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concerning the state of the righteous after death.

I. Our text intimates to us, that some persons of the Church of *Thessalonica* were lately dead.

Whether these were such as had been eminently useful and serviceable in the church, or whether they were persons indear'd to them by the ties of natural relation, is not mention'd by the apostle; however, this, I think, is certain, that some among them were dead, and that their death was so much lamented by the survivors, that the apostle thought it necessary to give them this advice, to moderate, and assuage their grief.

Now the agreeableness of this advice to the *Thessalonians*, in those melancholly circumstances, will appear with greater evidence, if we reflect a little upon the uncertainty of humane life, and that state of mortality, to which all mankind are equally subject.

We must all, one time or other, undergo the same change, which others have done before us. Experience shews, that as in every age and every country, some are continually coming into this world, so others are dying, and departing out of it. *By sin death enter'd into the world, and gain'd an universal empire over all mankind, so that none can flee from him, or escape his darts. 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, Eccles. viii. 8.* Some perhaps may not meet with the same worldly disappointments as others do, some may have more friends than others, and may be favour'd
with

with a greater share of this world's good, than many of their neighbours; but all these advantages cannot prevent their dying: *For what man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? Who shall deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?* Surely none! since all our names shall shortly be enter'd into the registers of the dead, and *the eye which here saw us, shall see us no more, neither shall our place any more behold us,* Psal. lxxxix. 48. Job xx. 9. The young as well as the aged, the strong and healthful, as well as the weak and sickly, the most learned and judicious, as well as the most illiterate and ignorant, the most pious and godly, together with the most prophane and impious, must fall by the stroke of this universal Conquerer. Indeed the young and healthful usually promise to themselves a large share of life, and imagine that they have a much longer time to continue in this world, than the old and decrepit; but alas, we are daily convinc'd, that these are equally liable to be surpriz'd by Death as others, and frequently go down to the grave before them. When the king of terrors comes, he makes no distinction of age, sex, or condition: he regards not whether a person be young or old, male or female, rich or poor, strong or weak, prepar'd or unprepar'd; *They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them,* Job xxi. 26. One would think that if any thing could preserve us from death, it should be piety and religion; but the frequent instances of mortality show us, that even this will not be effectual, for the righteous die as well as the wicked. There is indeed a vast
 difference

difference in the state of the righteous, and the wicked, after death ; and often in the manner of their death too : one dies in peace, the other in most horrid confusion ; one is blessed even in his death, knowing that to him it is an entrance into life eternal, the other dreads to depart, being fill'd with most direful apprehensions of the wrath of an angry and incensed Deity : one can rejoice in God knowing him to be his reconciled friend, and therefore longs to be dissolved, that he may be with him ; the other can look upon God only as an omnipotent adversary, and therefore trembles at the thoughts of appearing before him. So that *Balaam* might well wish to *die the death of the righteous*, and that his *last end* might *be like his*, Numb. xxiii. 10. However, the common law of mortality takes place both in the righteous and wicked.

Our blessed Saviour hath indeed promised to bestow upon all those who believe in him, and obey him, life eternal ; but he hath no where told them, they shall be exempted from a natural death. He hath *ransom'd them from the power of the grave*, but hath not said, they shall not go down thither. Our text speaks concerning such who *slept in Jesus*. Those persons, though good and holy, righteous and godly, yet died as well as others. The grave therefore is most fitly stiled *the house appointed for all living*, Job xxx. 23. That is the place to which every one of us is hastening. We are all going to our long home, and whatsoever distinction there may now be between our persons, and circumstances, death will set us
all

all upon a level. In the grave we shall all meet together, *The small and great are there*, and there *the servant is free from his master*, Job iii. 19. Seeing therefore it is *appointed unto all men once to die*, he only is the truly wise person, who seriously considers his latter end, and makes due preparation for it. But,

II. The text intimates not only, that some persons of the church of *Thessalonica* were lately dead, but also that their surviving friends and relations were exceedingly grieved and troubled for the loss of them.

Here we may observe two things.

1. That the apostle doth not absolutely condemn their sorrowing for the dead.

2. That there ought, however, to be a wide difference between the sorrow, proper to be express'd by a christian, and what was usual among the heathens, who were strangers to christianity, and the hopes of future happiness.

1. The apostle doth not absolutely condemn their sorrowing for the dead. He only cautions them not to sorrow *even as others which have no hope*. Some expressions of grief and concern for our departed friends, is a debt which nature seems to require of us, and I am far from thinking that the christian religion dissolves the obligation. I might mention several examples of this in the holy records; examples, not of weak and effeminate, but of most noble and heroic minds; such as *David*, whom we find not only passionately

nately lamenting the *death* of his son *Abſalom*; but when in a more compoſed frame, ſedately weeping over *Jonathan* and *Abner*, 2 *Sam.* i. 26. *chap.* iii. 33, &c. The prophet *Jeremiah* lamented, and taught others to lament, the death of that great and moſt excellent prince *Joſiah*, 2 *Chron.* xxxv. 25. And when the patriarch *Jacob* died, his friends mourn'd with a *great and ſore lamentation*, Gen. l. 10. Our bleſſed Saviour, who never had any irregular, or diſorderly paſſion, when *Lazarus* was dead, wept over his grave. *Jeſus wept*, John xi. 35. And when the protomartyr *Stephen* died, *devout men carried him to his burial, and made a great lamentation over him*, Acts viii. 2. And it is ſpoken of as a curſe upon *Jehoiakim*, the ſon of *Joſiah* king of *Judah*, that he ſhould die without lamentation.

I ſhall here mention two or three reaſons, why we ought to be ſorrowful at ſuch times.

(1.) Becauſe this brings to our minds the dreadful effects, and woeful conſequences of ſin. For ſin hath deſtroyc'd the whole world. Thus the apoſtle *Paul* declares, that *by one man ſin entred into the world, and death by ſin*, Rom. v. 12. And for ought we know, our own particular ſins, and the ſmall improvement we have made by the ſociety and converſation, by the good advice and pious admonitions of our friends, may be one cauſe of God's removing them from us. He ſeems to take them away, as if *the world was not worthy of them*.

(2.) We have cauſe to mourn for the death of our godly friends, becauſe of the great loſs we

ourselves sustain thereby. Nay, farther, the removal of the righteous by death, especially such who have been serviceable in a public capacity, is a loss to mankind in general. It would therefore argue stupidity, not to be touch'd with a sense of it. What a wonderful blessing was *Noah*, that excellent *preacher of righteousness*, to the old world, had they but had the wisdom to improve it? What a great blessing was *Lot* to wicked *Sodom*, when God himself told him, he could not do *any thing* against the city, whilst he remained among them? Our blessed Saviour calls his disciples *the salt of the earth*, and *the light of the world*, intimating hereby, that the instructions and examples of pious and godly persons are like salt, to preserve those they converse with. But,

(3.) We have still greater cause to mourn upon such occasions, because the death of the righteous is sometimes a sad omen to the survivors, and a presage of some dreadful judgment that is coming upon the earth. Good men seem to be removed hence, that they may not be condemn'd with the world. *The righteous* (saith the prophet *Isaiab*) *perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come*, Isa. lvii. 1. As if the death of the godly was a symptom of some remarkable evil about to fall on those who survive. We ought therefore at such a time to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and to cry out with the Psalmist, *Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men.*

For

For these reasons we have great cause to mourn at the departure of those, who sleep in Jesus. And this is so far from being forbidden, that it seems rather to be supposed in the text ; for the apostle doth not say, that we ought not to sorrow at all, but that we ought not to sorrow *as others, which have no hope.*

I proceed now to observe,

2. That there ought to be a wide difference between the sorrow proper to be express'd by a christian, and what was usual among the heathen ; who were strangers to christianity, and the hopes of future happiness.

By those *which have no hope*, 'tis evident we are to understand the heathen, the generality of whom had little or no expectation of a life after this. The wiser of them, indeed, seem to have entertain'd some faint hopes of the immortality of the soul ; but they were all in general so far from believing the resurrection of the body, that they exploded and ridiculed the supposition. *Celsus*, in particular, saith, 'tis *impossible*, and calls the hope of it *σκωλήκων ἢ ἐλπίς*, a *hope* fitter to be entertained *by worms*, than men. Accordingly, we find St. *Paul* describing the heathen as persons who had *no hope*, Eph. ii. 12. They are there stiled, *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope.* And as they were without hope, their sorrow for the dead was usually express'd in a very foolish, and extravagant manner. Some of them would not only tear their hair, but their face ; cut themselves, beat their breasts, and run howling up and down in a

most frantic manner : others would even jump into the funeral pile, that they might be burnt alive with their departed relation or friend*.

But christians must mourn after another sort. They must mourn as such who are duely sensible of God's hand, and know 'tis their duty to submit to their heavenly Father in all things. They should endeavour to bring themselves to the same composed frame with that of the Psalmist, saying, *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth ; because thou didst it*, Psal. xxxix. 9. They should behave as such, who have not only deserved this, but heavier strokes also to fall upon them ; as such, who know that God is infinitely wise and good,

* That such wild expressions of grief were usual among the eastern nations in the time of *Moses*, is evident from the command given to the *Israelites*, not to disfigure themselves upon those occasions, *Deut. xiv. 1. Ye are the children of the Lord your God, ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.* And *Lev. xix. 28.* they are expressly forbidden to make any incisions in their flesh for the dead : *Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you : I am the Lord.* The tearing of the cheeks, together with the mournful yellings, usual at funerals, were forbidden in the *Laws of the twelve tables.* The words are these : *Mulieres genas ne radunto : neve lessum funeris ergo habento.* Which law *Cicero* thus interprets : *Hoc veteres interpretes, Sex. Ælius, L. Acilius non satis se intelligere dixerunt ; sed suspicari vestimenti aliquod genus funebris : L. Ælius, lessum, quasi lugubrem ejulationem, ut vox ipsa significat. Quod eo magis judico verum esse, quia lex Solonis id ipsum vetat. L. II. de legib. n. 59.* And that the custom of tearing their cheeks prevailed among the *Greeks*, is further confirm'd by the testimony of *Artemidorus, cap. 30. lib. I.* *Καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς πένθεσι λωβῶνται τὰς παρεῖδας οἱ ἄνθρωποι.* And as to throwing themselves into the funeral pile, that is plainly alluded to by *Terence* in his *Andria, Act. I. scen. I.*

in the government of the world, that he orders and disposes all things for the best; and that they ought therefore to submit all their concerns to his disposal. These things rightly considered, will moderate our grief, and keep it within proper bounds; especially if we add the consideration of the state of the soul departed, and the glorious resurrection of the body; but of these I shall speak presently.

I proceed now to the third and last thing intimated in the text.

III. The apostle here intimates that the excessive sorrow of the *Thessalonian* christians upon the account of their departed friends, was in a great measure owing to their ignorance concerning the happy and blessed state of those, *who sleep in Jesus.*

Therefore he saith, *I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope, q. d.* “ This your extravagant and im-
“ moderate grief for your departed friends, is ow-
“ ing to your ignorance or *want of considerati-*
“ *on*; did you but consider what a blessed state
“ and condition they are in, who are fallen *asleep*
“ *in Jesus*; this would mitigate your sorrow, and
“ allay your grief.

My business therefore under this head, shall be to shew, what we know from divine revelation concerning them which sleep in Jesus.

1. The Scriptures assure us, that they are perfectly freed from all those troubles and afflictions,

to which they were exposed in this mortal state. They are delivered from all those evils, which unavoidably attend this imperfect life. Hence the spirit of God pronounces those *blessed, who die in the Lord*, Rev. xiv. 13. because *they rest from their labours*. This is mentioned as one part of their felicity, and it is so necessary a part, that without it there could be no happiness. Innumerable are the cares and fears, the troubles and sorrows, to which the good man is exposed while in this world ; arising sometimes from the weakness and frailty of his body ; such as frequent pains and aches, sicknesses and diseases, which quite spoil his other enjoyments, rendring them tasteless and insipid : at other times from his mean circumstances in the world ; for he is liable to losses and disappointments, to penury and want, as well as others. He frequently knows not which way to turn himself, or what method he shall take to gain a necessary supply for himself and family. Sometimes he is weeping and lamenting over wicked and ungodly relations, who are taking evil courses, and running in the broad way, that leads to everlasting perdition ; and at other times he is greatly troubled, upon account of their sudden and unexpected removal. These things make him even long and *desire* (if God see fit) *to be dissolved* ; and cause him to cry out in the language of the holy Psalmist ; *Oh that I had wings like a dove : for then would I flee away : and be at rest*, Psal. lv. 6.

Again, the good man meets with no small uneasiness from those temptations to which he is here exposed. He is not only violently assaulted from

from within ; but likewise vigorously attacked from without. He hath not only fleshly lusts, to grapple with, which war against his soul, but must also maintain a conflict *against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickednesses in high places.* So that he hath need to be ever upon his guard ; to be always vigilant and watchful ; and to be sending up prayers and supplications to heaven for help and assistance ; lest he be vanquish'd and subdued by his spiritual enemies.

But farther, good men are in this life not only liable to manifold temptations ; but too often, to their own great grief and sorrow, actually comply with them. The remainders of sin hang about the best of men, obstructing them in their journey to the celestial *Canaan* ; and this creates great trouble in their minds. Sincere christians are indeed, by *St. Paul*, said to be *made free from sin*, Rom. vi. 22. but we are not thereby to understand, that they never actually transgress ; for who is he that liveth and sinneth not ? But as the apostle explains himself, *Chap. viii. 2.* they are made free from the *law*, or the dominion, of *sin*.

An absolute freedom from sin is not to be attained by us in this life ; but on the contrary, the best of christians are guilty of many slips and failures, which make them to cry out in the words of the same apostle, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?* But when once the christian dies, an eternal period shall be put to all his troubles : *God shall wipe*

wipe away all tears from his eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, Rev. xxi. 4.

These things shall all pass away and the voice of mourning shall be heard no more. No longer shall he have temptations to struggle with. He shall meet with nothing that can disturb his peace, or endanger his happiness, but shall gain a complete victory over sin, and be established in an unchangeable state of holiness. Oh happy and desirable day ! When all our sorrows shall have an end, and we shall enter into everlasting rest ! However, it is our duty, to wait with patience, the days of our appointed time, till our change come. But,

2. The Scriptures teach us, that the souls of those who die in the faith, are upon their departure hence, admitted into the presence of Christ. Some persons from the words of the text, and other passages, wherein death is resembled to sleep, have imagined, that the soul remains in a state of insensibility, from the time of death, till the general resurrection. I shall not have leisure at present, to enter far upon this argument ; I would however observe, that in most of the places of Scripture, where this metaphor of sleep is used, there can be no room to doubt, but it must be referred to the body, and I am apt to think, that no instance can be produced, where it can fairly be applied to the soul.

However, I shall just mention two or three passages, which appear to me to teach the direct contrary : thus *Phil. i. 21, &c. For me to live*
(saith

(saith the apostle) *is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose, I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.* Now, can we reasonably suppose that the good apostle St. Paul (than whom none was more zealous, none more concern'd for the glory of God, and the propagation of the Gospel) would prefer a state of insensibility, to a life which so mightily tended to his master's glory? Could he be at a loss which to choose; a life most useful and beneficial to mankind, most serviceable to the interests of his redeemer, and accompanied with present delight and satisfaction in the discharge of his duty; or a life of insensible rest and inactivity?

Again, the same apostle, *Cor. v. 6.* is very express; *We are always confident, knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, i. e. whilst we are in the body, and live in this world, we are detain'd from our happiness; therefore he adds, verse 8. We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

And again, our Saviour assures the penitent thief, that he should be immediately admitted into paradise, *Luke xxiii. 43. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* These passages seem so evident that I need no more than mention them. Now

this is another very good reason, why we should moderate our grief for our godly friends departed, that their death, though it be our great loss, is their inestimable gain. But I proceed

3. The holy Scriptures assure us, that those who *sleep in Jesus* shall awake, and have a glorious and happy resurrection at the last day. This is the reason assigned by the apostle in the words following our text, why the *Thessalonian* christians ought not to mourn for their godly friends departed, as such who were without hope. *For if we believe* (saith he) *that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.* I think, I cannot better give the meaning of these words, than in the following paraphrase: “ If this be a certain truth, “ that Jesus died, and rose again, as you profess “ to believe ; then is it also certain, that christi- “ ans, which are all members of his body, shall “ rise likewise ”. So that the design of the apostle in these words, is to prove from the resurrection of Christ, that the dead shall rise. The same argument he makes use of, 1 Cor. xv. 20. where he assures us, *that Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept*, alluding to the *first fruits* among the *Jews*, which were a pledge and token of a future harvest. And this is a sufficient evidence of the certainty of our resurrection ; that Christ, who promised to raise us from the dead, did really die, and is risen himself.

The bodies of the saints, therefore, are not laid in the grave to be lost for ever ; but shall most assuredly

assuredly awake in the morning of the resurrection. Then shall they arise to a state of everlasting bliss and felicity. And perhaps it might be for this reason, that the apostle speaking of those who were departed this life, doth not say ; *I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are dead ; but concerning them which are asleep.* However, these bodies shall be greatly changed, and render'd beautiful and glorious ; for, as it is written, *He, i. e. Christ, shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself,* Phil. iii. 21. These bodies, which were sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption, which were sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory ; which were sown in weakness, shall be raised in power. They are here liable to be worn out by labour, to decay by age, and to waste by various diseases : but they shall be raised active and vigorous, no longer subject to their former infirmities, never to suffer grief, sickness, pain, or weariness any more. The body, thus redeemed from mortality, and all the inconveniences of this present state, shall receive the joyful spirit ; which being reunited shall never be separated again. Then shall the righteous, with the highest pleasure, appear before the judge, who will most plenteously reward their sincere, though very imperfect services ; and publickly commend and applaud their fidelity, saying, *Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord.* Then shall the sincere christian find that

his labour hath not been in vain in the Lord; that God is not unrighteous, to forget his work and labour of love; that so small a favour, as a cup of cold water onely, given to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not pass his notice; and that he will not let even the least service go unrewarded: for then shall the king say to each of his faithful servants, *Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, admiring at his great goodness, that he should so kindly receive their imperfect services, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the king shall answer, and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me,* Matt. xxv. 34, &c.

Having thus gone through the several things I proposed to discourse on from the text, I shall now close all with a few reflections on what has been said.

1. Let us seriously consider, that this happy state, of which I have been speaking, is peculiar to the righteous. None but these do at their departure hence enter into the presence of
Christ

Christ ; none but these shall arise at the last day to a glorious and happy immortality. The wicked indeed shall rise again, as well as the righteous, but it shall be *to shame and everlasting contempt.* How deplorable then must be the case of such, who, though they live under the Gospel dispensation, which affords all the light and assistance that is proper to direct and dispose them for a happy eternity, yet when they come to die, can have no just expectation of future happiness, nor can their friends and relations have any comfortable hope concerning them ! For such unhappy persons, we have great cause to mourn. There is somewhat to dry up our tears for those who *sleep in Jesus*, but how should we lament for those who at once drop into the grave and everlasting misery ? For those, who under the dispensation of the Gospel (wherein are contain'd the most powerful motives to a holy life, and wherein likewise the wrath of God is most clearly revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men) have lived without God and without Christ in the world ? For those, whose whole life hath been, as it were, one continued act of rebellion against their maker, who have despised his authority, transgressed his righteous laws, and violated his holy precepts ? Whose whole business it has been to gratify and indulge their sensual appetites, who have entirely thrown off their allegiance to their supreme king and governour, and would not that he should reign over them ? Who have disdainfully rejected all overtures of mercy, all offers of peace and reconciliation, and have said unto the Almighty, *Depart from*

from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways ?

What can be more afflictive to a good man than such a deplorable object ? How must it grieve his righteous soul, to behold one of these miserable wretches for whom he hath any, even the least affection, expiring ? Good God ! how terrible must it be to behold a poor sinner, concerning whom we can have no hope, in the agonies of death, and upon the borders of eternal destruction ? And as the godly friends and relatives of such a person can have no good hope concerning him, what deep concern must impress their minds, to think that he must shortly appear before that just and holy God, who will by no means acquit the guilty, or suffer the sinner to pass unpunish'd ? Such a one may be justly said, in the language of the wise man, to be *driven away*, while *the righteous hath hope in his death*, Prov. xiv. 32. He generally dies full of peace and comfort ; when the righteous walks through the dark and gloomy vale, He fears no ill, because God is with him.

2. If the state of those who sleep in Jesus, be such as I have represented, this should encourage the christian to go on in the practice of holiness ; to be pressing *toward the mark* for the obtaining *the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*. If we have our fruit unto holiness, the end will be life everlasting. *Therefore, my beloved brethern, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know, that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*. Have a steady respect, christians, to the recompence of reward, that so you may be pre-
served

served faithful unto death ; then shall you receive the crown of life.

3. The representation which hath been given of the state of the righteous after death, may serve to comfort and support the christian under all the evils and sufferings of this present life. The Scriptures assure us, that *the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*, Rom. viii. 18. And *verse 28. that all things shall work together for good, to them that love God.* The good man therefore has reason to be comforted, even in the most distressed circumstances. My afflictions, may he say, are great and many ; however, I know they are working for me *an eternal, and exceeding weight of glory.* The path I walk in is rugged, and uneasy, but it is the way to my crown. Besides, my afflictions will not last always. I have but a few days of trouble more to pass over, and these things shall all be at an end ; a few more difficulties to struggle with, then shall I enter into the joy of my Lord.

4. What has been said should reconcile the christian to the thoughts of death. There are, I believe, some good persons ; who *through fear of death are all their life time subject to bondage.* They can scarce take any comfort during life, because they are so much terrified about dying. But if, when the christian dies, he is perfectly freed from all the evils which attended him in this life ; if at his departure hence, he enters into a happy state, why should the thoughts of death affright him? Has he not reason rather to *desire to depart*, that
he

he may *be with Christ?* And to *be absent from the body*, that he may *be present with the Lord?* Is rest ungrateful after hard toil, and labour? Nay, is it not what the weary man earnestly desires? Why then should we represent death with terror to our own minds?

5. And *lastly*, the consideration of the happy condition of those who are *fallen asleep in Jesus*, affords us the most solid comfort, and support, under the loss of our pious and godly friends. We have indeed abundant cause to deplore the loss we suffer, in the death of that reverend person, whose decease occasion'd this discourse. Yet let us not mourn as those who have *no hope*, because we have good reason to believe, that he is *asleep in Jesus*, that he is entered into everlasting rest, and that our loss is his inconceivable gain.

It will now, I presume, be expected that I should draw his character. To do this with justice to the deceased, is, I am very sensible, a task far superiour to my abilities. However, as *the righteous* ought to be had *in remembrance*, I should be inexcusable to pass him over in silence. Therefore, for the sake of those who were less conversant with him, I shall mention a few things, which I hope may be useful in exciting them to the imitation of his virtues: as for those who had the happiness of his acquaintance, they can form a much better idea of him in their own minds, than from any thing I am capable of saying.

He was blest'd with extraordinary natural abilities; a hail, strong constitution, a smooth, ready wit, a bright, and lively fancy, a piercing thought, a quick invention, a strong memory, and a good and solid judgment.

These excellent qualifications were very much heighten'd and improv'd, by the advantages he receiv'd from an ingenuous and liberal education; in which he made so great a progress, as render'd him truly valuable to all persons of real worth and learning, who were so happy as to have any knowledge of, or acquaintance with him.

In the Year 1698, which was but the 19th year of his age, he was honoured by the University of *Leiden* with the Degree of *Doctor of Philosophy*, which, though he was then so young, I have been assured by a Professor of that University, was never conferred upon one who better deserv'd it.

He was scarce enter'd upon his 27th year, when he had finish'd his learned *Reflections on Mr. Wall's History of infant baptism*; an history so wellreceiv'd by men of character for learning, that it gain'd the author the thanks of the lower House of Convocation. How considerable *Dr. Gale's* answer to that performance was esteem'd, even by those who were not of his sentiments, appears from hence; that *Mr. Wall's Reply*, after several years, procur'd him the honour of a degree of *Dr. of Divinity* from the University of *Oxford*: not to mention the character given it by several persons of eminent learning, particularly *Dr. Whitby* *. But what

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Dr.

* The Dr. speaking of the practise of infant baptism in the most pure ages of the church, hath the following words: *con-*
frater

Dr. *Gale's* thoughts were of that *Reply*, the world would have known from himself, had it pleas'd God to have prolong'd his life; for he was preparing an answer to it a little before his death.

But what render'd him most valuable, was, that his mind was well stored with heavenly gifts and graces; so that as a *scribe well instructed* in the law, he brought forth *of his treasures things new and old*. Furnish'd to every good work, he was prevail'd on to engage in the ministry; in the discharge of which office he studied to shew himself approved to God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, and giving to all a portion in due season. In his preaching, tho' he highly deserv'd the praise and commendation of his hearers, yet what he sought was their profit and advantage. It was pleasing and agreeable to a polite and ingenious audience, which usually attended him, and at the same time plain and easy to persons of a meaner capacity: so that in his discourses there was instruction for the ignorant, and entertainment for the most learned and judicious. His deportment in the pulpit was easy, yet attended with a seriousness and gravity becoming the solemnity of the work, in which he was engaged. His method was exact, his stile elegant, but unaffected, his reasoning clear and strong, and his arguments just and nervous, which by his happy managing them, constantly discover'd fresh beauties to his hearers. His voice was clear and

stanter obtinuisse, rem certe dubiam & incertam esse, ex Johannis Gale Literis ad invidiam doctis constat. Dissert. de S. Script. Interpretatione. Præfat. §. 5.

melodious, which at once charm'd the ear, rais'd and fired the imagination, and could not easily fail to gain the affections, and engage a reasonable mind not wholly sunk in sin, and bound down with vicious habits, to receive the truth *in love*. He did not shun *to declare*, as far as he could, the whole *counsel of God*; nor was he afraid to oppose those sentiments he apprehended to be erroneous: tho' the zeal he sometimes used upon those occasions, might perhaps induce some, unreasonably fond of their own opinions, to treat his labours with disrespect. However, it is apparent from the whole of his conduct, that the earnestness he has at any time shown in contending for what he esteem'd the truth, did not arise from the disaffection of his mind to the person of any man; but from the love he bore to souls, from his great desire to reclaim those whom he thought mistaken, and prevent, to the utmost of his power, others from running into the like sentiments. He strictly adher'd to the Scriptures as the perfect and only rule of his faith and practice: and was a zealous asserter and patron of universal liberty, where it tended not to licentiousness; a warm opposer of all humane impositions in matters of religion; and used earnestly to press all christians to stand fast in that liberty, wherewith Christ had made them free.

He entertain'd a sincere and hearty respect for all good men, and paid a great regard to his master's new commandment to his disciples *to love one another*. The different apprehensions between him and other christians, did not in the least alienate his affections from them. He truly loved all

who bore the image of the blessed Jesus. He valued all his fellow travellers, though they did not walk just in his path.

He had an even and composed temper, which discover'd itself in the constant serenity of his countenance. The different turns of his affairs seem'd to make little or no impression upon his mind; for he with the great apostle *St. Paul*, had *learned in whatever state he was, therewith to be content*. He knew *both how to be abased, and how to abound: every where, and in all things* was he instructed, *both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need*.

He was truly pious, but without any thing of ostentation, exercising himself *herein to have a conscience void of offence, toward God, and toward man*. He adorn'd the profession he made of the christian doctrine, by a holy and exemplary life; which was a convincing proof, that he firmly believ'd religion to be of the greatest importance, and that he was in earnest when he endeavour'd to persuade others *to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*.

He was a person of great integrity; and prefer'd the peace of his own mind, in the answer of a good conscience, to all other considerations. His thoughts were so fully employ'd about affairs of the highest consequence, that he neglected several opportunities of advancing his temporal interests. He was so intent upon his great Master's business, that he had little time left to lay out on these affairs; and was so warmly engag'd in the
pursuit

pursuit of the durable riches of the eternal world, that these fading treasures past his notice.

He was a kind friend ; and made it his business to instruct, and inform, to advise, and on proper occasions to reprove those, with whom he conversed ; which most difficult office of friendship he so well managed, that none could be offended with him. And being always delighted in doing good, he was ever as ready to perform any friendly office, even for the meanest disciple of Christ Jesus, as for those whose circumstances being more exalted, are from thence generally deem'd to have a more commanding influence.

He abounded greatly in those fruits of the spirit, mentioned by the apostle, Gal. v. 22, 23. *Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance.* But that virtue, wherein he peculiarly excelled, was his great humility. Notwithstanding his valuable and uncommon abilities, both natural and acquired, he always appeared humble and modest, mild and courteous, and was so far from having a vain and proud conceit of his own endowments, that he knew how (without the affected vanity of lessening his own qualifications) to *esteem others better than himself.*

He bore his last sickness with great patience and resignation to the will of God. When a little before his dissolution, his mournful consort with weeping eyes, and wringing hands, expected the dreadful separation, *Trust in the allsufficient one,* says the good man, *who can, if he thinks fit, raise me up.* He seem'd to depart with the
greatest

greatest composure and serenity of mind, making good that observation of the *Psalmist*, that *the end of the perfect and upright man is peace*. And indeed what should discompose him? For he well knew *in whom* he had *believed*. He knew that if *this earthly house* of his *tabernacle* were *dissolved*, he should have a *building of God*, a *house not made with hands*, *eternal in the heavens*. He knew that while he was *at home in the body* he was *absent from the Lord*; that for him *to die* would be *his gain*; and that it was far better *to depart*, that he might be *with Christ*.

Thus have I given you an imperfect character of that eminent servant of God, *whose praise in the Gospel is throughout the churches*. And how happy would it be, if all those who call themselves christians, would be followers of him, as he also was of Christ Jesus! Who of us all is not ready to cry out with *Balaam*: *O that I might die of the death the righteous, and that my last end may be like his*? If then we would attain the same happy end, if we would receive the same reward with those who are gone before us, to *inherit the promises*; we must be *followers of them in their faith, and patience*, and other christian graces. Holiness is absolutely necessary to happiness. God himself has expressly declared, that *without this no man shall see him*; and that if we *sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption*. Let those therefore, who have never yet seriously thought on their ways, now turn their feet unto God's testimonies. It highly concerns you to
be

be speedy in an affair of so great importance, to make *hast*, and delay not to keep God's commandments. The time of your continuance in this world is very uncertain ; *to day*, therefore, *while it is called to day*, *harden not your hearts*. *Behold, now is the accepted time ; Behold, now is the day of salvation*. Consider, that as you go out of this world, such will be your condition forever. Death will fix and determine your everlasting state. Indeed, was it possible after death to return back into this world, and amend the errors of your lives, there would be some excuse for delay ; but, alas ! when you are once gone hence, you are past recovery. This is the time of trial and probation, but hereafter there will be *no space* allowed you for *repentance* ; therefore, *whatsoever your hand findeth to doe, doe it with all your might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither you are hastening*. Let each of us then duly consider, that *our life is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away* ; that when it shall please God, in his wise providence, to call us out of this world, we may fall *asleep in Jesus*, and an abundant entrance may be administered to us into his everlasting kingdom and glory.

F I N I S.

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