptation, and in a body of corruption. But has not our guilt been our sorrow, and our indwelling sin

our heaviest cross? Have we not groaned under our remaining iniquities, and been burthened with a sense of our failings? And are not these groanings the first fruits of the Spirit? Are not these the work of thine own grace, blessed Lord? and wilt thou not consummate in heaven what thou hast begun upon earth? Do we not desire heaven, chiefly because in those blessed mansions we shall sin no more; we shall offend our God no more; be no more forgetful of a dying Saviour; no more disobedient to the motions of a sanctifying Spirit? And shall we be disappointed of this hope? It cannot, it cannot be.

They that hunger and thirst after righteousness, are not filled while they abide in the flesh; therefore there remaineth the accomplishment of this promise, they will assuredly awake up after the likeness of their Lord, at the great resurrection day, and, in another world, be fully, everlastingly satisfied with it.

CHAPTER V.

SECTION I.

Study to imitate the ancient worthies, by dying in faith.

THIS was the character and epitaph of the Old Testament saints, Heb. xi. 13. "These all died in faith." As they had lived by faith, so they died in faith. They not only continued true believers to the last, dying in the state of faith, but they died in the exercise of faith also. Now the exercise of faith in dying, includes several things, worthy to be imitated by all dying believers.

1st. An open and professed adherence to the doctrine of faith and truths of Christianity. This faith all Christians should zealously own in the view of death, and persevere in it to the last without wavering. This would be to die like martyrs, though we die in our beds. How steadfastly did old Polycarp adhere to Christ and his truths to the last, and so died in faith! When he was urged by the proconsul to deny Christ, he answered, "These fourscore and six years have I served him, and he never once offended me: and how shall I now deny him?"

2d. Dying in faith imports an inward,

heartly, and firm belief in the fundamental articles of the Christian faith: and improving them, so as to make them the foundation of our comfort and hope, at the hour of death. As for instance, we must yield our departing souls, in the firm belief of their living and existing in a separate condition after this life, and of that future state of blessedness and rest which God has prepared for all believers. Again, we must dismiss the body to the grave, in a firm belief and hope of a joyful resurrection at the last day. Thus that holy man Job both lived and died in faith, Job xix. 25, 26, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God." A Christian then dies in faith, when he believes these truths so as cheerfully to obey God's call, and venture into the invisible world, upon the testimony which God has given concerning it: As Abraham did in going out to an unknown land, Heb. xi. 8, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

3d. The believer dies in faith when he makes fresh application to Christ as his only .

hope and Saviour, takes him in his arms of faith, as old Simeon did before his death, saying, "In the Lord Christ I have righteousness and strength;" though I have neither righteousness nor strength in myself, yet I have both in him, my blessed surety and Redeemer. We have many uses for faith in Christ at the hour of death. By faith we must depend upon Christ's blood for making atonement, and washing away the guilt of all our past sins. By faith we must put on the righteousness of Christ for covering our naked souls, when they are to appear and stand before God. By faith we must rely on Christ for strength to suffer pain, resist temptations, and conquer death and all our enemies. By faith we must look to Christ as our leader, and trust him for our safe conduct through the dark valley of death, and for safe landing on the shore of glory.

4th. The believer dies in faith when he trusts his departing soul with confidence in his Redeemer's hand, saying with Paul, 2 Tim. i. 12, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." This was the Psalmists practice, Psal. xxxi. 5, "Into thy hand I commit my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord

God of truth.” Martyred Stephen, when dying, committed his soul into the hands of Christ, saying “Lord Jesus receive my spirit.” So the man that dies in faith commits his soul to his Redeemer’s keeping, and confides in his care of it. Because he made it, he has redeemed it, he loves it, it is his own, a member of his body, and he will not hate his own flesh. He loves his dying saints much better than we love an eye, a hand, or any other member of our body, which, to be sure, we will not lose if it be in our power to save it.

5th. Dying in faith imports that the dying saint confides in God’s faithfulness and truth for making good all those promises to his church and people after his death, which are not yet accomplished. We should go off the stage, in the firm belief of God’s fulfilling all his promises concerning the prosperity of his church, the calling of the Jews, the destruction of anti-Christ, and the second coming of our Lord : and likewise concerning our families, that God will be as good as his word, and be a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow.

Would we then be so happy as to die in faith, let us take these advices.

1st. Let us be careful to get faith beforehand: for death is a time to use faith, not

to get it. They were foolish virgins who had their oil to buy when the bridegroom was come.

2d. Study to live every day in the exercise of faith, and be still improving and making use of Christ in all his offices, and for all these ends and uses for which God has given him to believers.

3d. Be frequently clearing up your evidences for heaven, and beware of letting sin blot them out.

4th. Record and lay up the experiences of God's kind dealings with you, and be often reflecting upon them, that you may have them ready at hand in the hour of death.

Lastly. Meditate much on these promises which have been sweet and comfortable to you in times of distress: and beg that the Lord may bring them to your remembrance when you come to die.



SECTION II.

Set the examples of other dying saints before you.

This is the last opportunity you have of doing service to God, and the interest of religion, wherefore strive to improve it diligently for the honour of God, and the edifi-

cation of those who survive you. How pleasant it is to see God's people leaving the world, commending Christ and his service.

What I design in this section, is to set before you the dying example of eminent believers, by giving you a short history of their last moments and of their last sayings; in order that their dying testimony may strengthen and encourage you to be steadfast in the faith of Christ, and to triumph in death. Surely it is for this very end that God has encompassed us about with so great a cloud of witnesses, Heb. xii. 1. Thus does the apostle improve their example, Heb. xi. And how earnest is he in this matter? Heb. vi. 11, 12, "And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

I shall begin with some examples from the sacred history; and in the first place with the King of saints, our Lord Jesus Christ. O how sweet and comforting were his discourses to his disciples, when his death drew nigh! and what a heavenly prayer did he make for them, and all his elect ones at that time! These we have recorded in the 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th

chapters of John: which are most seasonable at all times for us to read and meditate upon, but especially when death is approaching. And likewise let us read the history of our Lord's passion, in which we may observe the wonderful expressions of his faith in God, his patience under sufferings, his pity to his enemies, his love to his mother and his disciples, his concern for his father's glory, his obedience in his death, and his willingness to be offered up. Thus the blessed Sun of righteousness did shine forth more gloriously at his setting, with the radiant beams of his heavenly grace and virtues: and herein he has made himself a pattern for all dying saints to the end of the world.

Jacob, when he was on his death-bed, called his sons together, and gave them many special charges and blessings; we have his excellent words recorded in Gen. xlviii. and xlix. chapters. And in particular, how sweetly does he speak of the coming of the Messiah to them? Gen. xlix. 10. 18. And how affectionately does he commend God's goodness and kind providence towards him through his life? Gen. xlviii. 15, 16. "The God which fed me all my life long unto this day," &c.

Joseph, when he was dying, spoke lovingly to his brethren, who had dealt cruelly with him; and assured them of the Lord's faith-

fulness in keeping his promise to their fathers. Gen. i. 20. "I die, and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land."

Moses, when he was to go up to mount Nebo to die there, left many blessings, and gave many weighty charges to the children of Israel; we have his holy words recorded, Deut. xxxii. and xxxiii. chapters. And particularly how delightfully does he commend God, and his ways to the people! Deut. xxxii. 4, "He is the rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he."

Joshua, when he was near his end, gave many solemn charges and exhortations to the people, which we have narrated in Josh. xxiii. and xxiv. chapters. And there we may see the remarkable methods he takes to rivet impressions and convictions upon them, now when he can instruct them no longer. And particularly, he appeals to their consciences concerning the faithfulness of God in keeping his word to them, that so he might engage them to fidelity to him. Josh. xxiii. 14, "And behold this day I am going the way of all the earth, and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of

all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you.”

David, when his end was near, assembled the people, and solemnly charged them as in the audience of God, to keep his commandments. 1 Chron. xxviii. 8, 9. And particularly he charged his son and successor, Solomon, to “know the God of his father, and to serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.”

The apostle Paul, when taking his last farewell of the elders of Ephesus, most solemnly charges them, to “take heed to themselves, and the flocks over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers.” Acts xx. 28. And how sweetly does he sing in the view of approaching death! 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8, “I am now ready to be offered, 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, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto them also that love his appearing.”

In imitation of these Scripture saints, the people of God in all ages, have studied to glorify God, and edify men at their death, by commending God and godliness to their

friends and families. These we ought to teach by our example, both how to live and how to die, as others have done before us. Thus said once a dying saint to his family, "I have formerly taught you how to live, and now I teach you how to die."

I shall now bring several examples from human histories and writings.

That old disciple, Polycarp, when he came to the stake at which he was burnt, desired to stand untied, saying, "Let me alone, for he that gave me strength to come to the fire, will give me patience to endure the flame without your tieing."

So holy Cyprian triumphed over death, saying, "let him only fear death, who must pass from this death to the second death." When he heard the sentence of death pronounced against him, he said, "I thank God for freeing me from the prison of this body."

Basil, when the emperor Valens sent his officers to tempt him with great preferments to turn from the faith, rejected them with scorn, saying, "You may offer these things to children." And when they threatened him with sufferings, he said, "threaten your purple gallants with these things that give themselves to their pleasures."

When Modestus, the prefect, threatened

Basil, to confiscate his goods, to torment him, to banish him or kill him, he answered, "he need not fear confiscation who had nothing to loose: nor banishment, whose only country is heaven: nor torments, when his body would be destroyed with one blow; nor death, which was the only way to set him at liberty." The prefect telling him that he was mad, he said, *Opto me in æternum, sic delirare*, I wish I may forever be thus mad.

Ignatius, being led from Syria to Rome to be torn in pieces by wild beasts, expressed his fear lest it should happen to him as to some others, that the lions, out of a kind of reverence, would not dare to touch him. And therefore he often wished, "That their appetites might be whetted to dispatch him. "For," said he, "the lions' teeth are but a like a mill, which though it bruises, yet wastes not the good wheat, but only prepares and fits it to be made into pure bread. Let me be broken by them, if I may but be made pure for heaven."

The great Mr. Knox, the reformer, when he lay on his death bed was much in prayer, crying, "Come Lord Jesus; sweet Jesus, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Being asked by those that attended him, if his pain was great? he answered "that he did not esteem that a pain, which

would be to him the end of all trouble, and the beginning of eternal joys." Often, after some deep meditations, he would say "O serve the Lord in fear, and death shall not be terrible to you; blessed is the death of those that have part in the death of Jesus."

After a sore temptation from Satan, over which he triumphed at length, he said, "Now the enemy is gone away ashamed, and shall no more return. I am sure now my battle is at an end, and that without pain of body, or trouble of spirit, I shall shortly change this mortal and miserable life, for that happy and immortal life which shall never have an end." After one had prayed for him, he was asked if he heard the prayer? he answered, "Would to God you had heard it with such an ear and heart as I have done! adding Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." With which words, without any motion of hands or feet, as one falling asleep rather than dying, he ended his life.

Dr. Gouge, when he was old and dying was much afflicted with the stone, and other painful maladies; and though by reason of his pains, he was often heard to groan, yet he never once murmured at the dispensations of God. He never cried out, *a great sufferer*, but often *a great sinner*:

yet still comforted himself, by saying that there is a great Saviour. In his greatest torments he would say, "Well, in all these things there is nothing of hell, or of God's wrath. O my soul be silent, be patient: it is thy God and Father that thus orders thine estate. Thou art his clay; he may tread and trample upon thee as he pleaseth; thou hast deserved much more. It is enough that thou art kept out of hell; though thy pains be grievous, yet they are not intolerable, thy God affords some intermissions; he will turn it to thy good, and at length put an end to all; and none of these comforts can be expected in hell." In his greatest pains, he often employed Job's words, "Shall we receive good from the hand of the Lord, and not evil also?" "When any of his friends would comfort him, by telling of his eminent gifts and service in the ministry, he would answer, "I dare not think of any such thing for comfort: only Jesus Christ, and what he hath done and endured, is the ground of my sure comfort." The thoughts of death were pleasant to him, which he often termed his best friend, next unto Jesus Christ. And he would bless God, that he had nothing to do but to die.

- I have read of another minister under

similar pains. When he was asked how he did? his frequent answer was, "The bush always burning but not consumed; though my pains are above the strength of nature, yet they are not above the supports of grace." He would pray, "Lord drop comfort into these bitter waters of Marah. Let the blood of sprinkling, which extinguisheth the fire of thine anger, allay my burning pain. Oh, if my patience were more, my pains would be less; Lord, give me patience, and inflict what thou wilt. This is a fiery chariot, but it will carry me to heaven. O my God break open the prison door, and set my poor captive soul free: I desire to be dissolved, but enable me willingly to wait thy time." He would again cry, "When shall the time come, that I shall neither sin more, nor sorrow more? Lord keep me from dishonouring thy name by impatience. Oh, who would not, even in burning, have honourable thoughts of God! Lord thou gavest me no occasion to have hard thoughts of thee. Blessed be God, for the peace of mine inward man, when my outward man is so full of trouble. This is a bitter cup, but it is of my Father's mixing; and shall I not then drink it?"

Mrs. Jean Askew, who was a martyr in king Henry's reign, to her confession in Newgate thus subscribed; "Written by me

Jean Askew, that neither wisheth death, nor feareth its might, and as merry as one bound towards heaven." When the chancellor sent her letters to the stake, offering her the king's pardon, if she would recant; she refused to look upon them, and gave this answer: "That she came not hither to deny her Lord and Master."

Mr. James Bainham, when he was at the stake in the midst of the burning fire, which had half consumed his legs and arms, spake these words; "O ye Papists! behold ye look for miracles, and here now ye may see a miracle; for in this fire I feel no more pain, than if I were in a bed of down; it is to me as a bed of roses."

John Lambert, as he was burning in Smithfield, and his legs were quite consumed with the fire, lifted up his hands, his fingers flaming like torches, but his heart abounding with comfort, crying out, "none but Christ, none but Christ."

Mr. Robert Glover, a little before his death, had lost the sense of God's favour, for which he was in great heaviness and sorrow; but when he came within sight of the stake at which he was to suffer, he was on a sudden so filled with divine comfort, that clapping his hands together, he cried out to his servant, "He is come, he is come;" and so died most cheerfully.

It was a saying of Augustine, "Boughs fall off trees, and stones out of buildings; and why should it seem strange that mortal men die?"

Mr. John Dodd had a violent fever, and there was but little hope of his life; yet at length his physician coming to him, said, "now I have hope of your recovery." To whom Mr. Dodd answered, "you think to comfort me with this, but you make my heart sad. It is as if you should tell one who had been weather beaten at sea, and thinking that he had now arrived at the haven where his soul longed to be, that he must go back to be tossed with new winds and waves."

He would often say in his last sickness, "I am not afraid to look death in the face. I can say Death where is thy sting? death cannot hurt me."

He used to say, the knowledge of two things would make one willing to die, viz. "What heaven is, and that it is mine." "Yes," said one, "if a man were sure of that." To whom he answered, "truly assurance is to be had; and what have we been doing all this while?"

Mr. Dodd once visited a godly minister on his death bed who was much oppressed with melancholy, and complained to him, saying, "O Mr. Dodd, what will you say

of him who is going out of the world, and can find no comfort?" To whom Mr. Dodd answered, "what will you say of our Saviour Christ, who, when he was going out of the world, found no comfort, but cried out My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" He said of afflictions, "they are God's portions which we may sweeten by faith and faithful prayer; but we, for the most part, make them bitter, putting into God's cup, the evil ingredients of our impatience and unbelief. He called death the friend of grace, though it be the enemy of nature; for whereas the word, sacraments and prayer do but weaken sin, death kills it." He used to say, "a man is never in a hard condition, unless he have a hard heart, and cannot pray." He instructed Christians in what way they might avoid great and lasting affliction, and that was by looking upon the things that are not seen, which are eternal, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. For what can be great to him who counts the world nothing? And what can be long to him, that accounts his life but a span? When he saw a Christian look sad, he would say as Jonadab did to Amnon, "Art thou a king's son, and lookest so ill?" And when such complained to him of their losses and crosses, he would use the words

of Eliphaz to Job, "Do the consolations of God seem small unto you? God hath taken from you your children, your goods, &c. but he hath not taken from you himself, his Christ, nor his Spirit, nor heaven, nor eternal life."

To a friend of his that rose from a small to a great estate, he sent word, "That this was as if he should go out of a boat into a ship; but he ought seriously to remember, that whilst he was in this world, he was but upon the floating sea."

He often said, "That if it were lawful to envy any, he would envy those that turn to God in their youth, whereby they escape much sin and sorrow, and are like Jacob, that stole the blessing betimes. He used to compare reproofs given in a passion, to scalding potions, which the patient could not take down: in reproofs we should labour for meekness of wisdom, using soft words and hard arguments.

He was a very popular minister, but much persecuted. Once he took a journey to see his father-in-law, Mr. Greenham, to bemoan himself to him, on account of his crosses and hard usage. Mr. Greenham having heard all he could say, answered him thus: "Son, son, when affliction lieth heavy, sin lieth light." Mr. Dodd used often to bless

God for this speech, saying, "If Mr. Greenham had condoled with him as he had expected, he would have done him much hurt." He did not forget this saying in his old age, but made excellent use of it for himself and others.

Æcolampadius, that famous divine of Switzerland, when lying on his death-bed, and being asked whether the light did not offend him? answered, pointing to his breast, *Hic sat lucis*, "Here is abundance of light;" meaning of comfort and joy. He asked one of his friends, What news? His friend answered, none. Then, said he, I will tell you some news; I shall presently be with my Lord Christ.

A certain godly man passing through his last sickness with extraordinary calmness of conscience, being asked by some of his friends about it, he answered, that he had stedfastly fixed his heart upon that sweet promise, Isa. xxvi. 3, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is staid on thee; because he trusteth in thee." And my God, said he, has graciously made it fully good unto my soul.

Mr. Robert Bolton, minister at Broughton, well known by his writings, in the time of his last sickness, which was long and sharp, often breathed out these words:

“Oh, when will this good hour come? when shall I be dissolved? when shall I be with Christ.” Being told, that to be dissolved was indeed better for him, yet it would be better for the church that he would stay here, he answered, “If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation: but if otherwise, lo here I am, let him do what seemeth him good in his eyes.” Being asked by another, if he could not be content to live, if it pleased God? he answered, “I grant that life is a great blessing of God, neither will I neglect any means that may preserve it; and do heartily submit to God’s will: but of the two, I infinitely desire more to be dissolved and to be with Christ.” He bade all that came to see him, make sure of Christ before they came to die; and look upon the world now as a lump of vanity. He encouraged the ministers that came to him, to be diligent and courageous in the work of the Lord, and not to faint nor droop for any affliction that should arise thereupon.

When he found himself very weak, he called for his wife and children. He desired her to bear his dissolution which was near at hand, with a Christian fortitude, a thing he had been preparing her for, during

the space of twenty years; and bade her make no doubt but she should meet him again in heaven. He exhorted his children to remember those things which he had frequently told them before; adding, "That he hoped and believed that none of them durst think of meeting him at that dread tribunal in an unregenerate state."

Some of his parish coming to watch with him, it was asked, that as by his doctrine he had discovered to them the exceeding comforts that were in Christ, so he would now tell them what he felt in his own soul. "Alas," said he, "do you look for that of me now, when I want breath and strength to speak? I have told you enough in my ministry: but yet to satisfy you, I am, by the wonderful mercies of God, as full of comfort as my heart can hold; and I feel nothing in my soul but Christ, with whom I heartily desire to be."

When the pangs of death were upon him, being told that some of his dear friends were about him, to take their last farewell, he caused himself to be raised up in his bed, and after a few gaspings for breath, he said, "I am now drawing on apace to my dissolution: hold out faith and patience, your work will speedily be at an end." And then shaking them all by the hands,

he prayed heartily and particularly for them, and desired them to make sure of heaven, and to bear in mind what he had formerly told them in his ministry, protesting to them, that the doctrine he had preached to them for the space of twenty years, was the truth of God, as he should answer for it at the tribunal of Christ, before which he should shortly appear.

When he was struggling with death, a very dear friend taking him by the hand, asked him if he felt not much pain? "Truly no," said he, "the greatest I feel is your cold hand."

Mr. John Holland, a godly minister, continued his usual practice of expounding the Scripture in his family to the last; and the day before his death, he called for a Bible, and causing another to read the 18th chapter of Romans, he discoursed upon it, verse by verse; but on a sudden he said, "Oh stay your reading, what brightness is this I see! have you lighted up any candle?" A stander by said, no, it is the sunshine, (for it was about five o'clock in a clear summer's evening). "Sunshine," said he, "nay, it is my Saviour's sun-shine. Now farewell world; welcome heaven; the day-star from on high hath visited my heart: O speak it when I am gone, and preach it at my fune-

ral: God dealeth familiarly with man: I feel his mercy, I see his majesty, whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth; but I see the things that are unutterable." And in this rapture he continued till he died.

I knew not long ago an eminently godly man G. M. that fell into several such extraordinary raptures sometime before his death, such as his bodily strength and spirit were not able to support, though he had no sickness. Sometimes he was so swallowed up and overcome by the manifestations of God's love to his soul, that his words could not be well understood; his natural colour, heat, and strength would go off, that all about him would conclude him to be dying; but when he was able to get words uttered, they were so heavenly and ravishing, concerning the love of Christ, and freedom of grace, that by-standers could not hear him without weeping. Sometimes ministers, when they came to visit him, and found him in these raptures, were forced to turn all their prayers in his behalf into praises; except some petitions that they would put up to God, "That he might graciously spare and be tender of his weak body, and enable him to bear that load of loving-kindness God was pleased to let out to him,

and which his present bodily strength was not sufficient for." Yea, they cry, "Lord, if it be thy will, hold thy hand, for he is but a clay vessel; this new wine will burst the old bottle; preserve him in life as a monument of the rich grace of God, for the conviction of Atheists and carnal people, and for the confirmation of the faith of the children of God." When his ecstasy somewhat abated, so that he attained a pleasant calmness of thought and freedom of speech, he would discourse of the mysteries of religion, the electing love of God, the freedom of grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the glorious contrivance of redemption through his death and sacrifice; I say he would talk of these things more like an angel than a man. For such was his heavenly eloquence, fluency of words, and facility of speaking upon these subjects, which otherwise was not natural to him, that those who came to see him, were exceedingly surprised and astonished to hear him. His body gradually weakened under these raptures of spirit, and he longed much to be out of the world, because he thought he could be so little useful in it, for advancing God's honour. He reckoned himself bound to improve the short time he was likely to have

here, in commending Christ and religion to all that he had access to, and also to admonish them of any thing he knew amiss in them, which he did most convincingly. He seemed to have sin wonderfully mortified; for he complained of no other heart plague but self, and it was his great exercise to get self wholly subdued; he pursued it through many of its windings and lurking places, and after all he would regret his little success against it. For, said he, when I am in my most elevated frames, and admitted to the nearest access to my Redeemer, that subtle enemy, self, will enter in with me, and offer to pull the crown off his head before my face.

Once, after hearing a sermon on Psal. lxxxv. 8, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak," he broke out in a rapturous discourse to one that came to see him, blessing God that he had spoken to him in that sermon. "And O," said he, "what am I, that the Rock of Israel should have spoken to me, assuring me that all my sins are forgiven! What am I, a vile worm, that he should be so kind and condescending, as to discover Christ and heaven in such a manner to me, and assure me that I shall shortly be with him! Admirable free grace!

Dr. Harris, head of Trinity college in

Oxford, in his last sickness, used to exhort all about him to get faith above all things. "It is," said he, "your victory, your peace, your life, your crown, and your chiefest piece of spiritual armour. Howbeit, get on all other pieces, and go forth in the Lord's might: stand to the fight, and the issue shall be glorious. Only forget not to call in the help of your General. Do all from him and under him." On the Lord's day he would not have any kept from the ordinances upon his account; and when they returned from the sermons, he would say to them, "Come, what have you for me?" And when they gave him an account of what they had heard, he would resume the heads thereof, and say, "O what excellent truths are these! Lay them up carefully, for you will have need of them." When friends came to visit him, he would say, "I cannot speak, but I can hear." Being asked, where his comfort lay? He answered, "In Christ, and in the free grace of God."

One telling him, that he might take much comfort in his labours, and the good he had done; his answer was, "All is nothing without a Saviour; without him my best works would condemn me. Oh, I am ashamed of them, they are so mixed with sin. I have

done nothing for God as I ought. Oh, loss of time sits very heavy upon my spirit. Work, work apace; assure yourselves nothing will more trouble you when you come to die, than that you have done no more for God, who hath done so much for you.

Sometimes he used thus to breathe out himself, "I never in all my life saw the worth of Christ, nor tasted the sweetness of God's love in that measure as I now do!" Being asked by ministers, what they should chiefly request for him? "Do not only pray for me, but praise God that he supports me, and keeps off Satan from me in my weakness; beg that I may hold out. I am now a good way home, near the shore, I leave you tossing on the sea: Oh, it is a good time to die in."

In all the will which he made, he took care this legacy should be inserted; "Item, I bequeath to all my children, and to their children's children, to each of them a Bible, with this inscription, None but Christ." He used to say, "It is a hard thing for a saint to forgive himself some faults when God has forgiven them."

Mr. Cooper, when dying said, "I saw not my children when they were in the womb, yet there the Lord fed them without my care or knowledge. I shall not see

them when I go out of the body, yet shall they not want a father.” Again, “death is somewhat dreary, and the stream of that Jordan between us and our Canaan runs furiously, but they stand still when the ark comes.”

The Reverend Mr. Halyburton, that shining light in St. Andrews, when dying, commended Christ and godliness with great earnestness to all that came to see him. He exhorted his brethren to diligence in the ministry. “It was the delight of my heart (said he) to preach the gospel: I desired to decrease, that the bridegroom might increase, and to be nothing, that he might be all. I repent that I did not do more for him. O that I had the tongues of men and angels, to praise him!” When he was advised to lie quiet, he said, “Whereon should a man bestow his last breath, but in commending the Lord Jesus Christ, God clothed in our nature, dying for our sins?”

He exhorted some ministers that came to see him, to faithfulness. “As for the work of the ministry (said he) it was my deliberate choice; were my days lengthened out much more, and days as troublesome as they are like to be, I would rather be a condemned minister of God, than the greatest prince on earth.” He said, when taking

farewell of his wife, children and servants, "Here is a demonstration of the reality of religion, that I, a poor, weak, timorous man, as much afraid of death as any, am now enabled, by the power of grace, composedly and with joy, to look death in the face, I dare look it in the face in its most ghastly shape, and hope within a little to have the victory. I cannot but commend the Lord Jesus. As far as my word will go, I must proclaim it, he is the best master that ever I saw." To his son who was a child, he said, "If I had as many sons as there are hairs in your head, I would bestow them all on God."—To some present he said, "O Sirs, I dread mightily that a rational sort of religion is coming in among us; I mean by it, a religion that consists in a bare attendance on outward duties and ordinances, without the power of godliness; and thence people shall fall into a way of serving God, which is mere Deism, having no relation to Christ Jesus and the Spirit of God."

Mr. Philip Henry, when dying, his pains being very sharp, said to his neighbours who came to see him, O make sure work for your souls, by getting an interest in Christ while you are in health, for if I had that work to do now, what would become of me. A little before his last illness he wrote

to a reverend brother, "Methinks it is strange, that it should be your lot and mine, to abide so long on earth by the stuff, when so many of our friends are dividing the spoil above; but God will have it so; and to be willing to live in obedience to his holy will, is as true an act of grace as to be willing to die when he calls."

Mr. Matthew Henry, whose death was somewhat sudden, said a little before it, to some about him, "You have been used to take notice of the sayings of dying men; this is mine, "That a life spent in the service of God, and communion with him, is the most comfortable and pleasant life that any one can live in this world."

Luther, when he fell sick, made his will, in which he bequeathed his detestation of Popery to his friends, and to the pastors of the church, having before made this verse,

Pestis eram vivus, moriens ero mors tua Papa.

In his last will, he says, "O Lord God, I thank thee that thou wouldst have me live a poor and indigent person upon earth. I have neither house nor lands, nor possessions, nor money, to leave. Thou, Lord, hast given me wife and children; them, Lord, I give back unto thee. Nourish, in-

struct, and keep them. O thou the Father of orphans, and judge of the widows, as thou hast done to me so do to them."

In his last prayer, Feb. 18th, 1546 he has these words: "I pray God to preserve his gospel among us; for the Pope, and the Council of Trent, have grievous things in hand. O heavenly father, I give thee thanks that thou hast revealed to me thy son Jesus Christ, whom I believe, whom I possess, whom I glorify, and whom the Pope and the root of the wicked, persecute and dishonour." Mr. Fox says of Luther, "That a poor friar should be able to stand against the Pope was a great miracle; that he should prevail against the Pope was a greater; and after all to die in peace, having so many enemies, was the greatest of all."

Mr. Joseph Allein, a most laborious minister, being deprived of the use of his arms and legs before his death, was asked by a friend, how he could be so well contented to lie so long in that condition? He answered, "What! is God my Father, Jesus Christ my Saviour, and the Holy Spirit my sanctifier and comforter; and shall I not be content without limbs and health? He is an unreasonable wretch that cannot be con-

tent with a God, though he had nothing else."

He would say to his friends who came to see him, "It is a shame for a believer to be cast down under afflictions, that hath so many glorious privileges, justification, adoption, sanctification, and eternal glory. We shall be as the angels of God in a little while; nay, to say the truth, believers are, as it were, little angels already, that live in the power of faith. O my friends, live like believers, trample this dirty world under your feet; be not taken with its comforts, nor disquieted with its crosses, you will be gone out of it shortly."

When he looked on his weak consumed hands, he would say, "These shall be changed: this vile body shall be made like to Christ's glorious body. O what a glorious day will the day of resurrection be! Methinks I see it by faith; how will the saints lift up their heads, and rejoice! and how sadly will the wicked world look then! O come let us make haste, our Lord will come shortly! If we long to be in heaven, let us hasten with our work: for when that is done, away we shall be borne. O this vain, and foolish world! I wonder how reasonable creatures can so doat upon it! What is there in it worth living for! I care not to be in it

longer than while my Master has either doing or suffering work for me: were that done, farewell to earth."

Mr. John Welsh, minister of the Gospel at Ayr, when prisoner in the castle of Blackness, and in the view of death (being condemned to it, for maintaining the liberties of the church, though afterwards the sentence was changed to banishment) in a letter to his wife writes thus,

"I long to eat of that tree which is planted in the midst of the paradise of God, and to drink of the pure river clear as crystal, that runs through the streets of the New Jerusalem. I long to be refreshed with the souls of them that are under the altar, who were slain for the word of God, and the testimony that they held: and to have these long white robes given me, that I may walk in white raiment with those glorious saints who have washed their garments, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Why should I think it a strange thing to be removed from this place, to that where my hope, my joy, my crown, my elder Brother, my Head, my Father, my Comforter, and all the glorious saints are, and where the song of Moses and the Lamb is sung joyfully; where we shall not be compelled to sit by the rivers of Babylon, and hang up

our harps on the willow trees, but shall take them up, and sing the new hallelujah, Blessing, honour, glory, and power, to Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever? What is there under the old vault of the heavens, and in this old worn earth, which is groaning under the bondage of corruption, that should make me desire to remain here? I expect that new heaven and new earth, wherein righteousness dwelleth, wherein I shall rest for evermore. I look to get entry to the New Jerusalem at one of the twelve gates, whereupon are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. I know that Jesus Christ hath prepared them for me. Why may I not then, with boldness in his blood, step into that glory, where my head and Lord has gone before me? Jesus Christ is the door and the porter; who then shall hold me out. O thou fairest among the children of men, the delight of mankind, the light of the Gentiles, the glory of the Jews, the life of the dead, the joy of angels and saints, my soul panteth to be with thee. I refuse not to die with thee, that I may live with thee; I refuse not to suffer with thee, that I may rejoice with thee. O when shall I be filled with his love! Surely if a man knew how precious it is, he would

count all things but dross and dung to gain it. I long for the scaffold, or that axe, or that cord, that might be to me the last step of this wearisome journey, to go to thee, my Lord. Who am I, that he should first have called me, and then constitute me a minister of the glad tidings of the Gospel of salvation these many years, and now last of all to be a sufferer for thy cause and kingdom? These two points, 1. That Christ is the head of the Church: 2. That she is free in her government from all other jurisdiction, except Christ; yea, as free as any kingdom under heaven, not only to convocate, hold, and keep her meetings and assemblies, but also to judge of all her affairs amongst her members and subjects; these are the cause of our sufferings. I would be most glad to be offered up a sacrifice for so glorious a truth: but, alas! I fear that my sins, and the abuse of so glorious things as I have found, deprive me of so fair a crown: yet my Lord doth know, if he would call me to it, and strengthen me in it, it would be to me the most glorious day, and gladdest hour I ever saw in my life; but I am in his hands, to do with me whatsoever shall please him."

This eminent saint spent much of his time in the mount of prayer and wrestling

with God; was admitted to very intimate nearness with him, and had many secret things revealed to him from God. He used to say, "he wondered how a Christian could lie in bed all night, without rising to spend some time in prayer and praise."

In his last illness he had a great weakness in his knees, caused by his continual kneeling at prayer: but when, in his weakness, he was desired to remit somewhat of his former laboriousness, his answer was, "he had his life of God, and therefore it should be spent for him." During his sickness he was so filled with the sensible enjoyment of God, that he was sometimes overheard in prayer to utter these words; "Lord, hold thy hand, it is enough, thy servant is a clay vessel, and can hold no more."

Mr. Christopher Love, minister of Laurence-Jury in London, was beheaded on Tower hill, August 22, 1651, in time of Cromwell's usurpation, and for suspected plotting against his government; his words on the scaffold were most pathetic and weighty. "Although," said he, "there be but little between me and death; yet this bears up my heart, there is but little between me and heaven. It comforted Dr. Taylor the martyr, when he was going to execution, that there was but two stiles be-

tween him and his Father's house: there is a lesser way between me and my Father's house, but two steps between me and glory. It is but lying down upon that block, and I shall ascend upon a throne. I am this day sailing towards the ocean of eternity, through a rough passage, to my haven of rest, through a red sea to the promised land. Methinks I hear God say to me, as he said to Moses, Go up to mount Nebo, and die there; so to me, Go up to Tower hill and die there. Isaac said of himself, that he was old, and yet he knew not the day of his death: but I cannot say so. I am young, and yet I know the day of my death; and I know the kind of my death, and I know the place of my death also. I am put to such a kind of death as two famous preachers of the Gospel were put to before me; John the Baptist, and Paul the apostle, they were both beheaded. I read also in Rev. xx. 4, "The saints were beheaded for the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus." But herein is the disadvantage which I lie under in the thoughts of many; they judge that I suffer, not for the word of God, or for conscience, but for meddling with state matters. To this I shall briefly say, that it is an old trick of Satan, to impute the cause of God's people's sufferings, to be contrive-

ments against the state, when, in truth, it is their religion and conscience they are persecuted for. The rulers of Israel would have put Jeremiah to death upon a civil account, though indeed it was only the truth of his prophesy that made the rulers angry with him: and yet upon a civil account, they pretend he must die, because he fell away to the Chaldeans, and would have brought in foreign forces to invade them. The same thing is laid to my charge, of which I am as innocent as Jeremiah was. So Paul, though he did but preach Jesus Christ, yet his enemies would have had him put to death, under pretence that he was a mover of sedition. Upon a civil account, my life is pretended to be taken away; whereas it is because I pursue my covenant, and will not prostitute my principles and conscience to the ambition and lusts of men. I had rather die a covenant-keeper, than live a covenant-breaker. Beloved, I am this day making a double exchange: I am changing a pulpit for a scaffold, and a scaffold for a throne; and I might add a third, I am changing the presence of this numerous multitude on Tower hill, for the innumerable company of saints and angels in heaven, the holy hill of Zion; and I am changing a guard of sol-

diers for a guard of angels, which will receive me and carry me to Abraham's bosom. This scaffold is the best pulpit that I ever preached in: in my church pulpit, God through his grace made me an instrument to bring others to heaven, "but in this pulpit he will bring me to heaven." Afterwards he said, "Though my blood be not the blood of the nobles, yet it is Christian blood, minister's blood, yea more, it is also innocent blood. I magnify the riches of God's mercy and grace towards me, that I, who was born in Wales, an obscure country, and of obscure parents, should be singled out to honourable suffering. For the first fourteen years of my life I never heard a sermon preached; yet in the fifteenth year of my life it pleased God to convert me. Blessed be God, who not only made me a Christian but also a minister, judging me faithful and putting me into the ministry, which is my glory. I had rather be a preacher in the pulpit, than a prince upon a throne; I had rather be an instrument to bring souls to heaven, than that all nations should bring tribute to me. Formerly, said he, I have been under a spirit of bondage; yea, sometimes I have had more fear in drawing out a tooth, than now I have for cutting off my head. When fear was upon

me, death was not near; now death is near me, my fear has vanished. I am comforted in this, though men kill me, they cannot damn me; though they thrust me out of world, yet they cannot shut me out of heaven. When I have shed my blood, I expect the full declaration of the remission of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. I am going to my long home, and ye to your short homes; but I shall be at my home before ye be at yours." He prayed that seeing "he was called to do the work he never did, he might have the strength he never had."

Mrs. Joyce Lewis, being condemned to be burnt for the Protestant religion in Queen Mary's reign, when she heard that the writ for her execution was come, said to her friends, "as for death, I fear it not; for when I behold the amiable countenance of Jesus Christ my dear Saviour, the ugly face of death does not much trouble me."

Bullinger of Zurich, in his sickness, said to his friends, "If the Lord will make any further use of me and my ministry in his church, I willingly obey him; but if he please (as I much desire) to take me out of this miserable life, I shall exceedingly rejoice, that he pleases to take me out of this corrupt and wretched age, to go to my sa-

viour Christ. For (said he) if Socrates was glad when his death approached, because he thought he should go to Homer, Hesiod, and other learned men, whom he expected to meet with in the other world; how much more do I joy, who am sure that I shall see my saviour Jesus Christ, as also the saints, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and all the holy men who have lived from the beginning of the world? Now when I am sure to see them, and to partake of their joys, why should I not willingly die, to enjoy their perpetual society and glory?"

Mr. Theodore Beza, a famous pastor in Geneva, when he apprehended the approach of death, revised his will; and so relieving himself of all worldly thoughts, wholly betook himself to expect the time of his departure, which he had much longed for. He often used the apostles saying, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works." And that of Augustine, *Domine, quod cœpisti perfice, ne in portu naufragium accadat.* "Lord perfect that which thou hast begun, that I suffer not shipwreck in the haven." And that saying of Barnard, *Domine, sequemur te, per te, ad te. Te qui averitas; Per te, quia via; Ad te, quia vita.* "Lord, we will follow thee, by thee, to thee. Thee, because thou

art the truth; by thee, because thou art the way; to thee, because thou art the life."

Mr. John Bradford, a minister and martyr in Queen Mary's reign, when the keeper told him that the next day he was to be burnt in Smithfield, put off his cap, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, said, I thank God for it, it comes not now to me on a sudden, but as a thing waited for every day and hour; the Lord make me worthy thereof." One Cresswell, offering to interpose for him, and desiring to know what his request was, he said, "I have no request to make; if the queen give me my life I will thank her; if she will banish me I will thank her; if she burn me I will thank her; if she will condemn me to perpetual imprisonment I will thank her." The Chancellor pressing him to do as others had done, in hopes of the queen's mercy; he said, "My lord, I desire mercy with God's mercy, that is, without doing or saying any thing against God and his truth. But mercy with God's wrath, God keep me from. God's mercy (added he) I desire, and also would be glad of the Queen's favour, to live as a subject without a clog on conscience: but otherwise the Lord's mercy is better to me than life. Life in his displeasure is

worse than death, and death with his favour is true life.”

In one of his meditations, after confessing sin, he saith, “O what now may we do! despair? no, for thou art God, and therefore good; thou art merciful, and therefore thou forgivest sin: with thee there is mercy and propitiation, and therefore thou art worshipped. When Adam sinned, thou gavest him mercy before he desired it; and wilt thou deny us mercy, who now desire the same; Adam excused his fault, and accused thee: but we accuse ourselves, and excuse thee: and shall we be sent empty away? How often in the wilderness didst thou spare Israel, and defer thy plagues at the request of Moses, when the people themselves made no petition to thee? Now we do not only make our petitions to thee, but also have a Mediator, far above Moses, to appear for us, even Jesus Christ thine own Son; and shall we (dear Lord) depart ashamed? O merciful Lord, for thine own glory, suffer not the enemy of thy Son Christ, the Romish Antichrist, thus wretchedly to delude and draw from thee, our poor brethren, for whom thy dear Son once died, &c. Suffer him not to seduce the simple sort with his fond opinion, that his false gods, his blind, mumbling, feigned religion, or

his foolish superstition, give him such conquests, such victories, and such triumphs over us. But, O Lord, this is thy righteous judgment, to punish us with the tyrannical yoke of blindness, because we have cast a way from us the sweet yoke of the wholesome words of thy Son our Saviour."

Mr. Edward Deering, a little before his death, said to his friends, "As for my death, I bless God I feel and find so much inward joy, and comfort to my soul, that if I were put to my choice, whether I would die or live, I would a thousand times rather choose death than life, if it may stand with the holy will of God."

Mr. Robert Rollock, when dying, prayed thus, "Lord, I have hitherto seen but darkly in the glass of thy word: now grant that I may enjoy the eternal fruition of thy countenance, which I have so much desired and longed for. Haste, Lord, and do not tarry; I am weary both of nights and days; come Lord Jesus, that I may come to thee. Break these eye-strings, and give me others: I desire to be dissolved, and to be with thee; haste, Lord Jesus, and defer no longer. Go forth, my weak life, and let a better succeed. O Lord Jesus, thrust thy hand into my body, and take my soul to thyself. O my sweet Lord,

set this soul of mine free, that it may enjoy her husband.”

The famous Lord Duplessis in France, when dying, was much concerned for the church of God in distress, praying earnestly for her deliverance. He particularly blessed such of his grand children as were following the studies of learning, saying, that he was assured they should be blessed with the blessings both of heaven above, and of the earth beneath.” When a minister spoke of the service he had done the church by his writings, he said, “Alas, what was there of mine in that work? Say not, that it was I, but God by me.” Then lifting up his hands above his head, he cried three times, mercy, mercy, mercy. Adding, “that he did it to show that it was the alone mercy of God to which he had recourse.”——And declared that his faith was altogether founded upon the goodness of God in Jesus Christ, who by the Father had been made unto him, as to all others that believe in him, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. “Away (said he) with all merit; I call for nothing but mercy, free mercy.” When one was blessing God for giving him such peace and comfort at his end, he said, I feel, I feel what I speak. As to his faith of the truths of God, he said,

“He was entirely persuaded thereof, by the demonstration of God’s holy Spirit, which was more powerful, more clear, and more certain than all the demonstrations of Euclid.” When secretly praying, he was overheard saying in broken sentences, “I fly, I fly to heaven. Let the angels carry me to the bosom of my Saviour.” Afterwards, he said, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and I shall see him with these eyes, *Hisce oculis*,” which words he repeated four or five times.

Jerome of Prague, when he was fastened to the stake, and the executioner began to kindle the fire behind him, bade him kindle it before his face. “For (said he) if I had been afraid of it, I had not come to this place, having had so many opportunities offered me to escape it.”

Mr. Heron, a minister in New England, when dying, was leaving a family of many small children; his poor wife was weeping, and said, Alas! what will become of all these children? He presently and pleasantly replied, “Never fear; he that feeds the young ravens, will not starve the young Herons.” And indeed it came to pass accordingly. It was an ancient observation concerning the English martyrs under the bloody Marian persecution, “That none of them went more joyfully to the

stake, than those who had the largest families to commit unto the Lord."

Rev. Dr. Payson of Portland, when on his death bed, said of his racking pains, "these are God's arrows, but they are all sharpened with love." In the extremity of his sufferings he was accustomed to repeat, as a favourite expression, "I will trust in the Lord at *all times*."

Once he exclaimed, "Peace! Peace! Victory! Victory!" He looked on his wife and children and said, almost in the words of dying Joseph, "I am going, but God will surely be with you."

Henry Martyn, on the 6th of October, 1812, thus writes of himself: "No horses being to be had, I had an unexpected repose. I sat in the orchard, and thought, with sweet comfort and peace, of my God; in solitude—my company, my friend, and comforter. O! when shall time give place to eternity! When shall appear that new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness! There—there shall in no wise enter in any thing that defileth: none of that wickedness that has made men worse than wild beasts—none of those corruptions that add still more to the miseries of mortality, shall be seen or heard of any more."

Scarcely had Mr. Martyn breathed these

aspirations after that state of blissful purity, for which he had attained such a measure of meetness, when he was called to exchange a condition of pain, weakness, and suffering, for that everlasting "rest which remaineth for the people of God." At Tocat, on the 16th of October, 1812, either falling a sacrifice to the plague, which then raged there, or sinking under that disorder, which, when he had penned his last words, had so greatly reduced him, he surrendered his soul into the hands of his Redeemer.

Eliza Cunningham, of England, just before she died was asked by Dr. Benamor, how she was? she answered, "Truly happy, and if this be dying it is a pleasant thing to die." She said to her uncle about 10 o'clock, "My dear uncle, I would not exchange conditions with any person on earth; Oh how gracious is the Lord to me! O what a change is before me!" She was several times asked, if she could wish to live, provided the Lord should restore her to perfect health; her answer was "Not for all the world," and sometimes "Not for a thousand worlds." The last time she was asked the question, she said "I desire to have no choice." Just before she expired she said "this is my experience now, that 'blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.'"

The late Rev. Cornelius Winter, when

on his death bed said, "If God were to refer the event of this affliction to me, I would refer it to him again. I feel to this world as a weaned child."

On Friday one of his brethren, Mr. Bishop, of Gloucester, visited him. When told that he was come, he lifted up his hands with surprise and pleasure. Mr. Bishop said to him, "I hope, sir, that you are happy." He replied, "Yes." His friend added, "It is but a short step from earth to heaven:" with a feeble, but distinct voice, he echoed, "A short step," and then added, "I have sought the divine glory more than mine own interest. I am closing life as I began it." His eyelids then fell—his voice ceased—and death seemed rapidly approaching.

Many acknowledgments of a similar nature were uttered, which, as is too common in these cases, the attendants did not secure at the season, and could not accurately recover afterwards. Indeed the affectionate and devoted creatures significantly remarked, they "Did not know that one thing he said was better than another; it was all alike—so heavenly—it was heavenly—it was heaven to be with him."

The Sabbath was now come, that was to end in the rest that remains for the people

of God. In the morning he prayed, "Lord, bless and unite my people." Soon after, he suddenly cried out, "He is my salvation, he is all my salvation." About eleven o'clock he exclaimed, "I am ready, I am ready, I want to go home." Soon after, when one of his friends looked upon him, and asked him how he did? He replied, "Like a dying man; may the Lord bless you, and your family." He inquired, as some of the family returned from worship, the state of the congregation, and was pleased to learn that it was large.

A little before eight in the evening he said, "Tell my good wife, I am going." He then stretched himself out, laid his arms at length upon his body, and indistinctly said, "Come Lord Jesus;" and without a groan fell asleep.

We might fill a volume with such examples of dying believers; but to conclude, let these prompt us to seek grace from God, and to make it our earnest study to imitate and follow such a cloud of witnesses, that we may die martyrs in resolution, so that our graces may be most lively at the last, that our evening sun may shine brightest, and that we may go off the stage of life glorifying God, and leaving a sweet savour behind us, as those famous worthies

whose praise is in the churches, have done before us.

Thus we see, in the language of Newton, that believers can sing the song of victory before their departure out of this world. We expect it, when we are called to attend them in their last hours; and if their illness leaves them in possession of their faculties and speech, we are seldom disappointed. Yet I believe a full knowledge of this subject cannot be collected from what we observe of others, or hear from them, when they are near death. We must be in similar circumstances ourselves, before we can see as they see, or possess the ideas which they endeavour to describe, and which seem too great for the language of mortals to convey.

We know, by the evidence of undeniable testimony, that many faithful servants of God, when called to suffer for his sake, have not only been supported, but comforted, and enabled to rejoice, under the severest tortures, and even in the midst of the flames, as we have seen in the instances before quoted. We suppose, and I think with reason, that such communications of light and power, as raise a person in such situations above the ordinary feelings of humanity, must, either in kind or degree, be superior to what is usually enjoyed by

Christians in the smoother walks of prosperity and outward peace. God, who is all-sufficient, and always near, has promised to give his people strength according to their day, and in the time of trouble they are not disappointed. A measure of the like extraordinary discoveries and supports, is often vouchsafed to dying believers, and thus the gloom which might otherwise hang over their dying hours, is dispelled; and while they contemplate the approach of death, a new world opens upon them. Even while they are yet upon earth, they stand upon the threshold of heaven. It seems, in many cases, as if the weakness of the bodily frame gave occasion to the awakening of some faculty, till then dormant in the soul, by which invisibles are not only believed but seen, and unutterables are heard and understood.

The soul's dark cottage, tattered and decayed
Lets in new light through chinks.——

Instances, as we have seen, are frequent of those who are thus blessed when they die in the Lord; and it does not appear that old age or great knowledge, or long experience, gives any considerable advantage in a dying hour; for when the heart is truly humbled for sin, and the hope solidly fixed upon the Saviour, persons of weak

vices, and children, are enabled to meet death with equal fortitude and triumph. And often the present comforts they feel, and their lively expectations of approaching glory, inspire them with a dignity of sentiment and expression, far beyond what could be expected from them; and perhaps their deportment upon the whole is no less animating and encouraging, than that of the most established and best informed believers. Thus, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings the Lord ordains strength, and perfects his praise, Ps. viii. 2. In a few hours, under the influence of his immediate teaching, they often learn more of the certainty and importance of divine things, than can be derived from the ordinary methods of instruction in the course of many years. In the midst of agonies and outward distress, we hear them with admiration declare that they are truly happy, and that they never knew pleasure in their happiest days of health, equal to what they enjoy when flesh and heart are fainting. For death has lost its sting as to them, and while they are able to speak, they continue to ascribe praise to him, who has given them the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This victory is through our Lord Jesus Christ. They gained it not by their own sword, neither was it their own arm that

capacities and small attainments, yea, no-saved, Ps. xlv. 3. He died to deliver them, who would otherwise, through fear of death, have been always subject to bondage. And it is he who teaches their hands to war, and their fingers to fight, and covers their heads in the day of battle. Therefore they gladly say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, be the glory and the praise," Ps. cxv. 1. And this consideration enhances their pleasure; for because they love him above all, they rejoice, not only in the victory they obtain, but in the thought that they are indebted to him for it. For were it possible there could be several methods of salvation, and they were left to their own choice, they would, most gladly and deliberately, choose that method which would bring them under the greatest obligations to him. But this triumphant song will be sung to the highest advantage, when the whole body of the redeemed shall be collected together to sing it with one heart and voice at the great resurrection-day. Lot was undoubtedly thankful, when he was snatched from the impending destruction of Sodom. Yet his lingering (Gen. xix. 16) showed, that he had but an imperfect sense of the greatness of the mercy afforded him. His feelings were probably stronger afterwards, when he stood in safety

upon the mountain, and actually saw the smoke of a furnace, from the place where he had lately dwelt. At present we have but very faint ideas of the misery from which we are delivered, of the happiness reserved in heaven for us; or of the sufferings of the Redeemer; but if we attain to the heavenly Zion, and see from thence the smoke of that bottomless pit, which might justly have been our everlasting abode, we shall then more fully understand what we are delivered from, the means of our deliverance, and the riches of the inheritance of the saints in light. And then we shall sing in more exalted strains than we can at present even conceive of, "Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

CHAPTER VI.

Containing directions to the people of God, when the Lord is pleased to recover them from sickness and distress.

SECTION I.

It is very proper, both under sickness and after it, to examine if the affliction be sanctified to you, and has come from the love of God.

It would be very comfortable for us to know that the afflictions which God visits us

with, are not the punishment of a judge, but the chastisement of a father; that they do not proceed from wrath, but from love: that they are not curses, but blessings to us. Now, the best way of knowing this, is by the effects which they work and produce in us, through the blessing of God.

Can you say, that your affliction has humbled you in the sight of God, and made you confess and bewail your sins, and strayings from God as the procuring cause? Has it been like Moses' rod, that smote the rock and brought out much water? Did you water your couch with tears, and mourn humbly before God, for all your God-provoking sins? Then it is a good sign that sickness is sanctified.

2d. Does your affliction drive you nearer to God, and cause you to aim at closer communion with God, and more diligence in duty than formerly, saying, "However careless I have been in duty in time past, it is surely good for me now to draw nearer to God?" Then your sickness is a blessing to you.

3d. Affliction is sanctified, when the corruption and deceitfulness of the heart is more discovered and laid open to the view of the soul: so that the man is made to abhor himself in dust and ashes, and cry out as the leper, "Unclean, unclean." I never

could have thought my heart was so wicked as now I see it.

4th. It is a sanctified sickness that purges the heart and changes the life, and gives a death stroke to your sins and idols, and makes you to loathe and abhor them more than ever, saying with Ephraim, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

5th. It is a blessed rod, when grace is more quickened and stirred up by it, and the man becomes more fruitful in holy duties and good works; when it is a budding and blossoming rod, like Aaron's, Numb. xvii. It is recorded there of Aaron's rod, that it brought forth buds, blooming blossoms, and yielded almonds. So it is happy with us, when our rods and sicknesses do produce in us, not only the buds of a profession, or the blossoms or some beginnings of a reformation; but even cause us to yield almonds, fruit savoury to God. Is conscience become more tender with respect to sin? Are we more jealous over our hearts? Are we more fervent in prayer, more lively in praise, more mortified to the world, more desirous of communion with God? Then may we say with David, "It is good for us to have been afflicted?" and with Hezekiah, "Thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption."

SECTION II.

Make conscience of offering to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving, upon his recovering you from sickness or any distress.

The Psalmist gives us this direction from God, Psal. l. 14, 15. and he shows us that it was his own practice in such a case, Psal. cxvi. 17. Psal. ciii. 1, 2, 3, &c. The command is just, let us obey it; the example excellent, let us imitate it. Praise is comely for the upright.

The sacrifice of thanksgiving is most pleasing and acceptable to God. He loves your tears and prayers, O believer, but much more your praises. How well pleased was our Lord with the poor leper Samaritan, that returned and gave him thanks for curing his bodily disease? Luke xvii. He dismissed him with a special blessing, and cured him of his soul's disease as well as that of his body.

Consider that thankfulness for mercies received, is a most profitable exercise for yourself; for it is the way to get more and better blessings bestowed upon you, according to Psal. lxvii. 5. 6, "Let the people praise thee, O God. Then shall the earth yield her increase: and God, even our own God, shall bless us." Thanksgiving for former

mercies is one way of petitioning for new favours, and God will understand it in this sense.

God is so well pleased with the duty of thanksgiving, that he honours it to be the eternal work of heaven. Whereas other graces, such as faith, hope, and repentance, will then be melted into love and joy forever, so other duties of worship, such as reading, hearing, will then be changed into that of praise and thanksgiving: the glorified company above will never be weary of this work; and shall not we delight in it now, when God is calling us to it by so many new mercies?

In the next place, that you may offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving to God for your recovery, with gracious acceptance.

1. See that your heart be touched with a sense of the greatness of the mercy, and of the goodness of God manifested therein. We must put a due value upon our mercies, and have our hearts affected with God's kind dealing towards us in them, if we would be rightly thankful to God, the author of them. Hence it was that David called upon his heart, and all within him, to bless the Lord for his benefits, Psal. ciii. 1. and in Psal. cxxxviii. 1, he says, "I will praise thee with my whole heart."

2. Let your praise be the native result of faith and love in your soul, otherwise it will be but an empty sound. Faith is necessary to draw aside the veil, and show us the perfections of the invisible God, who is the spring and author of all our mercies; love gives a deep sense of his goodness, enlarges the heart towards God, and opens the lips to show forth his praise.

3. Study to have a deep sense of your own unworthiness and ill-deservings at the Lord's hand, upon account of your sins, and ill improvement of former deliverances, saying with Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10, "I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies."

4. Look above instruments and second causes, and do not ascribe your recovery to physicians or outward means, but to the Lord, the prime author of it, whose blessing alone it is, that gives efficacy and success to the appointed means, and by whose mercy only we are spared and brought back from the gates of the grave. To this the apostle 27, "Indeed he was sick nigh unto death, attributes Epaphroditus' recovery, Phil. ii. but God had mercy on him." Hence we are told, 1 Sam. ii. 6, "The Lord bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up."

5. Observe narrowly the remarkable circumstances of the Lord's goodness, and the sweet ingredients of your mercies. As for

instance, (1.) How discernible the Lord's hand was in your deliverance, which obliges you to say, surely this is the finger of God? this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in mine eyes. (2.) How your deliverance came to you as the return of prayer, makes you say, surely he is a prayer-hearing God. (3.) How deliverances came when there was but little ground to hope for it. See how Hezekiah observed this ingredient in his recovery from sickness. Isa. xxxviii. 10, 11, "I said in the cutting off of my days I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more, with the inhabitants of the world," verse 15, "What shall I say? he has both spoken to me, and himself hath done it." Sometimes God sends deliverances to his people when they are most hopeless, and saying, with the captives of Babylon, Ezek. xxxvii. 11, "Behold our bones are dried, and our hope is lost, and we are cut off for our parts." (4.) Remember how the extremity of your distress was God's opportunity of sending relief. Abraham never forgot the seasonableness of God's appearing for him in his extreme need upon mount Moriah, when he called the name of

the place *Jehovah Jireh*, for preserving the memorial of it; "in the mount of the Lord it will be seen." So doth David, Psal. cxvi, "I was brought low and he helped me."

6. Let the present deliverance bring all former mercies to your remembrance, so that you may praise God for them all, whether they be national or personal mercies, public or private, spiritual or temporal. New mercies should revive the memory of the old, and all of them should come to mind at such a time; so the Psalmist directs, Ps. cv. 2, "Sing to the Lord, talk ye of all his wondrous works." And what he directs others to, he practised himself in such a case, Psal. cxvi. 12, "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?"

7. Be ready to communicate to others an account of the Lord's kind dealings towards you, and the sweet ingredients of his mercies; and particularly of his sending spiritual deliverance to your soul, as well as outward deliverance to your body, when he is pleased to do so. And do this to recommend the service of God to others, and to engage and invite them to assist you in blessing and praising the Lord. We see how David observed his soul deliverances, Psal. cxvi. 7, 6, and declares his experience to others, Psal. xxii. 22, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of

the congregation will I praise thee.” Psal. lxvi. 16, “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.”

Lastly, Remember always to give thanks for mercies to the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, as directed, Eph. v. 20. Your spiritual sacrifices are only accepted of God, when you offer them up by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. ii. 5. As we must seek all our mercies in Christ’s name, so we must give thanks for them also in his name. He is the Mediator of our praises, as well as our prayers. Believers have not one mercy, but what comes swimming to them in Christ’s blood, and is the fruit of his death and purchase to them: and therefore he is to be looked to in the receiving of every mercy. And as Christ is the only mediator for conveying all our services and spiritual sacrifices to God. God accepts of them only as they are perfumed by Christ’s meritorious sacrifice, and potent intercession.

SECTION III.

Inquire after these fruits of righteousness, which are the genuine effects of affliction in the children of God, who are duly exercised thereby.

The Apostle speaks of these fruits, Heb. xii. 11, as properly following sanctified

afflictions, and a kindly exercise of spirit under them. And therefore it is your duty to inquire if they be produced in you.

1. The increase of true repentance is one of those fruits which is the product of sanctified trials. Job found it in himself on the back of his affliction, chap. xiii. 6, "Now I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." It would be happy, if we could find our hearts more soft and melting upon the view of sin, after we have been in the furnace of affliction.

2. Another fruit is the improvement of faith. The afflicted believer is taught to look to, and depend more upon God for help in time of need, and less upon the creature. He now sees that vain is the help of man in the day of calamity, and that God in Christ is the only proper object of the soul's trust. This was the fruit of the apostle's affliction, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9. 10, "We were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead; who delivereth us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver."

3. Humility and low thoughts of ourselves, is one of the fruits of righteousness

which sanctified affliction yields. How proud and lofty was Nebuchadnezzar before he was afflicted, Dan. iv. 29, 30. But afterwards is made to own God, and humbly submit to him as his supreme and uncontrollable Sovereign, and to acknowledge that those who walk in pride he is able to abase, ver. 37. This was God's design in the various trials in the wilderness, Deut. viii. 16, "That he might humble thee, prove thee, and do thee good at the latter end." See then, O believer, if this fruit be produced in thee.

4. Another fruit is the spirit of prayer and supplication. This was visible in the Psalmist's case, after God had delivered him from the sorrows of death, and heard his voice, Psal. cxvi. 2, "Therefore," says he, "will I call upon him as long as I live." O, says the true believer, God's mercy to me in trouble, and his sending me relief when I cried to him, will make me love prayer the better, and engage me to be more diligent in it all my days; for I still see I have daily need of his helping hand.

5. Heavenly-mindedness is a fruit of sanctified affliction. Before, the man was inclined to say, It is good for us to be here, let us build tabernacles in this lower world. But now he changes his thoughts, and says with the Psalmist, "It is good for me to

draw nigh to God. Arise let us depart, this is not our rest." This world is nothing but the house of our pilgrimage, heaven only is our home.

6. Another fruit of sanctified trials, is greater love to God than formerly. How much was David's heart warmed with love and gratitude to God upon the back of his affliction, so that he wants words to express the affections of his soul? Psal. cxvi. 1. 8. 12, "I will love the Lord because he hath heard my voice. I was brought low but he helped me. Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?"

7. Learning and keeping God's word is a fruit of sanctified affliction, Psal. cxix. 67. 71. Let us inquire if this fruit be produced in us after sickness. Do we attend to the word more closely? do we believe it more firmly? do we embrace its offers more earnestly? and do we live more in the expectation of that glory which the word reveals to us? "Then it is good for us to have been afflicted; for we have learned more of God's word."

8. Tenderness of conscience is a happy fruit of sanctified trouble; when the believer, after it, becomes exceedingly afraid

of sin, and of making new wounds in his conscience. He cannot think of venturing again upon any known sin: for the smart of former wounds, and the pain they occasioned in his soul, when distress lay upon him, make deep and lasting impressions on his mind, as they did on the afflicted church, Lam. iii. 19, 20, "Remember mine affliction, and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled within me." Now such fruits of righteousness are an evidence that we have been suitably exercised under affliction: O to find them produced in us after sickness is over.

Many and powerful are the motives which should lead you to bring forth fruits; and if they fail to produce this effect, it indicates a very lamentable state of heart in you. Your gracious Father, though an indulgent lover of all mankind, seems to watch over you, with more than ordinary care and concern, and to be extremely desirous, nay, even solicitous for your salvation. How does his goodness endeavour, by the repeated, though lightest strokes of his rod, to cure whatever is disordered, to rectify whatever is amiss in you? How studiously does he seek, by laying you on a sick-bed, to make you see yourself and all things

else in a true and proper light; to point out to you your frailties and follies, your darling lusts, and the sins that do most easily beset you; to convince you that you are only a sojourner here upon earth, your body a poor frail and corruptible house of clay, your soul, a bright, glorious, and immortal being, that is hasting to the fruition of God, and to mansions of eternal rest; to discover to you the vanity and meanness, and contemptible littleness of this world, and the worth, the importance, and the amazing greatness of the next. Do not then hold out against these kind calls to repentance and amendment; do not resist such earnest importunities, such sweet solicitations. But suffer yourself, by this loving correction, to be made great; great in humility, holiness and happiness. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God; and by a hearty sorrow for your past sins, and a firm resolution of obedience for the future, let this fatherly chastisement bring forth in you the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Oh! let us dread, let us tremble, to reject any longer the offers of grace, lest we awake at length his justice, and draw down vengeance upon ourselves; lest our visitation be not in love and with kindness, but in heavy displeasure and with fury poured out; lest his next dis-

pensation be not a merciful severity, but indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish.

SECTION IV.

Be careful to perform these resolutions, engagements or vows, you have come under in the time of sickness : and walk suitably to them.

As a time of sickness and affliction is a proper season for making vows to God, and binding our souls with resolutions to mortify sin in the heart, and purge it away from the life, and to be diligent in duty, and walk more humbly with God; so a time of recovery from sickness is a proper season for paying and performing those vows. This was the royal Psalmist's practice in such a case, Psal. cxvi. 6. 16, 17, 18. "I was brought low and he helped me. Truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people." Now, for your assistance in this matter, I offer you these few advices.

1. Defer not to pay your vows, but be speedy, and take the first opportunity to pay them. Delays in this case are most

dangerous: Solomon, that wise man, was sensible of this, which made him give you this advice, Eccles. v. 4. "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it."

2. Be still jealous of your heart, which is prone to deal treacherously with God after affliction is over. The Israelites' practice is a sad instance of this truth, Psal. lxxviii. 34, &c. "When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God, &c. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they did flatter him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant." The purposes of many in affliction are like the vows of mariners in a storm; they are the first things they forget and break when once they are safe ashore. However patient some seem to be in sickness, yet when they recover from it, they soon return to their old sins again. They are like metals in a furnace, they melt and turn liquid while in it, but when out they soon return to their old hardness. There is good reason for that caution which the Lord gives us, Mal. ii. 10, "Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you deal not treacherously."

3. Cry continually for strength from above to enable you to perform your vows. The

Psalmist took this course, and found it successful, Psal. cxxxviii. 3. "In the day when I cried to thee, thou answeredst me, and strengthenest me with strength, in my soul." And forget not, O believer, that God has treasured up strength for you in your Head and Surety Christ Jesus; wherefore be still borrowing from him, for the performing of all your engagements, 2 Tim. ii. 1. "My son be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Put your treacherous heart in your Surety's hand, for though you are weak, yet your Redeemer is strong. Whenever, then, you first perceive your heart begin to start aside from God, be sure to check it, and look up to God in Christ for strength, and secure it against treachery and perfidious dealing: cry with the Psalmist, "Be surety for thy servant for good."

4. Guard diligently against your predominant sin, the sin that has most easily beset you, the sin that was the most bitter and uneasy to you in the day of distress. Keep a vigilant eye upon it now; for if once that sin be vanquished, the rest will the more easily be put to flight.

5. Be frequently meditating on your vows, and on the condition you were in when they were made, and study to keep alive in your heart, the same apprehension

of things after sickness, which you had in time of it. How vain and comfortless did the world and its vanities then appear to you! how awful were the truths of God on your spirits! how far preferable was the loving-kindness of God to you than life! how precious was Christ then in your eyes! O that your judgment, thoughts, and impressions of these things may continue still the same.

6. Keep up the impressions of preciousness of time, that you may diligently improve it; and shake off sloth and idleness. Remember what a view you obtained in time of sickness, of long-lasting eternity; and what a trouble it was to you to look back, and see how much time you had lost in sin and vanity. When sometimes we are brought to the brink of eternity, the near views we then get of its vast and unchangableness, are sometimes so awful and amazing to us, that we are ready to think, though we had Methusalem's years to live, it would be unreasonable wilfully to mispend one hour of them all. Well then, is sickness over, our time so short, and so little of it remaining behind? will we be so foolish as to be lavish of it still, and trifle it away as before?

7. Set a special mark upon all these sins,

whether of omission or commission, that made death look grim and ghastly upon you in the time of sickness, and against which you resolved; and see to get every one of them amended and removed. Remember and consider how sad it will be for you, if sickness find you again in the very same sins which formerly stung you. What will you say to conscience, when it shall challenge you? How will you look death in the face, if it should find you living in the very same sins you formerly mourned for, and promised against! Death would then be the king of terrors to thy soul indeed.

O then mind your vows, and say with the Psalmist, Psal. lvi. 12, 13. "Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises to thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?"



APPROPRIATE POETRY.

THERE'S NOTHING TRUE BUT HEAVEN.

THIS world is all a fleeting show,
For man's illusion given ;
The smiles of joy, the tears of wo,
Deceitful shine, deceitful flow ;
There's nothing true but heaven !

And false the light on glory's plume,
As fading hues of even ;
And love, and hope, and beauty's bloom,
Are blossoms gather'd for the tomb ;
There's nothing true but heaven !

Poor wand'ers of a stormy day,
From wave to wave we're driven ;
And fancy's flash, and reason's ray,
Serve but to light the troubled way ;
There's nothing calm but heaven !

Moore.

IMMORTALITY.

IN the dust I'm doom'd to sleep,
But shall not sleep for ever ;
Fear may for a moment weep,
Christian courage—never.

Years in rapid course shall roll,
By time's chariot driven,
And my re-awakened soul
Wing its flight to heaven.

What though o'er my mortal tomb
Clouds and mists be blending?
Sweetest hope shall chase the gloom,
Hopes to heaven ascending.
These shall be my stay, my trust,
Ever bright and vernal;—
Life shall blossom out of dust
Life and joy eternal.

Bowring.

LONGING TO BE WITH CHRIST.

To Jesus, the crown of my hope,
My soul is in haste to be gone;
O bear me, ye cherubim, up,
And waft me away to his throne.

My Saviour, whom absent I love;
Whom, not having seen, I adore;
Whose name is exalted above
All glory, dominion, and power:

Dissolve from these bonds, that detain
My soul from her portion in thee;
Ah! strike off this adamant chain,
And make me eternally free.

When that happy era begins,
When array'd in thy glories I shine,
Nor grieve any more, by my sins,
The bosom on which I recline:

O then shall the veil be removed,
 And round me thy brightness be pour'd :
 I shall meet him whom absent I lov'd,
 I shall see whom unseen I ador'd.

And then, never more shall the fears,
 The trials, temptations, and woes,
 Which darken this valley of tears,
 Intrude on my blissful repose.

Or, if yet remembered above,
 Remembrance no sadness shall raise ;
 They will be but new signs of thy love,
 New themes for my wonder and praise.

Thus the strokes which, from sin and from pain,
 Shall set me eternally free,
 Will but strengthen and rivet the chain,
 Which binds me, my Saviour, to thee.

Cowper.

SEPARATION.

WHEN forced to part from those we love,
 If sure to meet to-morrow,
 We still a pang of anguish prove,
 And feel a touch of sorrow.

But who can paint the briny tears
 We shed when thus we sever,
 If forced to part for months, for years,
 To part—perhaps *for ever!*

Anon.

ANSWER.

BUT, if our thoughts are fixed aright,
 A cheering hope is given,
 Though *here* our prospects end in night,
 We meet again in heaven.

Yes, if our souls are rais'd above,
'Tis sweet when thus we sever,
Since parting in a Saviour's love,
We part *to meet for ever!*

Dudley.

COMFORT UNDER AFFLICTION.

WHEN gathering clouds around I view,
And days are dark and friends are few,
On him I lean, who not in vain
Experienc'd every human pain.
He sees my griefs, allays my fears,
And counts and treasures up my tears.

If aught should tempt my soul to stray
From heavenly wisdom's narrow way;
To fly the good I would pursue,
Or do the thing I would not do;
Still He, who felt temptation's power,
Shall guard me in that dangerous hour.

If wounded love my bosom swell,
Despised by those I prized too well;
He shall his pitying aid bestow,
Who felt on earth severer wo;
At once betrayed, denied, or fled,
By those who shared his daily bread.

When vexing thoughts within me rise,
And, sore dismayed, my spirit dies;
Yet He, who did vouchsafe to bear
The sickening anguish of despair,
Shall sweetly soothe, shall gently dry,
The throbbing heart, the streaming eye.

When mourning o'er some stone I bend,
Which covers all that was a friend;
And from his voice, his hand, his smile,
Divides me for a little while;

Thou, Saviour, mark'st the tears I shed,
For thou didst weep o'er Lazarus dead.

And O! when I have safely passed
Through every conflict but the last;
Still, still unchanging, watch beside
My painful bed—for thou hast died;
Then point to realms of cloudless day,
And wipe the latest tears away. *Grant.*



FUNERAL HYMN.

Thou art gone to the grave! but we will not deplore
thee,

Though sorrows and darkness encompass the tomb;
The Saviour has passed through its portals before thee,
And the lamp of his love is thy guide through the gloom;

Thou art gone to the grave! we no longer behold thee,
Nor tread the rough paths of the world by thy side,
But the wide arms of mercy are spread to enfold thee,
And sinners may hope, since the Sinless hath died.

Thou art gone to the grave! and its mansion forsaking,
Perchance thy weak spirit in doubt lingered long,
But the sunshine of heaven beamed bright on thy waking,
And the sound which thou heard'st was the seraphim's
song.

Thou art gone to the grave! but t'were vain to deplore
thee,

When God was thy ransom, thy guardian, thy guide.
He gave thee, he took thee, and he will restore thee,
And death hath no sting since the Saviour hath died.

Bishop Heber.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

FLOWERS, wherefore do ye bloom ?

—We strew thy pathway to the tomb.

Stars, wherefore do ye rise ?

—To light thy spirit to the skies.

O Sun, what makes thy beams so bright ?

—The Word that said,—“ Let there be light.”

Nature ; whence sprang thy glorious frame ?

—My maker called me, and I came.

O Light, thy subtle essence who may know ?

—Ask not ; for all things but myself I show.

What is yon arch which every where I see ?

—The sign of omnipresent Deity.

Winds, whence and whither do ye blow ?

—Thou must be born again to know.

Bow in the cloud, what token dost thou bear ?

—That justice still cries “Strike,” and merey, “Spare.”

Rise, glitter, break ; yet, Bubble, tell me why ?

—To show the course of all beneath the sky.

Ocean, what law thy chainless waves confined ?

—That which in reason’s limits holds thy mind.

Time, whither dost thou flee ?

—I travel to eternity.

Eternity, what art thou,—say ?

—Time past, time present, time to come—to-day.

Ye Dead, where can your dwelling be ?

—The house for all the living ;—come and see.

O Life, what is thy breath ?

—A vapour lost in death.

O Death how ends thy strife ?

—In everlasting life.

O Grave, where is thy victory ?

—Ask him who rose again for thee.

James Montgomery.

COMFORT IN AFFLICTION.

OH ! thou who driest the mourner's tear,

How dark this world would be,

If, when deceived and wounded here,

We could not fly to thee !

The friends who in our sunshine live,

When winter comes are flown ;

And he who has but tears to give,

Must weep those tears alone ;

But thou wilt hear that broken heart,

Which, like the plants that throw

Their fragrance from the wounded part,

Breathes sweetness out of wo.

When joy no longer soothes or cheers,

And e'en the hope that threw

A moment's sparkle o'er our tears,

Is dimmed and vanished too !

Oh who would bear life's stormy doom,

Did not thy wing of love

Come brightly wafting through the gloom

One peace-branch from above !

Then sorrow touched by thee grows bright,

With more than raptures ray ;

As darkness shows us worlds of light

We never saw by day.

Moore.

RESIGNATION.

WHEN musing sorrow weeps the *past*,
And mourns the *present* pain ;
How sweet to think of *peace* at last,
And feel that death is gain.

'Tis not that murmuring thoughts arise,
And dread a Father's will ;
'Tis not that meek submission flies,
And would not suffer still.

It is that heaven-taught *faith* surveys
The path to realms of light ;
And longs her eagle plumes to raise,
And lose herself in *sight*.

It is that *hope* with ardour glows,
To see Him face to face,
Whose dying love no language knows
Sufficient art to trace.

It is that harassed *conscience* feels
The pangs of struggling sin ;
Sees, though afar, the hand that heals,
And ends her war within.

Oh ! let me wing my hallowed flight,
From earth-born wo and care ;
And soar beyond these realms of night,
My Saviour's bliss to share.

Noel.

THE DYING CHRISTIAN TO HIS SOUL.

VITAL spark of heavenly flame !
Quit, O quit this mortal frame !

Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying ;
 Oh the pain, the bliss of dying !
 Cease, fond nature ! cease thy strife,
 And let me languish into life !

Hark, they whisper—angels say,
 “Sister spirit, come away !”
 What is this absorbs me quite,
 Steals my senses, shuts my sight,
 Drowns my spirit, draws my breath,
 Tell me, my soul—can this be death ?

The world recedes !—it disappears !—
 Heaven opens on my eyes !—my ears
 With sounds seraphic ring !
 Lend, lend, your wings ! I mount ! I fly !
 O grave ! where is thy victory !
 O death ! where is thy sting ?

Pope.



“WHAT THOU KNOWEST NOT NOW, THOU SHALT
 KNOW HEREAFTER.”

THERE is a secret in the ways of God
 With his own children, which none others know,
 That sweetens all he does ; and if such peace,
 While under his afflicting hand, we find,
 What will it be to see him as he is,
 And pass the reach of all that now disturbs
 The tranquil soul's repose ? To contemplate,
 In retrospect unclouded, all the means
 By which his wisdom has prepared his saints
 For the vast weight of glory which remains !
 Come then affliction, if my Father bids,
 And be my frowning friend. A friend that frowns
 Is better than a smiling enemy.

We welcome clouds which bring the former rain,
Though they the present prospect blacken round,
And shade the beauties of the opening year,
That, by their stores enriched, the earth may yield
A fruitful summer and a plenteous crop. *Swaine.*

BRIGHT ANTICIPATION OF GLORY.

DEATHLESS principle, arise !
Soar thou native of the skies !
Pearl of price, by Jesus bought
To his glorious likeness wrought,
Go, to shine before his throne,
Deck his mediatorial crown ;
Go, his triumphs to adorn,
Born for God, to God return.

Lo, he beckons from on high !
Fearless to his presence fly ;
Thine the merit of his blood,
Thine the righteousness of God !
Angels, joyful to attend,
Hovering round thy pillow bend ;
Wait to catch the signal given,
And escort thee quick to heaven !

Is thy earthly house distrest ?
Willing to retain its guest ?
'Tis not thou, but it, must die—
Fly, celestial tenant, fly !
Burst thy shackles, drop thy clay,
Sweetly breathe thyself away :
Singing, to thy crown remove,
Swift of wing, and fired with love.

Shudder not to pass the stream,
Venture all thy care on him,

Him, whose dying love and power
Stilled its tossing, hushed its roar :
Safe in the expanded wave,
Gentle as a summer's eve ;
Not one object of his care
Ever suffered shipwreck there !

See the haven full in view,
Love divine shall bear thee through ;
Trust to that propitious gale,
Weigh thy anchor, spread thy sail !
Saints in glory perfect made,
Wait thy passage through the shade :
Ardent for thy coming o'er,
See, they throng the blissful shore !

Mount, their transports to improve,
Join the longing choir above,
Swiftly to their wish be given,
Kindle higher joy in heaven.—
Such the prospects that arise
To the dying Christian's eyes !
Such the glorious vista faith
Opens through the shades of death !

Toplady.

THE SWEETNESS OF RESTING ON GOD.

WHEN languor and disease invade
This trembling house of clay,
'Tis sweet to look beyond our cage,
And long to soar away.

Sweet to look inward, and attend
The whispers of his love ;
Sweet to look upward to the throne
Where Jesus pleads above.

Sweet to look back, and see my name
In life's fair book marked down;
Sweet to look forward and behold
Eternal joy my own.

Sweet to reflect, how grace divine
My sins on Jesus laid :
Sweet to remember that thy death
My debt of suffering paid.

Sweet on thy faithfulness to rest,
Whose love can never end;
Sweet on thy covenant of grace
For all things to depend.

Sweet in the confidence of faith,
To trust thy truth divine;
Sweet to lie passive in thy hands,
And have no will but thine.

If such the sweetness of the streams,
What will that fountain be,
Where saints and angels draw their bliss
Immediately from thee !

Ibid.

HOPE GILDING THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

'Tis sweet to rest in lively hope,
That when the change shall come,
Angels will hover round my bed,
And waft my spirit home.

There shall my dis-imprisoned soul
Behold him and adore;
Be with his likeness satisfied,
And grieve and sin no more.

Shall see him wear that very flesh
On which my guilt was lain;
His love intense, his merit fresh,
As though but newly slain.

Soon too my slumbering dust shall hear
The trumpet's quickening sound!
And by my Saviour's power rebuilt,
At his right hand be found.

These eyes shall see him in that day,
The God that died for me;
And all my rising bones shall say,
Lord, who is like to thee!

If such the views which grace unfolds,
Weak as it is below,
What raptures do the church above
In Jesus' presence know!

O may the unction of these truths
For ever with me stay,
Till from her sinful cage dismissed,
My spirit flies away!

Ibid.

LAUNCHING INTO ETERNITY.

It was a brave attempt! adventurous he,
Who in the first ship broke the unknown sea:
And leaving his dear native shores behind,
Trusted his life to the licentious wind.
I see the surging brine: the tempest raves;
He on the pine-plank rides across the waves,
Exulting on the edge of thousand gaping graves:
He steers the winged boat, and shifts the sails,
Conquers the flood, and manages the gales.
Such is the soul that leaves this mortal land,
Fearless when the great Master gives command.

Death is the storm: she smiles to hear it roar,
And bids the tempest waft her from the shore:
Then with a skilful helm she sweeps the seas,
And manages the raging storm with ease;
"Her faith can govern death," she spreads her wings,
Wide to the wind, and as she sails she sings,
And loses by degrees the sight of mortal things.
As the shores lessen, so her joys arise,
The waves roll gentler, and the tempest dies;
Now vast eternity fills all her sight,
She floats on the broad deep with infinite delight,
The sea for ever calm, the skies forever bright.

Watts.

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.

WHEN marshalled on the nightly plain,
The glittering host bestud the sky:
One Star alone, of all the train,
Can fix the sinner's wandering eye.

Hark! hark! to God, the chorus breaks,
From every host, from every gem;
But one alone the Saviour speaks,
It is the Star of Bethlehem.

Once on the raging seas I rode,
The storm was loud,—the night was dark,
The ocean yawned—and rudely blowed
The wind that tossed my foundering bark.

Deep horror then my vitals froze,
Death-struck, I ceased the tide to stem;
When suddenly a star arose;
It was the Star of Bethlehem.

It was my guide, my light, my all,
It bade my dark forebodings cease;
And through the storm and danger's thrall,
It led me to the port of peace.

Now safely moored, my perils o'er,
I'll sing—first in night's diadem,
For ever and for evermore,
The Star! the Star of Bethlehem.

H. K. White.

DEATH-BED OF THE CHRISTIAN.

Let reason vainly boast her power,
To teach her children how to die:
The sinner in a dying hour
Needs more than reason can supply:
A view of Christ, the sinner's friend,
Alone can cheer him in the end.

When nature sinks beneath disease,
And every earthly hope is fled,
What then can give the sinner ease,
And fill with peace his dying bed?
Jesus, thy word his heart can cheer,
He's blest e'en then if thou art near.

The gospel free salvation brings,
And Jesus is the gospel theme;
In death the pardoned sinner sings,
And triumphs in the Saviour's name
"O death, where is thy sting?" they cry;
"O grave, where is thy victory?"

Ah, let me die the death of those
Whom Jesus washes in his blood;

Who on his faithfulness repose,
And know that he indeed is God.
Then round his throne we all shall meet,
And cast our crowns beneath his feet. *Anon.*

I WOULD NOT LIVE ALWAY.

I would not live alway : I ask not to stay
Where storm after storm rises dark o'er the way ;
The few lurid mornings that dawn on us here,
Are enough for life's woes, full enough for its cheer.

I would not live alway, thus fetter'd by sin ;
Temptation without, and corruption within :
E'en the rapture of pardon is mingled with fears,
And the cup of thanksgiving with penitent tears.

I would not live alway ; no—welcome the tomb,
Since Jesus has laid there, I dread not its gloom ;
There, sweet be my rest, till he bid me arise
To hail him in triumph descending the skies.

Who, who would live always away from his God ;
Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,
Where the rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns ;

Where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,
Their Saviour and brethren, transported to greet ;
While the anthems of rapture unceasingly roll,
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul !
Muhlenburg.

A SIGHT OF HEAVEN IN SICKNESS.

OfT have I sat in secret sighs,
To feel my flesh decay,
Then groan'd aloud with frightened eyes,
To view the tottering clay.

But I forbid my sorrows now,
Nor dares the flesh complain;
Diseases bring their profits too;
The joy o'ercomes the pain.

My cheerful soul now all the day
Sits waiting here and sings;
Looks through the ruins of her clay,
And practises her wings.

Faith almost changes into sight,
While from afar she spies
Her fair inheritance in light,
Above created skies.

Had but the prison walls been strong,
And firm without a flaw,
In darkness she had dwelt too long,
And less of glory saw.

But now the everlasting hills
Through every chink appear,
And something of the joy she feels,
While she's a prisoner here.

The beams of heaven rush sweetly in
At all the gaping flaws;
Visions of endless bliss are seen,
And native air she draws.

O may these walls stand tottering still,
The breaches never close,
If I must here in darkness dwell,
And all this glory lose!

Or rather let this flesh decay,
The ruins wider grow,
Till, glad to see th' enlarged way,
I stretch my pinions through.

PANTING FOR HEAVEN.

YE angels who stand round the throne,
And view my Immanuel's face,
In rapturous songs make him known;
Tune, tune your soft harps to his praise;
He formed you the spirits you are,
So happy, so noble, so good;
While others sunk down in despair,
Confirmed by his power, ye stood.

Ye saints, who stand nearer than they,
And cast your bright crowns at his feet,
His grace and his glory display,
And all his rich mercy repeat:
He snatched you from hell and the grave,
He ransomed from death and despair;
For you he was mighty to save,
Almighty to bring you safe there.

O, when will the period appear,
When I shall unite in your song?
I'm weary of lingering here,
And I to your Saviour belong!
I'm fettered and chained up in clay;
I struggle and pant to be free;

I long to be soaring away,
My God and my Saviour to see.

I want to put on my attire,
Washed white in the blood of the Lamb;
I want to be one of your choir.
And tune my sweet harp to his name:
I want—oh I want to be there,
Where sorrow and sin bid adieu,
Your joy and your friendship to share.
To wonder and worship with you.

De Fleury.

THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

SWEET is the scene when Christians die,
When holy souls retire to rest;
How mildly beams the closing eye!
How gently heaves the expiring breast!

So fades a summer's cloud away:
So sinks the gale when storms are o'er;
So gently shuts the eye of day;
So dies a wave along the shore.

Triumphant smiles the victor's brow,
Fanned by some guardian angel's wing;
O grave! were is thy victory now?
And where, insidious death, thy sting?

Barbault.

FAREWELL.

NAY, shrink not from the word "farewell!"
 As 'twere friendship's final knell:
 Such fears may prove but vain:
 So changeful is life's fleeting day,
 When'er we sever—hope may say
"We part to meet again!"

Even the last parting earth can know,
 Brings not unutterable woe,
 To soul's that heavenward soar;
 For humble faith, with steadfast eye,
 Points to a brighter world on high,
 Where hearts that here at parting sigh,
 May meet—to part no more.

Bernard Barton.

 HOPE BEYOND THE GRAVE.

'Tis night, and the landscape is lovely no more;
 I mourn, but ye woodlands, I mourn not for you;
 For morn is approaching, your charms to restore,
 Perfumed with fresh fragrance, and glittering with dew.
 Nor yet for the ravage of winter I mourn;
 Kind nature the embryo blossom will save:
 But when shall spring visit the mouldering urn?
 O when shall it dawn on the night of the grave?

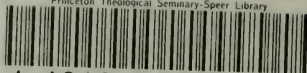
'Twas thus by the glare of false science betrayed,
 That leads to bewilder, and dazzles to blind,
 My thoughts wont to roam, from shade onward to shade,
 Destruction before me, and sorrow behind,
 "O pity, great Father of light," then I cried,
 Thy creature who fain would not wander from thee!

Lo, humbled in dust, I relinquish my pride :
From doubt and from darkness thou only canst free.
And darkness and doubt are now flying away,
No longer I roam in conjecture forlorn :
So breaks on the traveller, faint and astray,
The bright and the balmy effulgence of morn.
See truth, love, and mercy, in triumph descending,
And nature all glowing in Eden's first bloom !
On the cold cheek of death smiles and roses are blending,
And beauty immortal awakes from the tomb !

Beattie.

THE END.

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