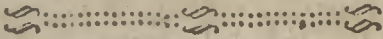


THE  
Great Importance

OF  
A Suitable Preparation for DEATH.



A  
SERMON,

ON  
PSALM lxxxix. 48.

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

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BY THE LATE REVEREND  
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Minister of the Gospel in GLASGOW.

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## A SERMON,

ON

PSALM lxxxix. 48.

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

**I**T is very hard to determine, where all that are here shall be within thirty years; for even ere that time, 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 the shadows of death shall be sitting upon our eye-lids, and our eye-springs shall begin to break. 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 you 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 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 you 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 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 life time 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 between 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 enter 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, ver. 8. "We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." And it is clear, Philip. i. 23. "I am in a strait between 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 ye 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 compari-



son of 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 ~~rose~~ Plant of Reagon, 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 do assault us; and from these oppressions whereunto we are subject by it.— Doubtless Paul desired to die on this account, when he cried out, Rom. xii. 24. "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He longed greatly for that day, whereon he should 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, ye 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. 21. and chap. vi. 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 not lawful to desire to die, when thy predominant idol is taken away from thee: yet such was Jonah's desire, chap. 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 shouldst 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 had 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 children's 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. Isa. 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 shouldst 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 controverly, Hezekiah's desire was a most precious and well grounded desire. However, I would say this unto thee, that thou shouldest examine thy desires to live (as much, if not more) as thy desire 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 band* (that is, from the power) *of the grave?*

III. That sometimes a Christian may win the solid faith of this truth, that once he must die; this the Psalmist wau 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, *Selab*, 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 once die, I hope there are none 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." — 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, on the day wherein their Emperor was crowned, that they presented a marble-stone unto him, and he was required 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 surprize us before we be awate; 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 surprize some, as it did Abel in the open fields, Genesis iv. 8. Death will surprize some, as it did Eglon in his parlour, Judges iii. 21. And, death will surprize 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 the 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 the 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 verse 12. Peter is ex-  
 ceeding diligent in his duty; and the ground  
 of his diligence is in verse 14. “ Knowing,  
 “ that shortly I must put off this taber-  
 “ nacle,” &c. Yet it is even the Epicure’s  
 argument, “ Let us eat and drink, for to-  
 “ morrow we may die.” And, should not  
 the Christian much more cry out, Let me  
 watch and pray, for to-morrow I may die?  
 I say, if the Epicures did make use of this  
 notion, to make them vigorous in the pur-  
 suit of their pleasures, O how much more  
 should a Christian improve it, for making  
 him vigorous in the pursuit of duty?—  
 Therefore I say unto you all, O be ye dili-  
 gent, 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 up to the end of  
 your race, there is no retiring place where-  
 unto 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 notable exhortation in 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 pursue the world so much as ye do. Paul was much in the meditation of this 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, Chap. 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,  
Paul, (might one have said) may ye not take  
a-look of the world? No, saith he, “ For  
“ I know, that if our 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 taber-  
nacle 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, ver. 32. “ I would have  
“ you without carefulness, caring how to  
“ please the Lord.” And, Philipians iv. 5.  
“ Let your moderation be known unto all  
“ men. The Lord is at hand.” As if he  
had said, 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 among 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

curst 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 curst person that I am, that ever I made the world my god? Alas! that I contented myself 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 the 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 Sirs, mistake me not; I am boasting much of myself, but 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 practice of each of you, to say, O temptation, what will I answer to God, when he rises up to reprove me, if I should yield unto thee?" Likewise, Eccles. xi. 9. where Solomon, dissuading young men to pursue after their vanity, brings this as



a reason, " Know ye, that for all these things God will bring you into judgment." 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 intreat you to answer all your temptations with that one 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 xxx. v. 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 sight 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 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 un-awares; for indeed the persons that die among us, when we come to visit them, we may give you a sad account of them. 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 you cannot repent for your senselessnes, and stupid frame of spirit.

2. A second sort we find in a presumptuous frame, saying, They have had a good hope all their days, and they will not quit it now; they will go down to their graves 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? O! 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 to 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 of 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 judgment-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 make you once 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.

II. 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; but, 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, than so 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 gréatest 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 to love 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 thy 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 had 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 those duties wherein thou hadst most satisfaction, as praying, reading, &c.

6. Death will try thy sincerity, and make it appear what you really are.

7. Death will discover unto thee, many hid and secret sins, which you knew not.

8. Death will accurately try thy mortification, 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.

Now, to perss you to make use of Christ, consider, 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 that can comfort the in that day, but only this, I am Christ's, and he is mine! And, O how blessed is the person that can sing that song, in view of death and the grave, Psal. xlviii. 14 “ This “ is my God, he will be my guide even “ unto death.” O how happy is he that can say, when his eye-strings shall begin to break, “ Though I walk through the shadow “ of death, yet will I fear no ill; for I know “ the Lord is wlt h me?” If death find you in an estranged state from God, I defy the angels in heaven to free you out of that state. Therefore, I say unto each of you, “ O prepare to meet thy God!” Haste, haste in time, and come out of the land of your captivity, and from the house of your bondage, and take Christ for your Redeemer. Amen.

**F I N I S.**