

THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF A SUITABLE
PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

S E R M O N,

ON

PSALM LXXIX. 48.

What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death, &c.

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IT is very hard to determine, where all that are here shall be within thirty years; for even ere that time come, many (if not all) of us who are here, shall have taken up our everlasting lodging. And whether we shall take it up in the eternity of joy, or in the eternity of pain, is also hard to determine; only this one thing I am sure of, that all of us shall shortly be gone, and ere long the shadows of death shall be sitting upon our eye-lids, and our eye-strings shall begin to break. Therefore, I would the more seriously enquire at you, what would you think if death were approaching this night unto you? Think ye that Jesus Christ is gone up to prepare a place for you? even for you. Surely I think we are all near to eternity, and there are some hearing me to day, whom I defy the world to assure, that ever they shall hear another sermon: therefore I entreat you all to hear this preaching, as if it were the last preaching that ever ye should hear, and O that we could speak it, as if it were the last sermon that ever we would preach unto you. Believe me, death is another thing than we take it to be. Oh! what will many of us do in the day of our visitation, when desolation shall

The great Importance of a, &c.

come from afar? where will we flee for rest; and, where will we leave our glory? Old rich men, where will ye flee when death assaults you! Old poor men, where will ye flee when death assaults you! Old women, where will you flee when death assaults you? Young women, where will you flee when death assaults you? It was an ancient observation of David, Psalm xxxix. 5. that 'God had made his days as an hand breadth.' This either may relate to the fourfold state of man, viz: His infancy, his child-hood, his man-hood, and his old age. Or, it may relate to the fourfold time of his life, viz. His morning, his forenoon, his afternoon, and his evening; yet, all our lifetime is but a day. And, O think ye not that our day is near unto a close!

Now before that I begin to speak any thing from the words, I shall speak a few things to these two questions, which I conceive may not altogether be unprofitable.

Quest. 1. Whether is it lawful for any to desire to die, and return unto their long and endless home? Whether it be lawful for one to cry out, O time, time flee away (and all my shadows let them be gone) that so, long eternity may come?

Ans. I say, It is lawful in some cases, for one to desire to die; for it was Paul's desire, Philip. i. 23. 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.' And 2 Cor. v. 2. 'We groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven.' I long greatly till the twenty-first year of my age come, when my minority shall be overpast, that I may be entered heir to that matchless inheritance. But to clear in what cases it is lawful to desire to die.

1. I say, It is lawful to desire to die, when it floweth from a desire of uninterrupted fellowship and communion with Christ, and conjunction with him; this is clear, 2 Cor. v. 6. 'Knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.' Therefore, Verse 8. 'We are willing rather to be

absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.' Also it is clear, Philip. i. 23. 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.' It was his great end to have near and unmixed communion with Christ. What aileth you, Paul, (might one have said) may you not be content to stay a while here? Nay, saith Paul, 'I desire to be gone, and to be with Christ.' Wast thou never with him here, Paul? I have been with him, saith he, but what is all my being with him here, in comparison of my being with him above; 'Whilst I am present in the body, I am absent from the Lord: therefore, I will never be at rest, saith he, get what I will, until I get Christ, until I get those naked and immediate embracements of that noble Plant of Renown, the Flower of the stock of Jesse, who is the light of the higher house, the eternal admiration of angels.'

2. It is lawful to desire to die, when it floweth from the excellencies of heaven, from a desire to partake of these excellent things that are there; this is clear, 2 Cor. v. 4. 'We groan being burdened;' or, as the word is, 'We groan, as they who are pressed under a heavy burden, that we may be clothed upon.' &c. What aileth you to groan so, Paul? O saith he, I groan that mortality may be swallowed up of life.

3. It is lawful to desire to die, when it floweth from a desire to be saved from the body of death; and from these temptations that doth assault us: And from these oppressions whereunto we are subjected by it. Doubtless Paul desired to die on this account, when he cried out, Romans xii. 24. 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!' he longeth greatly for that day; 'wherein he shall be made white like the wings of a dove, covered with silver, whose feathers are of yellow gold.' O! saith Paul, I am as one impatient till I be above, where I shall be clothed with these excellent and cleanly robes, 'the righteousness of Christ.' Oh! saith Paul, I think every day a year, till I be possessed of that kingdom where Satan cannot tempt, and the creature cannot

yield, and where I shall be free from all my fears of sinning. Now in all these respects who would not desire to die? But to guard all these, I would give you these four cautions.

1. Caution. Your desire to die should not be peremptory, but you should desire to die with submission to the will of God; so that although he would fill up fifteen years more to your life, you should be content to live it out.

2. Caution. When your desires are hasty and off hand, suspect them; for some, when they meet with an outward cross (without all deliberation) will cry out, "O to be gone, O that I were dead." But your desire to die should be deliberate, but not hasty, or rash.

3. Caution. It is not lawful to desire to die, because of personal afflictions. Many, when they meet with bitter afflictions, will cry out, 'O to be gone; they long for death even upon that account; such were Job's desires, Job xxi. 22. and chapter vi. verse 8, 9. 'O that I might have my request! even that it would please God to destroy me.' This desire was very unlawful.

4. Caution. It is not lawful to desire to die, when thy predominant idol is taken away from thee: Yet such was Jonah's desire, chapter iv. 3. Jonah thought his credit and reputation (which was his idol) was gone, and could never be regained; therefore he wished to die. But I would say this to you, that some will have ten desires for death, when they have not one desire for heaven. And what moveth Christians to be so desirous to die? It is not so much because of their hope, as because of their anxiety; it is not so much because of their confidence, as because of their impatience. But I say unto you, when your desires of death are not accompanied with desires of heaven, suspect them. 2. I would say this, that there are some who will have ten desires for death, when they will not have one for the death of the body of death; but it were good for thee (who art such) to be desiring the death of the body of death; then should thou

be in a more suitable frame to desire to die.

3. Some will have hearty desires to die, and yet, when death cometh, they will be as unwilling to die as any. It hath been observed, that some who have much desire to die, when death came, have cried out, 'O spare a little, that I may recover strength,' &c.

There is a great difference between a desire to die, and death itself. It is an easy thing to desire to die, but it is a very great business to meet with death, and to look it in the face when it cometh. We think death (ere it come near us) to be but childrens' play, but when we meet with it, it maketh us change our thoughts; for it is a great business to die.

Quest. 2. Is it lawful for a Christian to desire to live when he is summoned to die?

Ans. In some cases it is lawful for a Christian to desire to live, even when he is summoned to die; which is clear from the practice of David, Psalm xxxix. 13. where he prayeth, 'that the Lord would spare him a little.' It is also clear from the practice of good Hezekiah, Isaiah xxxviii. 3. when he was commanded 'to set his house in order, for he should die, and not live,' he crieth out, 'Remember now O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight: and Hezekiah wept sore;' or, as the words are in the original, 'he wept with great weeping.' But, to guard this, take these two cautions.

Caution 1. Thy desire to live (when thou art summoned to die) should not be peremptory, but with submission to the will of God, that if it be his pleasure to remove thee presently out of time, thou should be content to die.

Caution 2. Thy desire to live should have gracious principles, and also a very gracious end, as is most clear from David, Psalm xxxix. 13. where he saith, 'O spare me a little, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.' His desire to live was, that he might have victory over his idols, As if he had said, my desire to live is, that I may

have strength to wrestle with, and overcome my idols. And without all controversy, Hezekiah's desire was a most precious and well grounded desire. However, I would say this unto thee, that thou shouldst examine thy desires to live. (as much if not more) as thy desires to die; for, we are ready to shun death, if we could, but he is that universal King, unto whom all of us must be subject ere long.

Now, in the words which are read unto you, there are these six things, which might be clearly observed from them.

I. That it is a most clear and infallible truth, that all persons shall once see death, as is clear in these words, 'who is he that liveth, and shall not see death?'

II. That this truth (that we shall once see death) is not much believed or thought upon by many; therefore, it is that the Psalmist doubleth the assertion, 'What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death; shall he deliver his soul' (that is, his life) 'from the hand' (that is) 'from the power of the grave.'

III. That sometimes a Christian may win to the solid faith of this truth, that once he must die; this the Psalmist wan unto, as it is also clear in that word (who) 'Who is he that liveth, and shall not see death?'

IV. That the certainty of this, that once we shall die, should be still kept in our mind; therefore, that note of attention, Selah, is put to it. As if he had said, take heed, that there is none living that shall not die.

V. That howbeit some persons put the evil day far away, as if they were not to see death; yet, is the day coming when they shall see death, and death shall take them by the hand.

VI. We shall take notice of this from the context, that the Christian, who is much in minding the brevity of his life, will believe the certainty of his death: the Psalmist was speaking of the shortness of his life in the preceding verse, and, in this verse, he speaketh of the certainty of death.

Now, as for the first of these things observed, viz. That it is certain and most sure, that we shall all once die. I hope there are none of you here who will deny, altho' I confess some few of you believe, what was said by the woman of Tekoah, 2 Samuel xiv. 14. 'We must all die, and be like water spilt upon the ground, that cannot be gathered up again. God doth not except the person of any.' And Job xxx. 23. 'I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.' And it is very clear, Eccles. viii. 8. 'There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war, neither shall wickedness deliver those who are given to it.' It is clear, Heb. ix. 27. 'It is appointed unto men once to die.' So that it is most clear that we must die. I remember of one Philip, king of Macedonia, who had one substituted for this very end, to cry at his chamber door every morning. *Memento mori, memento mori, memento mori*, Remember thou art to die. And, it is reported to have been the practice of the nobles of Greece, and in the day wherein their emperor was crowned, that they presented a marble-stone unto him, and he was enquired after what fashion he would have his tomb-stone made? Which practice speaks forth this unto us, that altho' these were most destitute of the light of the scripture, they were very mindful of death. Believe me, death may surprise us before we be aware; for, it is most certain, that we must die; but, there is nothing more uncertain than the way how, and the time when we shall die.

Death will surprise some as it did Abel in the open field, Genesis iv. 8. Death will surprise some, as it did Eglon in his parlour, Judges iii. 21. And, death will surprise some, as it did Saul and Jonathan in the fight, 1 Samuel xxxi.

Now, in speaking to this point, I shall, First, Speak a little to these advantages which attend those that live within continual sight of death. Secondly, I shall give you some considerations to press you to

prepare for death. Thirdly, I shall give you some directions to help you to prepare for death. And then we shall proceed unto the second point of doctrine, which we observed from the text, and I shall speak a few things from it unto you, and so come to a close for this time.

First then, We conceive there are these seven advantages which attend those who live within the continual sight of this truth, that they must die.

First. The faith of approaching death, will make a soul exceeding diligent in duty: this was our blessed Lord's divinity, John ix. 4. 'I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work;' that is, death is approaching, therefore I must work. It is clear also, 2 Peter i. 12. compared with verse 14. In the 12. verse Peter is exceeding diligent in his duty, and the ground of his diligence is in the 14. verse, 'Knowing, that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle,' &c. Yet it is even the Epicure's argument, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die.' And, should not the Christian much more cry out, 'Let me watch and pray, for tomorrow I may die.' I say, if the Epicures did make use of this notion, to make them vigorous in the pursuit of their pleasures, O how much more should a Christian improve it, for making him vigorous in the pursuit of his duty? Therefore I say unto you all, O be ye diligent, for your night is drawing near. O Christians and expectants of heaven, are ye not afraid lest ye be nighted before ye have walked the half of your journey? For, if ye be nighted on your journey to heaven, before ye come to the end of your race, there is no retiring place whereunto ye may turn aside to lodge. Therefore, 'O work, work, work, while it is to day;' for, behold death is approaching, and then shall we all be called to an account.

Second, The faith of approaching death, will make a Christian exceeding active in duty, he will not only be diligent, but also exceeding serious, and zealous, in the exercise of his duty; this is clear from that nota-

ble exhortation. Eccles. ix. 10. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might;' and the reason is, 'for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.' Wherefore, O be active, while you are alive, for ye shall never work any more after ye are dead; and, if ye leave but one work undone, there is no doing of it after death. 'There is no work' (saith Solomon) 'in the grave:' therefore. O be active.

Third. The faith of this truth, that we must all die, will help a Christian to be exceeding mortified to the things of a present world. Oh! covetous men and women, would you shake hands with cold death but once every morning, I should defy you to purify the world so much as ye do. Paul was much in the meditation of his change, which made him, 2 Cor. iv. 18. to overlook these things that are temporary, 'While we look not' (saith he) 'at the things which are seen, which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen, which are eternal:' therefore, chapter v. 1, 2. 'Knowing, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens: therefore, in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.' What aileth you, Saul (might one have said) may ye not take a look of the world? No, saith he, 'For I know, that if this earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, I have a house with God, not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens:' that is, I know that ere long the pins of my tabernacle will be loosed, and it will fall down about my ears; therefore, I must look for another dwelling-house. And, 1 Cor. vii. 31. 'The fashion of this world passeth away.' Therefore, saith he, verse 32. 'I would have you without carefulness caring how to please the Lord.' And, Philippians iv. 5. 'Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.' As if he had said, death is approaching, and at hand; therefore, I intreat you to be sober. But I think many of

us will be found like Saul, hid among the stuff; that is, we will be lying amongst the midst of the pleasures of this passing world. But I say unto thee, who art such an one, that death will break the strings of thy harp, thy music will quickly cease. O but death will make thee to have a low esteem of the world. O blessed is the person who hath these thoughts of the world all along in his way, which he shall have of it at death! have not the most cursed wretches been forced to cry out, Oh! I would give ten thousand worlds for Christ? Have not some persons (who have had the moon upon their head, and that have made their belly their god) been forced to cry out at death, O cursed person that I am, that ever I made the world my God? Alas! that I contented myself with the world. Therefore, I say unto thee, who art such an one, O stay thy pursuit after the world, for death is approaching; that will cause all thy worldly comforts to vanish.

Fourth. When a Christian believeth this truth, that he must die, it will be an exceeding great restraint to keep him from sinning, as is clear, Job xxxi. 13. compared with verse 14. where Job reckoning over many good deeds done by himself, saith, 'What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?' As if he had said, first, mistake me not, I am not boasting much of myself, for I could not have done otherwise, else what should I do when God riseth up? how could I answer to God if I had done otherwise, I think it were a notable practise of each of you, to say, 'O temptation, what will I answer to God, when he riseth up to reprove me, if I should yield unto thee?' likewise, Eccles. xi. 9. where Solomon, dissuading young men to pursue after their vanity, bringeth this as a reason, 'know ye, that for all these things God will bring you into judgement.' Therefore, I say unto thee, who art often tempted to sin, let death and reckoning with God be still in thy sight, and I defy thee then to embrace half so many temptations, as now thou dost. I entreat you to an-

swer all your temptations with that word, 'What shall I do when God riseth up? and what shall I answer when he visiteth me?'

Fifth. When a Christian liveth within the sight of this truth, that he shall once see death, it will make him exceeding patient under every cross wherewith he meeteth. Such a Christian will hardly meet with a cross but he will quiet himself with this; death will put me beyond this cross, this is but a cloud that will quickly pass away. And for this cause did David so composedly put up that desire, Psalm xxxix. 4. 'Lord make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days.' He was sure that the knowledge of his end, would put him in a sober and patient frame.

The Sixth advantage is this, the faith of approaching death, will teach the person that hath it, to study saving wisdom: this is clear, Psalm xc. 12. where Moses putteth up this request, So 'teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.' As if he had said, I will never think myself wise, till I know that blessed part of arithmetic, 'how to number my days.' I would desire every one of you all to think with yourself every morning when you rise, now I am a day nearer unto eternity than I was before; and at the end of every hour, now I am an hour nearer unto eternity than I was before; I say, think often, yea, always thus, I was never so near my death as I am now; for, Oh! are we not all nearer unto eternity to day, than we were yesterday?

The Seventh advantage attending the faith of approaching death, is this, that it will make a Christian very careful in preparing for death. It is impossible for one to believe really that death is approaching, and not to prepare for it. Say what ye will, if ye be not careful in preparing for death, ye have not the solid faith of this truth, that ye shall die. Believe me, it is not every one that thinketh he believeth this truth, that believeth it indeed. And, O how dreadful is it for an unprepared man to meet with death? He desireth not to die, yea, he would give a world for his life, but die he must, whether he will or not; for

death will not be requested to spare a little when he cometh. And therefore I say unto you all, 'set your house in order, for ye shall surely die.' Old men and women, set your house in order, for to-morrow ye may die, and be cut off in the flower of your age. Think not that there be many who can sell time: for, I say, ye shall never get time sold unto you. Alas! I fear that the most part of persons that die now, death findeth them at unawares: for indeed the persons that die amongst us, when we come to visit them we may give you a sad account of them, for we think they are comprehended under these four sorts.

1. When we go to visit some persons on their death-beds, they are like unto Nabal, 'their heart is dying and sinking' (like unto a stone) 'within them,' they are no more affected with death, than if it were a fancy; alas! for the great stupidity that hath overtaken many; therefore, I intreat you delay not your repentance till death, lest the Lord take away your wit, so that ye cannot repent for your senselessness and stupid frame of spirit.

2. A second sort we find in a presumptuous, frantie saying, They have had a good hope all their days, and they will not quit it now; they will go down to their grave with their hope in their right hand, or rather, they will go down to the grave, 'with a lie in their right hand;' they live in a presumptuous frame, and they die in the same delusion. For, when we tell them, by all probability they are going down to hell, they answer, God forbid, I was all my time a very honest man or woman: but I love not that confession; for there are many such honest men and women in hell this day.

3. The third sort we find having some convictions that they have been playing the fool all their days; but we can get them no further: I shall only say to such, to go down to the grave with convictions in their breasts, not making use of Christ, is to go down to hell with a candle in their hand, to let them see the way: and truly the greatest part that die, die in that manner.

4. There are some whom we find in a self-righteous frame, resting upon the covenant of works, and their own merits, and trusting by these to go to heaven; yet neglecting the offer of Christ's righteousness. But alas! we find not one of a thousand of this frame. 'I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is best of all.' And scarce do we find any in such a frame, 'O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!' therefore I say this unto you all who are here, O! will ye mind death, before it take hold on you? Oh! mind your work now; for ye will find that death will be work enough for itself, though ye leave no work till then.

The Eighth advantage that attendeth the Christian in believing this truth, that once he must die, is this, death will not be so terrible to him as it is unto many when it cometh. What (think ye) maketh death a king of terrors? What maketh many to shake as the leaf of a tree, when they are summoned to appear before God's tribunal? It is even because of this, they have not been thinking on death before it came, so as to prepare for it. And I fear many in this place may be afraid for death, and that when it cometh to them, they will say unto death, as Ahab said to Elijah, 'Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?' Surely death will take you, and bring you to the judgement-seat of Christ; therefore study by all means to think often upon it, and make ready for it; believe me, death is a very big word, for it will once make you stand with horror in your souls, if your peace be not made up with God: I know not a more dreadful dispensation than death and a guilty conscience meeting together.

The Second thing that I shall speak unto from this first observation, (viz. This is a most certain and infallible truth, that all persons shall once see death) shall be to give you some considerations for pressing you to prepare for death.

The First consideration is this, 'to die well, and in the Lord,' is a most difficult work; therefore I entreat you to prepare for death, It is a difficult work to communicate aright, it is a difficult work to pray aright

and it is a difficult work to confer aright; I must tell you it is a more difficult work to die aright, than any of these. - It is true, it is more difficult to communicate aright, then to pray aright, yet it is much more difficult to die aright, than to communicate aright, for it is a more difficult work to die in the Lord. Death will put the most accurate Christian that is here to a wonderful search, and therefore I will tell you nine things that death will try in thee; 1. Death will try both the reality and strength of thy faith. It may be easy for thee to keep up faith under many difficulties, but death will put thy faith to the greatest stress that ever it did meet with. Yea, know this, that the faith of the strongest believer may get (and ordinarily doth get) a set at death, the like whereof it never got before; therefore prepare for death. 2. Death will try thy love to God: some persons pretend much love to him, but death will propose this question to such a person, 'Lovest thou him more than these? Lovest thou him more than thy wife, more than thy house, more than thy friends?' But your unwillingness to die, giveth us much ground to fear that many have little love to Christ, but much to the world, and so dare not answer the question, 'Lord thou knowest that I love thee.' 3. Death will try the enjoyments; some of you may be ready to think that ye meet with many enjoyments, so that ye may reckon (as you think) to forty enjoyments and sweet out-lettings; but beware that death bring them not down to twenty: I have known some, who thought they have met forty times with God, but when death came, it made them take down the count to the half; therefore, seeing death will try the reality of thine enjoyments, O prepare for it. 4. Death will try thy patience. Thou mayest seem to have much patience now, but when death cometh (and thou art put to die) it will put thy patience to a great trial, therefore prepare for it. 5. Death will try the reality of thy duties, yea, even these duties wherein thou hadst most satisfaction, as thy communicating aright in such a place, thou hopest that is sure; thy reading the scripture at such a time aright, thou hopest that is

sure; thou prayedst at such a time aright, and hopest that is sure; thou meditatedst in such a place aright, and hopest that is sure: but (believe me) death may make thee change thy thoughts; for there are some persons who have communicated, and prayed, &c. as right as any in this generation, who (for all that) will not find six duties wherein they can find satisfaction at death; therefore, our need is great to prepare for it.

6. Death will exceedingly try thy sincerity when it cometh: an hypocrite may go all along his whole way undiscovered, yet death may bring him to light, and make it appear what man he is. 7. Death will discover unto thee many hid and secret sins of which thou never hadst a thought before, yea, albeit thou thoughtest these had been forgotten, death will let thee see them standing between thee and the light of his countenance.

8. Death will accurately try thy mortification, some will think they have come a great length in mortification; but (believe me) death will try it, and put it to the touch-stone.

9. Death will try thy hope, whether it be real or not. I shall only say this, that all the other graces must low the sail to faith, and so it is, faith must carry us through, being the last triumphing grace, which must fit the field for us, when all the other graces will faint and ly by. It is faith that must enter us fairly within the borders of eternity; it is faith must gain-stand all the temptations of death, yea, all the other graces must (as it were) stand by, and see faith strike the last stroke in the war.

The Second consideration to press you to mind death, is this, that ye are to die but once, and the wrong doing of which, can never be helped. If ye pray not aright, ye may get that mended, and, if ye meditate not aright, ye may get that mended, and, if ye communicate not aright, ye may get that mended: but alas! if ye die not aright, there is no mending of that; therefore, O prepare for death, that ye may die well, seeing you are to die but once.

The Third consideration to press you to mind death, is this, that they are pronounced blessed who die in the Lord, Rev. xiv. 13. 'Blessed are the dead which die

in the Lord.' O let that provoke you to prepare for death, that so ye may die in the Lord, that is the only way to make you eternally happy, I confess it is a question difficult to determine, whether it be more difficult to die well or to live well? I shall not answer it, but rather desire you to study both.

The fourth consideration to press you to prepare for death, is this, viz. That tho' thou put all thy work by thy hand before death, yet shalt thou find that death shall have work enough for itself, yea, as much as thou shalt get done. It will then be much for thee to win to patience, it will be much for thee to win to the sight of thy justification; and it will then be much more for thee to win to assurance. O! then is it not needful for thee to put all thy work by hand before thy latter end come; Wherefore, I may say to you as Moses said in his song, Dent. xxxii. 29. 'O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!' O that ye had this piece of divine wisdom! I pray you consider that sad word, Lam. i. 9. 'She remembereth not her last end;' and what of it? 'therefore she came down wonderfully.' So will the down-coming of many in this generation be wonderful, who consider not their last end.

The fifth consideration for pressing you to prepare for death, is this, viz. That their labour shall end, but their work shall not be forgotten, as is clear from that forecited place. Rev. xiv. 13. 'They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them:' and is not that a glorious advantage?

The Sixth consideration to press you to prepare for death, is this, viz. That death may come upon you ere ye be aware; ye know not but death may surprize you this night before ye go home to your houses; and therefore let that press you to study a constant preparation for death.

The Seventh consideration to press you to prepare for death, is this, viz. 'That as death leaveth you, so will judgement find you;' If death shall leave you strangers to Christ, ye shall appear before him strangers to him; therefore, I intreat you all to prepare for it. I think

that noble practice of Paul exceeding worthy of imitation, 1 Cor. xv. 31. 'I die daily.' Which, I think doth comprehend these three things: 1. That Paul had death always in his sight. 2. It comprehendeth this, that he endeavoured to keep such a frame as every moment he should be ready to die; so that whensoever death should put the summons into his hand, he would be content to answer. 3. It comprehendeth this, that he laboureth to lay aside and remove all things out of the way, that might detain him from laying down his tabernacle. Oh! saith Paul, I labour to clear myself of all hinderances, as that whenever I shall be summoned to remove out of time, I may willingly lay down my life. Therefore, I would ask you this question, viz. When shall ye make your last testament? I think it were suitable for us to be renewing our letter-will every day; for, in so doing, Paul made an excellent testament, the better of which none that died since have made, 2 Tim. iv. 7. 8. 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith;' these are very sweet articles; and then he addeth, 'henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.' And think ye not that very sweet, that he would leave something unto you in Christ's name? viz. 'And that not for me only, but for all them that wait for his appearance.' Now I come to the third thing proposed, viz. To give some directions for helping you to prepare for death.

Direction 1. I entreat you be much in preparation for death every day, for it is even a preparation for heaven, to be taking a sight of your grave and latter end every day.

Direction 2. I entreat you be much in those duties: First, In self-examination; that your counts may be clear with God, for many a ragged count shall we have when death and we shall meet. Secondly, Be much in the exercise of repentance, that ye may have every fault and corruption in you mourned for, before death and your meet. Thirdly, Be much in the exercise of faith, 'making your calling and elec-

tion sure.' Fourthly, Be much in the exercise of mortification; and that will help you to keep a loose grip, not only of the world, but also of your idols: and if ye be much in these, ye shall undoubtedly be prepared for death.

Direction 3. Be much in minding the excellent things of heaven. A Christian that would be prepared for death, should have all his thoughts and conversation there. I think it would be an excellent help (in preparation for death) to take a sight of the crown every day.

Direction 4. 'Labour always to keep a good conscience, void of offence towards God and man:' I say, labour to keep thy conscience clear, and that shall be a continual feast unto thee.

Direction 5. Slight not thy known duty, do not crucify any conviction, neither break any resolution, put these three together, and that will exceedingly help you to prepare for death: I say, See that ye adventure not to slight any known duty: See that ye adventure not to crucify any conviction, and see that ye adventure not to break your resolutions.

Now we come to the second thing which we observed from the words, viz. That this truth, that we shall once see death, is not much believed by any of us. And to make this appear, we shall only give some evidences unto you, to prove that we are not as yet prepared for death.

1. Evidence. Doth not the unspeakable stupidity that hath overtaken many, say, That we are not a people prepared for death? Alas! many of us would find ourselves in a most stupid temper, if we were presently to die; for many of us are no more moved with the threatenings and terrors of God, than if they did not belong unto us; and this saith, we are not as yet prepared for death.

2. Evidence. That we are not prepared for death, is our pursuing so much after the vain and passing delights of a present world. Many of us rise up early, and go late to bed at night, and eat the bread of sorrow all the day, and load ourselves with the thick clay;

and I am sure that such a person (being night and day taken up with the world) is not prepared for death. I remember a word recorded of such a wretched one, who was exceedingly rich, said he, "I would give so many thousands of money, if death would give me but ~~the~~ ^{an} ~~hour~~ ^{hour} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~joy~~ ^{joy};" yet he got it not. And, O how suddenly will death surprize many of us, as it did him.

3. Evidence. Which speaketh forth our unpreparedness for death, is our impatience under every petty cross that we meet with; for the prepared Christian will be patient under very sharp crosses.

4. Evidence. That we are not prepared, is our not endeavouring to live within sight of our interest in God. Oh! if we were prepared for death, durst we live in so much uncertainty of our interest in God, and of our assurance of heaven.

5. Evidence. Some of us can let our idols ly in our breasts six years without repentance, and will never study to mortify them, nor to repent for them; and surely such are not prepared for death.

Now I intreat you seriously to mind what hath been said, and that you may the more seriously think upon it, I will tell you some material challenges that your conscience at death will present unto you, therefore take heed, that you may know how ye will answer.

1. Challenge, Is the slighting of much precious time, and sinning away the precious offers of grace. Oh! what will ye answer to that challenge when death shall present it unto you? Death will say (or rather thine own conscience at death) what ailed thee to sin so many hours without either praying, reading, or meditating? Now, have ye any thing to answer when death shall present this challenge to you? I intreat you premeditate what you will say: I intreat you prevent death, by presenting it first seriously to yourselves.

2. Challenge, That death will present unto you, will be for the killing of many precious convictions which ye have had. What will each of you answer at death, when your conscience proposeth this challenge unto you? Thou mettest with such a challenge

at such a time, and went home and crucified it: When at another time, thou met with another challenge, and went home and crucified it; these challenges will be laid to thy door, therefore think on them.

3. Challenge, Death will challenge you for a formal hypocritical way of going about duties: I say, your conscience will then tell you, that you went to such a communion with a selfish end: And, at another time, ye prayed hypocritically and formally. And, what will ye have to answer when you meet with these challenges? I confess, I know not what ye can answer to these, but I charge you, be thinking what ye will answer, for it may be that these convictions shall ly on your consciences, that even this day ye have heard two searching sermons, and did meet with some convictions, but made no good use of them; yea, and it may be ye did sleep all the time. Oh! what will ye answer, when it shall be said to you, ye went to such a sermon, and slept all the time? And ye went to such a communion, with no other end before your eyes, but to be seen of men? I intreat you consider presently what you will answer to these.

4. Challenge, Will be for your breaking of many precious resolutions. It will be said to some of you, that at the communion in this place, ye took on vows, and did break them: I am sure ye cannot question the justice of the challenge, therefore see what ye will answer.

5. Challenge, Ye slighted many precious offers of the gospel. O men and women in this city, what will ye answer to this? I was often exhorted to take Christ, and yet would never take him. What will conscience say to that, when death shall table it before you? I tell you what ye must then answer; O cursed I, that ever I refused Christ in the gospel. And ye shall then be confounded because this is your sin; believe me, there was never an offer of this everlasting gospel, and of Christ in it, made unto you, that shall not at death (before or after) be brought to your remembrance. And Oh! how sad

and doleful will it be to you, when Christ shall open the book wherein all your sins are written, and begin with the sin of fighting the great salvation? Thus I invited you, when ye were twelve years old, but you would not come. What will ye answer to this? Have ye any thing to say? Or, must you not stand speechless before your Judge, when he shall put home this challenge unto you? Therefore, think seriously upon it, how you will answer it.

6. Challenge, Will be for your sinning oftentimes against light; and, O! how painful and sad a challenge will that be at the day of death! when it will be laid, thou sinnedst with a witness in thy bosom that thou wast doing wrong! Thy conscience will say, oftentimes did I tell thee, this is sinful, yet wouldst thou not abstain from it; and what will ye answer to this?

7. Challenge, Oftentimes ye sinned upon very small temptations, and what will ye answer to that? must ye not then confess it, and say, O! how often have I deserted Christ, and embraced my idols upon a small temptation! Now I entreat you, be thinking what ye will answer to these seven most material challenges, which certainly shall be presented to you at death. I assure you, ye must either answer all your challenges in Christ, else ye will not get them well answered. Therefore, I would exhort you to embrace the gospel, and Christ in it; and so let death propose never so many challenges unto you, ye may answer them all as David did, viz. 'God hath made with me an everlasting covenant,' (and that will answer all your challenges) 'though my house be not so with God, yet I have the everlasting covenant to build my salvation upon.'

Now to press you to make use of Christ, I shall give you these four considerations

Consideration 1. If ye embrace not Christ now, death will be very unpleasant unto you. O what else can comfort thee, when going through the region of the shadow of death, but this, 'I am Christ's,' 'I am Christ's!' Is there any other thing can com-

fort thee in that day, but only this, 'I am Christ's,' and he is mine!

Consideration 2. If ye embrace not Christ, and the great salvation now, it will be an hundred to one if ever ye get time or liberty to do it, when ye are going to die. For, although many delay their closing with Christ till death, yet scarcely one of a hundred getteth favour to lay hold on Christ at death; therefore, think on it, for ye will not get your mind so composed at death as you imagine, nor all things done as ye suppose: Therefore, now embrace the great salvation?

Consideration 3. If ye delay your closing with Christ till death seize upon you, ye shall never be able to make up that loss: For, will the dead rise and praise God? Or, shall any come from the land of forgetfulness, to take hold upon a crucified Saviour? Therefore, O! will you take him for your salvation!

Consideration 4. If ye will take Christ now, he shall be your guide, 'when you are going through the valley and shadow of Death.' And, O how blessed is the person that can sing that song, Psalm xlviii. 14. 'This is my God, he will be my guide even unto death.' If ye can sing that pleasant song, O how may ye be comforted, when your eye-strings shall begin to break? O how happy is he who can say, 'though I walk through the shadow of death, yet will I fear no ill?' for I know the Lord is with me? Now this is the acceptable day, and the year of salvation; therefore, do not delay, but embrace Christ, lest death surprize you ere you be aware, and so that acceptable day be lost. But unto these who think they may delay till death, I say, Surely there are many damned atheists in hell that (sometimes) did think as ye think; I will make all wrongs right when death and I shall meet: I hope that three days repentance will satisfy for all my wrong. For, I am sure, There are many in hell, who did never get three days to think upon their former ways; therefore, O come, come, and embrace Christ presently. Now, are ye

all persuaded of this truth, that ye shall once see death? Then study a tender walking; for (believe me) here are many of us who shall go through death with many bruised bones, because of untender walking before God. We know it is not the multitude of words can persuade you to embrace Christ, for many of you never minded the thing. But (believe me) death will preach these things to you in a more terrible manner than we can do at this time. Therefore, I say to each of you, 'O prepare to meet thy God;' for, if death find you in an estranged state from God, I defy the angels in heaven to free you out of that state; and the day is coming, wherein thou shalt cry out, O sligher of the great salvation that I am, I would give ten thousand worlds for one sermon again, that I once heard, wherein Christ was freely offered to me: when thou shalt be tormented without hope of remedy: Therefore, 'while it is to day, harden not your hearts,' for your late wishes shall not be granted (when ye are gone) if ye make not haste. O therefore, haste, haste in time, and come out from the land of your captivity, and from the house of your bondage, and take Christ for your Redeemer, the guide of your youth and old age. Now, unto him, who can lead you through all the steps betwixt you and heaven, be eternal praise. Amen.

F I N I S.

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