

Monergism



PRACTICAL DISCOURSES ON SICKNESS AND RECOVERY

In several sermons on Psalm 30;3-4
as they were lately preached in
a congregation in London

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London.

BY TIMOTHY ROGERS, M. A.

After his Recovery from a Sickness of near two years continuance.

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To the Right Worshipful;

Sr. William Ashurst, and Sr. Thomas Lane, knights, and aldermen of the city of London.

Most Honored,

After I had once resolved to let the following Discourses see the Light, in hope that they might be some way serviceable to the Glory of God, and the Good of Men, especially of the Sick, or such as are recovered, I had no doubtful Thoughts to whom they should be addressed. You were the Persons that I first thought upon, and it is to You that I am obliged in a more than ordinary manner. Therefore I take this occasion to make my Acknowledgments, and to testify my Gratitude. It was from your Kindness, that in troubled and uneasy Times I did obtain many a pleasant and quiet Retreat. In both your Houses in the Country I always met with a cheerful Entertainment, and had there an opportunity of Study, which together with the benefit of your Conversation, and a leisure to think, without being diverted by the noise and burry of the disagreeing World, made me to relish a very sensible Delight in being there.

It is to me and others a thing very observable, that the Honors which you have received both from the King and your Fellow-Citizens, have made no Alteration in your former engaging Tempers and Carriage: You are still as free, as pleasant, and as affable to your meaner Friends as you were before. Whereas we daily see many Persons, whom a little Honor or Advancement changes from all the good Qualities they once possessed, to Loftiness and Pride; whom a high Station fills with as high Thoughts, and who cannot from their more

exalted Condition look upon such as are below them without Contempt and Scorn. And though this may not cause them to lose some outward Civilities from those that are dazzled with their shining Grandeur, yet they do thereby lose all that Reverence and Esteem in the Minds of Men which otherwise they might expect.

You are, for the great Zeal you have manifested to the Good of your Country, and more especially to the Liberties and Privileges of this City, justly beloved; and the more so, because you were always steadily resolved to promote the true Interest of both, even in such a Season, when some that had either no English Blood in their Veins, or no true Love to their Country in their Hearts, were willing easily to part with those excellent Rights which cost their Forefathers very dear; who were in some sense worse than Esau, for he sold his Birthright, but they were willing to surrender, and to give theirs away for nothing. It comforts us when from our low Ground we look up to your higher Sphere, and see you so well to fill your Orbs with Light; And we daily pray that you may long shine there for the Common Good, and that we may long be refreshed with those Influences which have already been so comfortable to us.

You have now, through the Providence of God, an honorable Station, but before that, you were most honorably descended: You derived your Birth not only from Families that had done worthily in Ephratah, and were famous in Bethlehem, but from such as were the Friends of God, of a strict Piety, and of an unblameable Religion: some of which are now Citizens of a better Corporation, even of that which is in Heaven. What a Comfort is it to the Children of good Parents, that they can pray to their Fathers and their Mothers God? In Yours you have beheld the Amiableness of Religion represented to the Life, in their good Example, and the Holiness of their Conversation. You may fire your Souls (if at any time they begin to

cool) by the pleasant remembrance of that which they did for God. You can remember with what Constancy and Fervor they prayed, with what Reverence they read the Word, and heard it preached, with what Seriousness and Frequency they spoke to you of heavenly Things, and of the Life to come, with what watchfulness they managed their Prosperity, with what Patience they bore Afflictions, with what Meekness they forgave their Enemies, with what Readiness they entertained all those whom they judged sincerely to name the Name of Christ. You see those who are yet alive, worshipping and serving God; and you can (though not without sorrow for your own loss) remember those who are dead and gone, with what Faith they lived, and with what Hope they died. Give me leave humbly to desire you, to continue to set often before your Eyes their heavenly Example, and to keep the same good Order in your Families that they kept, and to read the Scriptures with as much Frequency and Seriousness as they read them, to be as conscientious in all the Duties of Religion as they were, that so They and You may meet with Joy in the Great Day.

The Thoughts of Death, as it is an Entrance into an Unalterable and Eternal State, will very much promote all this. It will help us to have our most delightful Conversation with those Persons with whom we desire and hope to be found when our Lord comes. It will regulate our use of lawful Things, and guide us in the management of our Pleasures and our Recreations; it will keep both our Bodies and our Souls in a readiness for private Prayer, the serious, and reverent, and lively performance of which will greatly promote our Growth in Grace. We give to our Friends large Portions of our Time every day, and we should devote some part of it to converse with God; and that not in a cold manner, but endeavor to warm our Souls with a deep sense of our Wants, and with some suitable foregoing Meditations. This is that Duty to which you are no Strangers, and You and all

others, that are in earnest for your Souls, will preserve this as a strong Defense against all your spiritual Enemies, and the manifold Snares and Temptations of the World; for it brings to our Assistance the Help of God, and of our blessed Redeemer.

There is no Pleasure that we have in our Friends, or in our Diversions, that is comparable to that Joy which an holy Soul finds in its humble and reverent Approaches to the Throne of Grace, where God and the Soul meet together, where God by his Spirit kindles heavenly Desires, and where the Soul, upon the Wings of those Desires, takes its flight from this lower World; when the Soul complains of the burden of Sin, and God by his free and gracious Pardon takes the Burden off; when the Soul pants and breaths for the living God, and he is pleased to meet and to satisfy the longing Soul. It is then upon the Mount, and sees his smiling Face, and would fain always see it; it is loath to come down to the meaner Employments of this World; and when the necessary Affairs of the present Life call it away, it comes from the pleasant Work, shining with brighter Grace and Holiness.

It is a thing of more Honor to You than a thousand honorable Titles, that You keep up constantly the worshipping of God, and reading the Scriptures in your Families Morning and Evening: and indeed it is an Arrogance in those to call themselves Christians, who neglect so sacred and so considerable a part of our holy Religion: And your good Example in the due practice of these excellent Things will have a powerful Influence upon your Children; and what you now do, they will also do, if they live to have Families; and the sight of Religion in you will convey to them a greater Approbation, and a more easy practice of it.

God has blessed you with a numerous and a hopeful Offspring, whose present and future Welfare I do with an undissembled Affection most heartily desire. By their Seriousness, their Ingenuity, and their good Inclinations, they give us cause to expect, that though they are now as Olive-plants round about your Tables, yet that they will hereafter refresh the Hearts of many more besides your own Families: And that, as it is expressed in Psal. 144. 12. Your Sons may be as Plants grown up in their Youth; that your Daughters may be as Corner-Stones polished after the Similitude of a Palace. I question not but the Prayers that you send up to Heaven for them, will procure the Blessing of the Divine Providence, which is the richest and the best Inheritance. It is a Blessing of God that you have so many living Images of yourselves, in whom you see your own Life renewed. And you are so happy as to have your Quivers full of them. May they all live to be your Comfort, and to maintain Religion in the World.

God has been pleased to give You several Instances of the Vanity of this World, by the Deaths of several of your Relations, some of which died in their most hopeful Youth, and in the Flower of their Age, whilst their Friends promised themselves a long Comfort and Delight in their Conversation, who had they lived might have been of great use to their Country, and to the Church of God. And one Relation you lost, by a way that was very afflicting to you, but advantageous to him. He died unseasonably as to us, for we needed his Prayers and his good Example; but his Death was seasonable as to himself; for I do not doubt but he was prepared for it. He died much beloved, and greatly bewailed. Those that knew him could not but esteem and value him for the Affableness and Civility of his Temper, the Conscientiousness of his Dealings, the Sincerity and Heartiness of his Expressions, the good Order that he kept in his Family, and for that Uprightness and unaffected Religion that appeared to all that

observed his Conversation. I may without any show of Flattery, say he was one of those good Men for whom many would have died, could they have exchanged their meaner Lives for his more serviceable Life. He died by a way somewhat terrible to Flesh and Blood, but which by Faith he overcame. His Zeal for the Liberties of this City, and which he showed whilst he was in an honor able Station, rendered him obnoxious to those Persons then in Authority, who gave liberty to their Revenge to fall upon those who knew not how to flatter, or commend, or promote their Arbitrary Designs. It was a thing below him to use such sneaking and such unchristian Arts for Honor or for Safety. There is nothing can satisfy his Friends for the loss of so excellent a Citizen, so good a Man, and so sincere a Friend, but the consideration of that Providence, which though it be mysterious and severe for the present, yet will hereafter appear to have been very wise, and very good to all those that love God. Tho the Loss his Friends sustained by his removal from them be great, yet it cannot but be a Satisfaction to them to consider that he was happy in his Death. He is gone to that God that (as he said himself) knew his Innocence, and to a Place where there are no false Accusations, and where he and his holy Friends shall never part again. This and much more than what I have said, is due to the Memory of so great and so good a Man, whom it is impossible for a true Lover of his Country ever to forget.

My Zeal to the remembrance of those Persons which I have mentioned, and whom I honored and esteemed, together with the Respect that I ought to express to them, has drawn me to a much greater Length than what I at first intended; and though when I consider the multitude of your Affairs both public and domestic I am afraid I have too much presumed upon your Time in this Dedication, yet the Experience that I have often had of your Candor, makes me to believe that you will forgive even so criminal a Presumption.

God has given you plentiful Estates, and, which is as great a Mercy, Hearts to use them. You have often been Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lame. There are many hundreds whom your Charities have refreshed; the Blessing of those that were ready to perish, has often come upon you: And you have made the Hearts of the Desolate to sing for Joy. And it is no small support of your Prosperities to have many praying for you to God, and who are the more earnest as having been greatly obliged by you.

I do now thank you for all the many Kindnesses that I have received from you both in my former Health, and in my late sore Affliction. I thank you for Visiting me in my low Estate, though the greatness of my Pain, and the anguish of my Thoughts allowed me not to take such notice of so great an Honor as otherwise I should have done. I have often said when I was greatly afflicted, That I should neither see you, nor any others of my Friends till the great Day, and till the Heavens were no more: And God alone by his Sovereign Goodness hath brought me from the lowest Pit. It was to manifest my Thankfulness to my great Deliverer, that I preached the following Sermons, in a Place where were many of my Friends, many that had prayed for me, many that had continued their Kindnesses to me, when I could no way be serviceable to them, and to whom I can make no other Requital than by praying for them, and endeavoring to live to the Glory of that God, for whose sake both you and they so kindly remembered me.

In these Discourses you will find a Relation of some part of my Affliction. It is impossible to relate the whole of it, for my Sorrows were beyond expression. I have not here insisted on that, which was the Trouble of my Trouble, my spiritual Distress, my Anxieties and my Fears, which were vastly more afflicting to me than my bodily Pains, which yet were both sharp and long. I do purpose if these

Discourses meet with Acceptance, to publish some others hereafter, that shall both contain an account of the Distresses of my Soul, and also some Directions to those that are long afflicted, and more especially to melancholy People, to whose Case there is very little said by those that have long been so themselves. Since I have been so long sick, I cannot look upon any of my Fellow-Creatures but with great pity, when I think how many thousand Pains and Troubles may be their Portion before they die. I could not have thought there had been in the World so many and so great Miseries as those are which I myself have felt: Tho at the same time I cannot but adore the Wisdom of God's Providence that conceals from the knowledge of Men those Evils to which they are obnoxious; for if they foresaw them, it were impossible for them to perform their present Duty, they would cause such troublesome Agitations in their Spirits. I have been somewhat particular as to my own Case in the following Sermons, that I may warn all People to walk humbly, and not to be secure when they see what strange Miseries God has wherewith to correct our Follies; to desire them to prepare for long Sickness and Pain; as also to excite those that are delivered from the Grave, and so have received two Lives from God, to be very thankful, and to improve so comfortable and so great a Mercy.

That You may prosper in your Trades, and go on with the same Vigor and Faithfulness to manage the Duties of your Public Station that You have hitherto done; That You may long live to promote the Welfare and Happiness of this City, and by the careful discharging of your Talents may afterwards have Authority over ten Cities, and exchange your Gowns for Robes of Glory; That the Blessing of God may be upon You, your Ladies, your Children, and your whole Families, is, and shall be the constant Prayer of,

Gentlemen,

Your very much obliged Servant, TIMOTHY ROGERS.

London, Sept. 22. 1690.

PRACTICAL DISCOURSES OF SICKNESS AND RECOVERY.

SERMON I.

O Lord, thou hast brought up my Soul from the grave, thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. - PSAL. 30. ver. 3, 4.

Sing unto the Lord, O ye Saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

It hath pleased that all-wise Providence that Governs, orders and directs all things in this lower World, after a very long and terrible Sickness and Calamity to give me an opportunity to appear in this Place at this time. 'It is a place where I am well assured there have been many prayers put up for me during my sore and great Affliction. And seeing the Most High God, in whose power alone it was to relieve me, has from his own Sovereign Goodness, not cast off your prayers nor turned away his mercy from me; I am now come to thank him in the midst of this Congregation, for remembering so mean a Creature and so vile a sinner in his low Estate, for his mercy endureth forever. As also to thank those of you here that had a sense of my sorrowful Condition, for your kind Affection, and for the Requests which with so much pity and Compassion you presented to the Throne of God in my behalf. I judge it equal, that in a place where there have been offered up so many sacrifices of hearty prayer there

should be also offered up one common Sacrifice of as hearty Praise, and that a great Cloud of Incense may go up from us towards Heaven with an united flame of Love and Joy. For may you not say with me, Who is so great a God as our God, who does marvelous things without number; who commands Salvation where there seems to be no sign but of approaching Misery and Ruin; and, who is so good a God as our God, that does not contend forever; that Creates Light in the thickest Darkness, and turns the shadow of death into the morning. It is this Mighty and this Gracious God that I would praise myself, and that I would now invite you to praise. It is no less than his all-powerful Voice, that has assuaged those Floods that overwhelmed me; after I have been like Jonas in the very belly of Hell, swallowed up with amazement and fear, he has made those Waves of Trouble which in a Continual Succession rolled over my Head, to set me now as on the dry Land. It was without doubt a surprising thing to Jonah after so sad a Case as is mentioned in Chap. 2. ver. 3, 4, 5, 6. wherein he thus speaks, Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas, and the floods compassed me about, and thy billows and thy waves passed over me. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple, the waters compassed me about even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me forever, &c. I say after so sad a Case as this, it was a surprising thing to the poor man to see himself in this pleasant World again, and to find that the same Creature that had swallowed him up should be the vessel that should Convey him to the shore. As it is not easy to know after what manner he lived, for those three days and three nights, how he breathed in the Sea, and in the belly of the Whale, and with what he was nourished and maintained, so his escape from a danger which had actually overtaken him was no less miraculous. I am not in a less surprise than he may be supposed to

be in, nothing but that Almighty power to which nothing is impossible could save either him or me. Methinks I begin to stand as on the firm Land, and behold that stormy Sea, and those rough Winds that blew so violently, and filled me with so great a fear, and which lasted more Months, than his did Nights and Days. And though I was no way like to that Holy Prophet, unless it were in his Impatience and Anger, yet I can say with him, Jon. 2. 9. I will sacrifice unto the Lord with the voice of thanksgiving, I will pay that that I have vowed, salvation is of the Lord Though I have such a remaining pain as makes me not to know what a Total Ease is, yet I own it as an effect of his Unsearchable Grace that I have now so much hope as to be able in some measure to pray to him, and so much Ease, as to be able to speak to you, neither of which I could have done whilst his heavy hand pressed me very sore. Had it not been for some remaining indispositions, I had not so long delayed to appear in this place. I have thought indeed sometimes that I would with Samson arise, and do as I did at other times, but that tedious and uncommon pain that afflicted me, and the Consciousness that I have of mine inability to manage so Honorable and so difficult a work as this, has long kept me back. Moreover, I thought there was no need of my weaker Light, nor of my meaner Capacity whilst in my absence you had others, whose understandings being better furnished could communicate to you in larger measures from their more abounding store. But the deliverance which God by his own Power and Goodness has already given me, is so wonderful, so unexpected, and especially so undeserved, that I cannot but thrust my Sickle into the Harvest, though it be with a very trembling hand. And I promise myself that you will join your prayers with mine, that it may be for the good of some Soul or other, nay if God so please, that it may be for the good of many Souls that I come here this Evening; that it may be for the preservation of others from so thick a darkness, and so woeful a Condition as that, wherein I have been. I

come to you as one from the dead, to say no more, and though if you hear not Moses and the Prophets, and the well attested Revelations and Discoveries which God has made by them, neither will any other methods be successful to your good; yet one would think that the Words of one that has dwelt so long as in the very Grave and in the nearest Confines of Eternity, ought to carry more than ordinary weight with them. A peculiar attention is usually afforded to dying Persons, and I think the same should not be denied to such as in the Judgment of others and in their own opinion have been no longer for this World, as I was for above a year; and upon that account have Cause to say as in the Text. O Lord thou hast brought up my Soul from the Grave, &c.

From the Words we may raise these two Observations.

First, That God alone is the Sovereign disposer of Life and Death.

Secondly, To be brought up from the Grave is a Mercy greatly to be acknowledged, and for which all such as are recovered ought to be very thankful.

First, God alone is the Sovereign disposer of Life and Death. This great God concerns himself not only with the Nobler parts of his Dominions, but with such as are more inconsiderable. He not only preserves the vaster and the purer Orbs above, but also this little drossy Globe. His Care extends its self not only to the Highest Angel, but to the least and the meanest Man. And though Men are among us distinguished by several Excellencies and Titles of Honor, yet before him all flesh is as grass. He gives a Being to the meanest Pile in its ordinary Garb as well as fine Apparel to the beautiful Lilies of the Field. 'It is in him that we all live and move and have our being, and if his Concourse be removed, all our operations will immediately cease. We cannot act without him, for then we should be self-

sufficient, and Independent on him. He is the Author and the Preserver of our Nature. He first tied our Bodies and our Souls together, and 'tis his care that maintains this Incomprehensible Union that is between parts in themselves so vastly different; and when he pleases to suspend his Influence, 'tis dissolved and broken asunder. He is the strength of our Life, Psal. 27. 1. From him we have all our Healthfulness and Vigor. He is the Great Agent, the principal Efficient Cause of All that Exists, and all second Causes in their several Actions depend upon him. Though the manner of his Influx is very Mysteious, and it becomes not the weakness of our Minds daringly to determine which way it is, we that are extremely in the dark about many of the motions of our own Faculties, ought not any way to Limit Him, whose Ways are Unsearchable, and who is so far above us. But this we most certainly know that our whole being, and the continuance of it depends on him alone. 'It is his Sun that does refresh our Spirits with his Temperate, and Comfortable beams, and that by his Amiable shine renders this World a place of delight. For were it always covered with darkness, it would be a place very undesirable and full of horror. They are his Vapors that are drawn up to fill the bottles of Heaven, and 'tis his hand that opens them again, and makes the Clouds dissolve to give being to Grass and Corn, to feed the Beasts for us, and to be the staff of our Life. 'It is his Day in which we work, and his Night in which we sleep; 'tis his Earth that bears us, his Air in which we breathe, and they are his Winds that purify and fan that Air to make it healthful, and serviceable to us. It was this great and Gracious God that first breathed into us the breath of Life; he formed our several parts with curious and inimitable Art, and his own skillful hand brought us from the darkness in which we were enclosed safely to the Light of Day. 'Twas by his Goodness alone, that we were not strangled in our Birth, or smothered in the Cradle; and that we did not there by the Carelessness of our Keepers, and by the many distempers that attend our Early Age find a Grave.

His Goodness saved us from the dangers which we ourselves were unable to apprehend, and which without his extraordinary Favor would have closed our eyes as soon as we saw the Light; and have sent us into the other World, when we were but newly entered into this. His Mercy delivered us from the unknown dangers of our heedless Infancy, and from the unfeared evils of our daring Youth. 'It is God alone that holds our souls in life and suffers not our feet to be moved, Psal. 66. 9. 'It is he that furnishes us out of his Stores wherewith to repair the daily decays of Nature. He gives us the things that are absolutely necessary to maintain our Life and those also that are necessary for refreshment and delight. His corn his wine, and his oil. Hos. 2. 8. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle and herb for the service of man that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart, Psal. 104. 14, 15. 'It is he that spreads our Table, and who fills our Cup, and makes the things which we take for the support of Life to give us strength; for we live not by bread alone, Mat. 4. 4. 'It is he that gave and that maintains that heat in our Stomachs, and those Acid juices there, that alter and attenuate and distribute the several parts of our Meat. 'It is he that gave us the desire of Food, and that drives away those diseases that would lessen and abate our Appetite. And it is in the sense of his Providence that we ask his Blessing before we eat and return him thanks afterwards. For were it not for his Gracious Influences, our Faculties would quickly lose their proper Virtues, and we should notwithstanding all our Care quickly die. All Sicknesses are at his disposal, for it is he that kills, and that makes alive, he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up, 1 Sam. 2. 6. When he pleases to withdraw his most Common Blessings, we droop and Languish and pine away. Thousands of Diseases stand in a readiness waiting for his Command, and when our sins make him to give the word, they fall upon us with a mighty Violence; and in a few restless

days and nights change our Countenances, break off our purposes and stain all our Pride and glory. Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat, and they draw nigh unto the gates of death, Psal. 107. 17, 18. God has fixed the bounds of our habitations, and the very time of our stay, and when it shall be that they must know us no more, We are but Dust and Ashes, and how soon can the mighty power of our great Creator blow away the most strong and healthful, with more ease than we can our breath scatter a little dust. All things in this lower World have their Rise, their Progress and Decay by the Decree of God, and so have the Lives of men. There is a time wherein to be born and a time wherein to die, and both known to him though upon wise Reasons hid from our knowledge. God does with great Wisdom cast a Veil of thick night upon all future Events, that so we may without needless and diverting Curiosity perform our present duty. He shows this Dominion that he hath over the Lives of Men in these two things.

First, In the large difference which his Providence makes amongst those persons whose outward Circumstances seem to be much alike. One sick man by the use of some mixtures or applications immediately recovers, and another that with the most exact observance takes the same Physic, consumes his days in tedious Sorrows, and in the floods of his own Tears, is carried Mourning to the Grave.

Secondly, He shows his Sovereign disposal of the Lives of Men, in ordering the different Seasons and times of their Death. One is cut down in his early Spring, and in his blooming greener Youth, and his Sun is covered with darkness, almost as soon as it begins to rise, whilst another weathers out the Storms, and grows to a mature and full Age. One does but peep as it were into the World, takes a short

view of it, and is commanded out again, and is at his Journeys end in the morning of his Life, and another is allowed to travel till the shadows of the Evening are stretched out according to their most regular advances, and till the Threescore and Ten that is the usual date of Long Life is expired. One is quickly summoned to the Great Tribunal and judged, whilst another has a longer space wherein to prepare for his Trial and his Final doom. 'It is the Divine Providence that sees and orders not only the larger portions of the lives of Men such as Infancy and Childhood and Youth and Manhood, but as God numbers the Hairs of our Heads, so known to him are all the minutes and hours and days and particularities of our Life, and every moment of our Time. He has set us our bounds that we cannot pass, and with respect to his Appointment no man dies before his Time. Though a man that dies by an acute Disease, or a violent Death, dies before that time which he might have reached in an ordinary Course, and before old Age, which we reckon to be the most seasonable time wherein to die; Bloody and deceitful men are said not to live out half their days; that is, according to the General Limit and Order of Providence as to the Age of Man, viz. Seventy or Eighty years. And indeed every Wicked Man in some sense dies before his time, because he is not sit to die, like Fruit that is gathered before it be fully ripe. I now proceed to some Application: And from this Doctrine we may Infer.

First, If God be the Sovereign disposer of Life and Death, then the Friends of the Sick do them the greatest kindness when they recommend their Case to him. And to this they are obliged by the Communion which they have with them in the same Human Nature, they are also in the body; in such a body as is liable to as many pains as they see in others. They may be plunged into the same distresses, and need the same favor to be showed to them. Regard, I beseech you, your afflicted Friends with great tenderness and pity, for

whatsoever their Case is, your sins may bring you as Low; and you have no assurance that what has happened to them may not be your own Lot before you come to the period of this miserable Life. It is also the duty of the Sick themselves, in the first assaults of Pain, with great Humility and Contrition of Spirit to betake themselves to God as their only helper, and, with a fervor suitable to the sadness of their Case to request of him. Faith and Patience, Repentance, and Mortification, and the pardon of sin; and earnestly to pray (that if it may be) their sickness may not be very long, nor very sharp. For long and sore afflictions are so great Trials of Human Nature that they may very well be prayed against; and I suppose no man thinks himself obliged to desire a heavy Cross. As to what concerns the Sick Man himself, he is to put his Affairs into the best order he can upon the first warning, the first beginning of his Illness; for indeed in most Distempers those increasing pains that attend them will not allow him to do it afterwards. Thus Job advises, Chap. 33. 26. that, When a man is chastened with pain upon his bed he shall pray unto God and he will be favorable to him, and he shall see his face with joy. But he that never begins to pray till he be almost at the last Gasp, will not be able to make such a strong and fervent Prayer as is like to reach to Heaven.

As for them that try the Physician till he gives them over, and never till then seek the Prayers of the Church, they have but little Reason to hope for help from God, to whom they have no recourse till they are driven by the last extremity. For they show that if they could have had Relief without him, they cared not to be beholden to him for it. In which Case it is just with God to suffer the Sickness to be mortal, which perhaps had not been so, if Applications had been made to him with the first, by calling for the Elders, by confessing their Sins, by promising Repentance, and by Prayers for good things requisite,

as well for the body as for the Soul. (Discourse of Extreme Unction. pag. 48.)

It is also the duty of those that are acquainted with the sick, instead of vain and frivolous discourses of Common Affairs, which have no relish with those that are in great pain, to Minister as far as they are able to their Spiritual Wants; to direct, instruct, and any other way to help them; to set their Souls in order, and to trim their Lamp. See what Care the Holy Prophet used to his Enemies, Psal. 35. 13, 14. When they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth, I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned into my own bosom, I behaved myself as though he had been my friend, or brother: I bowed down heavily as one that mourneth for his Mother. Those means which he used for their Recovery were an argument of the sincerity of his own Religion, as well as of his most affectionate Sympathy and tenderness to them. When you visit the sick you see in them the prospect of your own Mortal Estate. You see how soon their Complexion, their Temper, their Sociableness, and all that agreeableness of Humor which was pleasing to you is gone and changed. In their broken feeble expressions, in their wan and pale looks and in their fallen Countenances, you behold that man in his best Estate is altogether vanity, Psal. 39. 5. and how when God with rebukes does correct man for Iniquity, he makes his beauty to consume away like a moth, ver. II. then you see that all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field, Isa. 40. 6. How many times do you see those whom you love, struggling with pains strong and bitter even as death itself, and you cannot though you never so earnestly desire it, afford to them the least Relief, not a moments ease, nor the smallest interval of rest; but when your hearts have sunk within you with the doleful and unintermitted accents of their Groans and Sighs, how often have you prayed to God and he has appeared to your help and theirs? There may be many Cases wherein much speaking may do

your afflicted Friends no good at all, but there is no Case wherein your prayers may not be of great advantage, either to preserve them with you, or to obtain for them some Gracious discoveries of the Love of God, or a more easy passage both which are very great Mercies. What wonders have been wrought in all Ages by the power of the United Intercession of Believers when they have carried their sick to Christ. What numbers are there of perfect Souls in Heaven that can Witness to the Truth of this; and how many delivered Captives are on Earth, that can now with joy set their Seal to it, and say with Transport, truly God, is a God hearing prayers. The continued prayers of the Church for Peter did procure his Enlargement and an Angel was dispatched to break his Chains, and to send him to carry the welcome news to the then praying Church, that their prayers were heard and he was delivered. Many there are now alive that owe their Lives to this, whereof I am one. The Mercy of God which alone could help me, and that was implored and sought by your prayers has brought me from the very Grave. In all future occasions try this method for you know it is available and successful. Is any afflicted let him pray himself; is any so overwhelmed that he cannot well perform it, Let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him, and the prayer of Faith shall save the sick. Jam. 5. 14, 15.

He is to use this course as a means for the recovery of his Health, for though we cannot with any Modesty pretend to the prayer of Faith here mentioned, that is, of a certain persuasion that the person for whom we pray shall be raised up; yet we ought to pray in this Faith, that it is pleasing to God when we express our dependence upon him by asking those things which we need; that every good thing comes from him, and therefore health and deliverance from death; that though he does not always, give that particular thing which we ask, yet 'tis sometimes denied because we do not ask, and that as he never gives the greatest Blessings of all, which are those of a good mind,

but in answer to prayers. So sometimes he does not send bodily good things, because he is not prayed to for them. And there is no less Reason for Prayer, when God raiseth up the sick by Blessing ordinary means, than when it was done by a supernatural Gift. (Discourse of Extreme Unction, pag 46.)

Inf. 2. There is great Reason to Fear and Reverence God. For as he presides over all the Revolutions of Empires and Nations, their Original, their Growth, their Prosperities and Decays, so he does likewise over particular persons in their Life and Death. His knowledge and his Government reaches to all things; for their Existence depends upon his Will. It is in his power to destroy or to save. He is the God in whose hand our Life is. We lie at his Mercy, and according as he Wills we must either be Healthful or Sick, Live or Die. His are our times, on his pleasure our present happiness and our future welfare depends. He sits upon the floods, and orders with a steady and uniform design, All that appears most uncertain and changeable to us. He can either make the Waters of Affliction to drown us, or say unto them as unto the waves of the Sea, hitherto shall you go and no further, even then, when their swelling Pride threatens us with total desolation. He has appointed his Sun to measure out our time, and knows when shall be the last concluding day. When those that are now living shall die, and by what sort of death, and where after that they shall be placed, whether in Happiness or Woe. He knows when the last Trumpet shall sound, and when the dead shall be raised. Of him therefore should we stand in Awe, as having that voice continually in our ears, Deut. 32. 39, 40. See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me: I kill and I make alive: I wound and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand, for I lift up my hand to heaven and say I live forever. What an abundance of diseases are at his beck, what abundance of Arrows are in his Quiver, what abundance of sins do we commit

which cause him to bend his bow, and provoke him to set us up as marks of his displeasure? He can strike the most confident and secure sinners dead in a moment, or with long abiding pains fill them with so great anguish and vexation that they shall choose strangling and death rather than Life. Alas what are we to this Great God, but as Chaff before the Wind, but as Thorns and Briars before a Consuming Fire; but by a reverential awe of him we may lay hold of his Strength and be at Peace. Look up to his Heavens, and that vastly extended Firmament that is above, and then reflect and think how great is he that made all this Creation with a Word. Look to his Law and consider how holy he is in his Precepts and Threatening's, and then look to yourselves and consider how Sinful and how Vile you are. Look upon the strange punishments and miseries under which many of your Fellow-creatures groan, and be not high-minded but fear, because the God that afflicts them may perhaps very shortly do the same to you; and let it fill you with the most awful thoughts, when you consider how great is his power, how severe his Justice, and how unspotted is his Holiness. How easy is it for him to bring you to the Grave, if he do but withdraw sleep from your eyes, so that you have no rest for three or four nights or for one Week. Then there is a stop put to all your present projects, and then all the Comfort of the World is gone. For all Affairs depend upon Activity and Vigor, and this will cease when sleep does no longer refresh your Spirits as it used to do. All your apprehensions will change when you have lost this support of weak nature, this only prop of Comfortable Life. God can make the strongest and most healthful persons quickly to feel Sickness and Diseases. He can quickly turn a pleasant fruitful Land into barrenness and the most beautiful Habitations into Dust and Ashes. We should greatly beware of provoking him of whose Mercy we stand in need, and whose Wrath we cannot bear. He can quickly change all our Joy into Mourning, and our Day into Night, and our Light into the shadow of Death. When he frowns all the stateliness of

Buildings, all the Glory of Nations, all the Pomp and Splendor of the World is gone. How soon can he lay waste a flourishing Country with War or Plague or Famine, he can quickly turn the house of Joy into an house of Mourning, and deprive us of what is most pleasant in our Eyes, and blast all our hopes You have seen that by letting loose an unruly Element of Fire he turned this City in two or three days into an heap of Ruins; and by filling the Air with contagious Vapors sent many thousands in a very little time into the Grave, and he can by letting loose any one Humor in your bodies make you a burden to yourselves, and to be weary of a World in which you can no longer live as you used to do.

Inf. 3. There is great Reason that, under any Sickness or Distress that befalls us, we should submit ourselves to this God that brings even to death and back again. If you be plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, Psal. 73. 14. whilst others are in no trouble; and if you feel your strength decay, whilst theirs is firm; let no murmuring thoughts fill your Minds, because you are the Creatures of God, and he may do with you what he will. Keep a remembrance of his absolute Sovereignty always imprinted on your Hearts. Job 33. 12, 13. God is greater than man, why dost thou strive against him, for he giveth not account of any of his matters. Whatever he doth, is therefore good and holy because he does it. And when he chastens us very sore, we should lay our Mouths in the dust, and bear with Patience his Indignation, because we have sinned against him. We must not yield ourselves to our Miseries, but to him that sends them; and that you may submit in Great and Heavy Trials, you must have recourse to the Promises of the Gospel, the Mercy of God, and the Righteousness of Christ, the Merit of his Sufferings, and the Efficacy of his Intercession, and if you believe you will be established, for without Faith in Christ there is no Hope, and without Hope no Submission. How can this be done if a man have no

prospect of advantage by it, either in this or the next World; for no man can possibly submit to be forever Miserable. It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the Salvation of the Lord, Lam. 3. 26. Inveigh not therefore against the Rod though it smart very much, but look to the hand in which it is, to that Wisdom that has the disposal of it, and to those sins that have deserved it. Look not upon your Evils as the product of Chance or Fortune, but as the effect of an Holy Providence, which though it is many times very severe, yet is always very just. Adore this Providence with an humble Silence and Veneration. You do not know which is better for you, Health or Sickness, Affliction or Deliverance, he only knows that knows all things, and it will be very grateful to him if you give a cheerful entertainment to his Order and Decree. If he please, who is your Gracious Creator and your Father, he can therefore afflict you, that he himself may be your Cordial, and revive your fainting spirits from the very Grave; but if not, your Religion should teach you to approve of all the messages he sends you, and by a quiet Resignation to put your Souls into his hands, when he signifies by the Progress and Increase of your Distemper that your Race is finished, and that it is now your time to die. And in order to this, you must lay up a good store against that Evil day. For you may be warned from the World with long Chronical Diseases, that by their Acuteness and Violence, may be as so many several Deaths complicated together. And, then, when you have no hope of bodily ease anymore, then will be the great Trial of your Faith. Several Men will with great hardiness and resolution bear very great pains, so long as there is the least hope of Life; but to be patient and submissive in the deepest Sorrows, and in the view of certain death, this is what none can rightly attain to but those that Believe, and not all those neither, but such whose Faith is deeply rooted; has for a long time flourished, and Conquered overwhelming doubts, and so is of more than an ordinary growth. This is that which rendered the Patience of our Blessed Redeemer so

very remarkable, that when he was led to the slaughter where he knew he was to suffer violent and great pain from barbarous and cruel men, yet even then he opened not his mouth, and when he knew there was unspeakable bitterness in that Cup which he was going to drink yet notwithstanding all the Wormwood and the Gall that was in it, and though his Innocent. Nature did recoil a little yet he drank it off, saying with an entire freedom of Choice and a full Acquiescence, Father, not my Will, but thine be done. And this was the fruit of a mighty trust in God; for without it lingering and continued pains are not to be born. For he that can submit for a Week may not have strength enough to submit for a Month; and he that can submit for a single Month, may fail when his Pain and Anguish is continued for Ten or Twelve Months together. We must prepare ourselves for Sufferings and beg of God, that we may be satisfied with his pleasure when they come, and that we may wait for our Change, for we cannot die till he will, of which Job was sensible, Chap. 6. 8, 9. Oh that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand and cut me off. All our struggling's, all our impatient and hasty wishes do not hasten our Last Hour; not all the Enemies we have in the World, nor we ourselves, can put a period to this Life without the permission and the leave of God. Therefore in all Cases we must submit ourselves to him. Though to be stupid is as far from our Duty as to be overwhelmed. He that would have us to be sensible of his Bounties, would have us also to be sensible of his Corrections, and the Prophet takes notice of the omission of this as of a very great fault. Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock they have refused to return, Jer. 5. 3. A Careless unconcerned frame in Affliction is an Affront to his Justice and his Wisdom, and defeats, as far as in us lies, the designs of his

Providence; and to sink, and altogether to dispond is as great a Crime. Our Tears are then just, when we look upon our Sins, and see to what Miseries they have brought us, and how they have made that Gracious God to punish us with severity who does not willingly grieve the children of men. We then Act most like Christians when we answer our Holy Calling by a Resignation to those Evils, which he is pleased to send; and when we exercise those Graces which he requires from us. This is the only Cure of all our Troubles, for 'tis no more in our power to thrust away a Disease by force, than to support a falling Rock. Some indeed will advise you not to think of the Evils you suffer, and then they will be less; whereas it may be through the raging pain that you are under, your Disease is in your Thoughts; and then it is no more than to advise you not to be diseased when you are diseased.

But alas! 'Tis not in a Mans power not to think of Pain when he is in Pain; a Man cannot avoid being sensible of what he feels, no more than he can avoid the Sense itself; and it is somewhat hard when a Man feels exquisite Pains, to be told that they are light enough of themselves, if he would not greaten them by his own weakness. This is to upbraid a Mans Misery, not to relieve him; and to add reproach to his Calamity by making his Infelicity his Folly. (Demonstr. of the Law of Nature. pag. 103.)

Patience though it doth not take away our Pain, yet it may prevent new degrees of Trouble; and though at first we are unaccustomed to the Yoke, yet by suffering we may learn to suffer.

Inf. 4. Seeing God alone brings to the Grave and raises up again, then put not too great Trust or Confidence in Physicians. A Man indeed is under the Obligation of Self-preservation to have recourse to them, and to keep up his Clay Cottage as long as he can with all possible

repairs; and when one is in very sharp pain, and knows not which way to turn himself for Anguish and Trouble, then indeed he does most willingly seek for help, and will take anything though never so displeasing to the Taste, if he have any hope of being better, or more at Ease. But upon the first pain or sickness we must by serious Prayer go to God himself, and open our Case to him who is a most Gracious Creator, and most able to help us, and this we should do before we go to Men, who many times when they are most willing to relieve us, cannot do it. It is a perpetual reproach upon Asa that in his Disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the Physicians, 2 Chron. 16. 12. And 'tis left upon Record to warn us from a practice that is unsafe for us as well as dishonorable to God. It is God alone that has put healing Qualities into Herbs, Plants and the Flowers of the Field, and who can discover the several Virtues that are in them for our good. Place not too much trust in your Physicians, and this Advice I think is not unnecessary because there are several people that by manifold disorders and Excesses impair and ruin their Health, of which they are less Careful, from a secret Opinion they have that 'tis in the power of Physic, to give them certain, Relief, and they doubt not but they will be able to rebuild those Walls which they have pulled down with their own hands. But this is far from being true, for there are abundance of secret and violent diseases into which they cannot penetrate with all their Learned Art. And though you go to such as are Men of Knowledge and Fame in their Profession, yet there are many things in this little World Man, that are to the most knowing as a Terra Incognita, and there may be a Thousand Diseases for which they want a name, and much more a Cure, and for which there is no Receipt in all the Dispensatories in the World. Their Profession indeed is Learned, but like all other Human Sciences, full of Imperfection, and the Light which has broke out by the Discoveries and Inquiries of Latter Ages even as to many things in the very frame and Contexture of Human Bodies, which were not known before,

shows the darkness and ignorance of former Ages, and when this has done its best, the next will its like see more. Beware of leaving your dependence on God to put your trust in Men. And though it is commonly said everyone is to be believed in his own Art, yet that belief very easily degenerates into presumption. A Thousand things may hinder your having any Relief from Physicians: You may be so pained as not to be able to give them an account how you are, or what part is affected, or after what manner; or you may as it frequently happens, have several complicated illnesses, and what they prescribe for one, may be very prejudicial to another; or they may do it in haste, or by a wrong Judgment, (which is very easy to fallible Men) take that for your Disease which really is not so, or the Apothecary may fail in the mixture, or those that attend you in the Administration, all which may betray you to death or to long pain. Seek chiefly to the Sovereign disposer of all things, who can either cure you without means, or make those that you try to be available; knowing that without him not all the Cordials in the World can for one moment stay the departing Life. Of which many Physicians are so sensible that they frequently tell you that by the blessing of God they hope to do you good. Indeed they had need be men of Prayer, that by their means Religio Medici might be as famous in reality as it has been in scorn. And though I pretend to no great skill in these affairs, yet I have some Experience as to what I say. I have often found the Insufficiency of all things that have been prescribed, and that they have not given me the least Ease in my violent and sharp pain; and how what I have taken with a design to help me has increased my Disease and made it more painful. Therefore having severely smarted myself for my folly in expecting too much from human help, I may be allowed to warn others, that they may not fall into the same snare; and to desire them to trust more in God and less in Men. We may be as guilty of Idolatry in giving Men too much of our Trust, as if we bowed before a Graven Image; and it is an evil to

which Men are as prone as to any other sin. An Instance whereof is that which Soudas saith, that the Book which Solomon wrote of Physic, was affixed upon the Gate into the Entry of the Temple, and because the People boasted too much in it, neglecting the Lord, Hezekiah caused them to pull away this Book and bury it, and the Talmud saith, that Hezekiah did two memorable things, first he hid the Book of Physic which Solomon had written; and secondly, he brake the brazen Serpent which Moses made. (Weemes Exerc. div. pag. 120.) Indeed men do as that King said unto Hazael, 2 King. 8. 8. Take a present in thine hand, and go meet the man of God, and inquire of the Lord by him, saying, shall I recover of this disease. They seek for Recovery first of all as that which would bring them the most acceptable News, which made the Prophet use such Ambiguity in his Speech, Verse 10. For 'tis likely that 'twas no dissimulation, because his Sickness was not in itself Mortal, yet he should surely die, that is by the Treachery of Hazael. The hope of Recovery is so grateful to the Patient, that Physicians are not a little tempted to conceal the danger when it is visible to all but to the Sick Man, and of how ill Consequence is this? I cannot better express it than in the Words of an Honorable person, for whom men of all the Learned professions have a just value.

For my part (says he) who take the prognostics of Physicians to be but Guesses, not Propheties, and know how backward they are to bid us Fear, till our condition leave them little hopes of us: I cannot but think that Patient very ill advised, who thinks it not time to entertain thoughts of death, as long as his Doctor allows him any hopes of Life; for in case they should both be deceived, 'twould be much easier for the mistaken Physician to save his Credit than for the unprepared Sinner to save his Soul. (Boyle Occasional Reflections, Sect. 2. pag. 222.)

Our safest Course in all our Troubles and Sickesses is to Go to Jesus Christ, who has an Omnipotent Virtue and Ability to help, as when he was on Earth he healed all manner of Diseases, and among the rest a person that had suffered many things of many Physicians and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. Mark 5. 26. So he has still the same power and Compassion, and though Thousands have shared in the Gracious effects of his Benevolence, yet he has still the same Charity, and the same All-sufficient Fulness from whence to relieve us as the Sun after it has by its Light and Quickening influences given Being and Refreshment to so many several Creatures in the World, suffers no diminution of its own Light and Heat, and is no less Communicative and Beneficial to this very day, then it was many hundred years ago.

The whole of what I have spoken upon this Head is only to keep our spirits from placing an undue reliance on the Creatures when our Trust is chiefly to be fixed on our Glorious and powerful Creator. One would think it strange, and yet so it is, that when God has by some sharp and severe stroke beaten off our hold from those props whereon we used to lean in the time of our Careless Health, when he has confined us to a solitary state, and we can no longer have our Antient Friendships, nor our former hope, yet even in distress itself (so great is our adherence to Creatures) we substitute to Ourselves new Reeds whereon to lay some strength; and our vain trust does not expire but with our latest breath.

I would not have any part of what I have said to reflect in the least upon those worthy Physicians who in the time of my woeful Calamity gave me their Charitable Visits; though God was not pleased to succeed the Endeavors they used, yet I hope and pray that he may reward them for their labor and their diligence: As also Those that gave me their kind help when I was not able to help myself. I owe to

them all great Respect and Thanks, and none can take it ill if I say what to his Glory I ought to say, that God only was my Physician and my Deliverer, and to him is all the praise due. He hath torn, and he hath healed, he hath smitten, and he hath bound me up, he hath revived me, and I live in his sight. Hos. 6. 1. So that I may say with David, Psal. 103. 1, 2, 3, 4. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine Iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy Life from destruction, who crowneth thee with Loving-kindness and tender mercies. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things so that thy Youth is renewed like the Eagles.

Observ. 2. To be brought up from the Grave, and to be kept alive from going down to the Pit, is a Mercy greatly to be acknowledged, and for which we ought to be very thankful, And that upon these following Accounts.

Reason 1. Because Life is the dearest of all our present Blessings. All Happiness is usually represented by the name of Life, and all Misery by the name of Death.

Other Evils take from us, each of them some part of our Comforts. Death bereaves us of them all. Bondage deprives us of Liberty, Banishment of our Country; Sickness afflicts our Bodies, shame or Infamy our Souls, pain troubleth our Senses, poverty incommodateth our Life; but there is no Calamity so great, as not to leave us the use or enjoyment of some good, or at least of ourselves. Death extinguisheth our Life, and by this means overthrowing the very Foundations of our Enjoyments, doth at the same time despoil as of all other good things altogether.

Daille sur; Coloss. 2. 13. Life is the most excellent Gift of God, but Death is an Enemy to Nature and cannot be loved for itself; 'tis the fruit of Sin, Rom. 5. 12. 'It is the wages thereof, Rom. 6. 23. For if Adam had persevered in his Innocent Condition he had enjoyed a Glorious Immortality without those pains, and that Death which is now our Lot.

The Philosophers indeed thought that death was natural to Man, and all the discourses they grounded upon this false principle, are so vain and empty, that they only serve to show in the General how weak Man is, seeing the greatest productions of the wisest Men are so mean and Childish. (Pascal, pensees. S. 30.)

Death is the matter of the Threat, and therefore a punishment; though Believers whose Faith is in exercise may quietly submit to it, as a passage to Eternal Glory. We give it indeed many soft names, and seem to make nothing of it in our ordinary discourse, we speak of nothing with more unconcernedness, and with less Fear; but it ceases not to be an Enemy though we give it never so many fair Characters. Men at a distance from it can make a slight matter of it, but its nearer approaches, if attended with the due sense of Futurity will make the boldest and the stoutest Man to tremble, it will strike a damp into his Spirits, mingle Gall and Wormwood with his Wine, and Bitterness with his sweetest Joys. Death is not the less formidable for being unavoidable, but rather more so; as a certain Evil is more an Evil than that which is only probable, and which may never happen, but do we consider what it is for the Union that is between the body and the Soul to be dissolved, what it is to see Corruption, what it is to have this Body turned into a Carcass without Life and Motion, what it is to have this Body which we have tended with so long a Care, which we have maintained at so vast a Charge of Meat and Drink and Time, to have this Body in which we have slept

and lived at Ease, laid into the cold Grave, and there in a loathsome manner to putrefy and consume away; it cannot but occasion very great Commotions, when the day is come that the two Friends who have been so long acquainted, and so dear to one another must part. Death is an evil to be prayed against, for as such it cannot be the Object of desire: And the old saying of Augustine is not unworthy of our Observation, That if there were no bitterness in Death the Constancy of Martyrs would not be so remarkable. Therefore says the Apostle, 2 Cor. 5. 4. We would not be unclothed, but clothed upon. It is promised as a favor to Ebedmelech, that though he sustained many other losses yet he should have his life for a prey, Jer. 39. 18. and Paul, then whom none had a greater desire and esteem of Glory, yet reckons it a Blessing for a good Man to be kept alive. For he says of Epaphroditus, Phil. 2. 27. He was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him. And we find the Holy Men of Old very earnest for their Lives. Return, O Lord, deliver my soul: O save me for thy mercies sake. For in death there is no remembrance of thee, in the Grave who shall give thee thanks, Psal. 6. 4. 5. Psal. 39. 13. Oh spare me, that I may recover strength before I go hence and be no more. Psal. 102. 24. I said, O my God take me not away in the midst of my days. And what doleful Expressions did Hezekiah use upon the news of his approaching death, Isa. 38. 10. I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the Grave, I am deprived of the residue of my years. I said, I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living; I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the Earth.

Reason 2. When a Man dies, 'tis to him as an end of all the World. He is no more considered as a Member of that Community to which he did once belong. When his Eyes are once closed by Death, he is no more to behold the Sun, Moon and Stars which he now sees; nor his Fields and Gardens, his Shops and Houses, his Estate and Lands. As

the waters fail from the Sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up: So man lieth down and riseth not till the heavens be no more, Job 14. 11, 12. He quits forever all those Earthly things on which he once set his Heart; and when he is asleep in his Bed of dust, he will not awake to pursue secular Affairs and Business, which took up so much of his time and labor. He must no more frequent his Exchange, not read Books, nor discourse with his Relations and Friends as he used to do among the Living here. The first sound that he will he will hear, will be the Voice of the Last Trumpet, Arise ye dead and come to judgment. The first sight that he will see, will be the Mighty Judge in the Clouds, and the Heavens and the Earth all in one flame: All that little share of the World which he called his own, will be undiscerned, and buried in the vast ruins and desolations of the Great Day. When a Man dies, 'tis with him as an End of the World; all the Affairs of Peace and War, of Trade and Commerce, and Gain and Riches, all his projects and designs, his large reaches, his forecast, his thoughtfulness about News, or about providing for his own Name, or for posterity, all these things are at an end with him forever. It would put a mighty Change upon the Face of things, and the Circumstances of particular persons if they knew certainly the World would be at an end in four or five years, or in so many Months, and no man knows but it may be so as to him, because before or at that time Death may cut him off; and then he has no more to do with this Earth, or with the Sons of Men. As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him anymore, Job 7. 9, 10.

Reason 3. Because when we die our Everlasting state is to be determined 1 After Death the Judgment. The moment of our departure hence will pass us over to the Righteous Tribunal of God. It will make us either to shine with the Angels above, or to set with

the Devils. It will either fix us in a joyful Paradise, or in an intolerable state of Woe. So that we may say with Nieremberg, how many things are to pass in that Moment. In the same is our Life to finish, our Works to be examined, and we are then to know how it will go with us forever and ever? In that Moment I shall cease to Live, in that Moment I shall behold my Judge, in that moment I must answer for all my public and my secret Actions, for all that I have ever thought, or spoke, or done; for all the Talents, the Time, the Mercies, the Health, the Strength, the Opportunities and the Seasons and Days of Grace that I have ever had, for all the Evil that I might have avoided, for all the good I might have done and did not, and all this before that Judge, who has beheld my ways from my Birth to the Grave; before that Judge who cannot be deceived, and who will not be imposed upon. Little can he that has not been brought near to Death and Judgment know what Thoughts the diseased have when they are so. Little, very little does a Soul in Flesh know what it is to appear before the Great God. This is so great and so strange a thing, that they only know it who have received their final Sentence; but they are not suffered to return to tell us how it is, or what passes then; and God sees it fit it should be concealed from us who are yet on this side the Grave. But who does not tremble to think of this mighty Change, and of this Moment that is the last of Time and the beginning of Eternity; that includes Heaven and Hell, and all the Effects of the Mercy and Justice of God. (See Moral Essays, Vol. 4. Lib. 1. Chap. 9.) Who does not tremble when he Considers that Infinite and Holy Majesty before whom the Angels cover their Faces; that Considers his Omniscience and his Greatness and the mighty Consequences of that Sentence, how sudden it is, and how irresistible, and that it is an irrevocable Decree, and by a Word of this Mighty Judge we live or die forever. It is no wonder if the thoughts of it make us shrink and quiver. It is a greater wonder that when some or other, whom we know, are almost every week going to such a place

and state as this, we who are not yet cited to the Bar, are no more concerned, and use no more endeavors to be ready for it; 'tis a wonder that we put no higher a value on that Gospel that teaches us how we may avoid Condemnation; 'tis a wonder that we prize no more that Gracious Redeemer, who alone can plead our Cause, and that we labor and strive no more to be partakers of his Righteousness by which we may be Justified. It is no wonder if this prospect throw men into strange Agonies, as it frequently does those who are dying. Many people will say, when they hear the Complaints of the Sick, and their Long Continued Groans, It were well if God would take their souls away from their pained Languishing Bodies; it were well indeed if that could put an end to their present and their future pain. But do they not know that they must go into Eternity and be judged after death. Oh my Friends when you come to the Borders of the Grave, when you are within an Hour or two's distance from your Final Judgment, and your unalterable state, what a mighty Change will it cause in your thoughts and your apprehensions. You will then know and feel it, Then, when the Perspective is turned, and the other World begins to appear very great, and this very little. This that I have represented to you is a part of that which we call dying. Death is that which the Philosophers have talked of with great Contempt and with lofty Speeches, but I believe they commonly talked so confidently when they thought themselves far from it, and I am sure they did so because they had not a distinct, knowledge of Futurity. For had they considered their own sins, and the nature of their last Trial with the Consequents of it, this would have lowered all their Pride and Glory, they would have changed their Language had they looked upon Death as the Conclusion of Time, and the beginning of Eternity; and not only as a going out of this, but as an entrance into a state that would never Change. It is a great Mercy and greatly to be acknowledged that God allows us so much time wherein to prepare ourselves for this final and irrevocable doom. It is an instance of his

Patience that is truly Divine, that notwithstanding our many repeated Sins he has not cut us off. It is his great Mercy that gives us leave to appear in his Courts before we appear at his Tribunal, and that he affords us such large notice and warning that so we may be ready for our Last Trial, whereon so very much depends.

The Conclusion.

I may say to you this Evening as Christ to the People concerning John, Mat. 11. 7. What came you out to see. As for those who came hither out of a Curiosity only to see one of whom they have, it may be, heard much discourse, Let them know that though, by reason of my long and sore Affliction, I have been a wonder unto many, yet now I can say with some hope that God is my strong Refuge As for those that came with an expectation of hearing something new and diverting, that might please their Fancies or gratify their Ears only, they find themselves by this time mightily disappointed. But Those of you that came with a more serious Intention, know, that you see a Person that has by his own Sins and the Righteous Displeasure of God been for a long Season as in the very Grave, and yet by the Power and Goodness of God brought from thence again. You see a poor Reed that has been shaken indeed by the Wind, but which the Grace of God has kept from being broken to pieces. 'Tis to you to whom I would principally direct my Speech, 'tis your Prayers which I would beg, that so you would desire of God that the Deliverance which he has so far advanced, may be completed by the same Hand and Mercy that has hitherto revived me. You that have Health, have cause to praise him for his Mercy; and I that have been long sick, have cause to praise him who has been my Physician and my Helper. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together, Psal. 34. 3. Let us as we join our Prayers, so unite our Praises to this mighty Lord. Do you praise him for keeping you from violent

overwhelming pains, and I will Praise him for mitigating those that I labored under; and though he chastened me sore, yet he has not delivered me over to death. And so by this means we shall bring an acceptable Sacrifice to his Altar, and it may be that through Jesus Christ he will receive as an odor of a sweet smell this our Evening Sacrifice.

The End of the First Sermon.

SERMON II.

O Lord, thou hast brought up my Soul from the grave, thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit. - PSAL. 30. ver. 3, 4.

Sing unto the Lord, O ye Saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

Reason 4. Deliverance from the Grave is a great Mercy, and greatly to be acknowledged, because by that means a man has a longer time in which to prepare for another World. And this is more a Mercy because it must go with us forever, according to what we have done in these bodies, whether good or evil. This Life is our only state of Trial, and so shall it fare with us hereafter as we now behave ourselves. There is no knowledge nor invention in the Grave whither we are going. None of those things can be performed there, which to perform now is our most seasonable and necessary Duty. If a man

were to have a Trial for his Estate or Life, he would take it for a favor to have leisure given him wherein to make ready for it, and to put his Affairs into the best posture that he could, it ought to be reckoned a much greater kindness to have notice and time afforded us wherein to prepare for the Last determination of the State of our Souls which is vastly more weighty and Considerable. It is a Mercy to have Sickness or some tolerable Affliction sent to summon us before the Arrival of the King of Terrors, and to bid us put our Houses, and our Minds in Order, lest by sensual Enjoyments, or the pleasing Enjoyments of the Flesh, that Day come upon us unawares; and left we be in a slumber when the Voice shall say, Behold the Bridegroom comes, go ye out to meet him. There is no question at all but that 'tis very Lawful with submission to pray against Sudden Death; for though it be a Mercy to those whose Grace is eminently strong and who are always ready, to die without Lingerings Pains and a Complication of acute and violent Diseases, which make Death much more a Death than it would be without them, yet to the most the danger of Surprisal is so very great, and of being hurried to the Bar, and judged to an Eternal Condition before we have done what we ought to do in time, that we may esteem it none of the least Mercies of God that he does by some shaking blows warn us before he give the last stroke and cut us down. It is not only the practice of a Holy Life, and an Habitual Readiness which Believers have by Faith, and the renewing Operations of the Spirit, by the uprightness of their Carriage and the Constancy of their Prayers, but a more particular preparation that they need. 'It is necessary for them not only to have Oil in their Lamps, but their Lamps burning; not only the Graces of the Spirit, but those Graces in the fullest brightness and strength, to which they can attain in this Mortal State. The best can never be so much prepared for Death, but they may be more so. They never have proceeded so far in their Mortification but they are sensible that they have still more sins to mortify; they have never so much warmed

their Hearts with the love of God, but that they may still glow with a purer and a hotter Flame. It is very desirable to the best to have their Faith more strong, their submission more calm, and their hope more lively. 'It is very desirable to have more Acquaintance and Familiarity with God before they appear at his Tribunal to receive their final Sentence. They know well that it is a great Work, impartially, seriously and constantly to search their own Hearts, and to judge themselves aright that they may not be judged of the Lord. As also to discharge all the duties that they owe to God; to themselves, to their Neighbors and their Country, and they cannot but be very thankful that they are allowed more time to do it in. That they may purify their Consciences, raise their Affections, and review their Lives with exactness and Care when they are shortly to be looked into by an Omniscient and unerring Eye. They know it is a Mercy to be able to loosen their Hearts from the World, which they are too much apt to love, and in a weanedness from what is sensible to die before they die. The most Religious have the clearest Apprehension that to appear before Christ is no sleight or Common thing; that they must be such in whom he may take delight, and be as a Bride adorned for her Husband. They know that the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, and the hearing of the Word, and Fast-days and extraordinary Seasons of Prayer, are such duties as require the preparations of Humbling Sorrows, lively Desires, awful Reverence, Meekness, and Self-denial, because God will be sanctified of all that draw nigh unto him. They dare scarcely go to the Lord's Table without Fear and Trembling much less dare they go to the Lord himself without a most solemn Preparation. What Care do men use if they are but about to Transplant themselves into some Foreign Country, what Inquiries do they make about it? What laying in of all necessary Stores that they may not be destitute of suitable accommodations when they come to the new place where they design to fix. And 'tis not to be wondered at, that such as are to be removed into another World, are very

solicitous about it, and very thankful that their season and their day of Grace is lengthened out. Whoever Considers the many duties which the Scripture requires of those that believe, what obligations they are under to their Savior, what, to their Fellow-Christians, and to those who are yet strangers to the Faith. How many Omissions and Commissions they are guilty of, and what need there is of running, watching and striving with all their might that they may not loose Heaven and Glory; whoso thinks of this, must account it a Mercy that they have opportunity wherein to do what is so great and so indispensable. And as the Apostle speaking of the new Heavens and new Earth infers, What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness, 2 Pet. 3. 11. So in this Case we may say what manner of persons ought they to be who must quickly go into Eternity? How should they labor to increase with all the increase of God, to have suitable Promises laid up in their Hearts, from which in the sorest Distresses they may fetch Relief? What need have they of manifold Experiences, and of the Complete Armor of Righteousness, which may enable them to wrestle with, and to subdue, the various and unknown difficulties and Tentation's of a dying Hour; to have their Evidences for Salvation clear and unquestionable; to know that they are in a state of Grace, and that they have finished the work of their Generation. Indeed the Careless part of Men think that the Prolongation of Life is not in this respect so great a Mercy. For they think that it is a most easy thing to be ready for Death and Judgment; they think that a few Prayers at last, a few Tears and Cries to God, with a Confession of their Miscarriages, and a few Resolutions against what they once did amiss, will put them into a good frame and serve their turn; and so the time that was given them wherein to prepare for another World is lost and unimproved, because they understand not the greatness of their Work, nor the preciousness and value of that Time which is given them to do it in. They ought to Remember if they have been

near to death, how that nearness changed their Thoughts, and that they then found by the hurry and confusion of their Apprehensions, that Sickness was no proper season wherein to begin an holy Course or to repair the disorders of an ill one. Of all men in the World those who are recovered from a Sickness that found them in their Impenitence have most Reason to be thankful because had they died in that Condition they had died forever, what thanks owe they to God that they are under Hope in the use of Means, yet upon his Earth and not in Hell. And there are two things with respect to our dying, which render the Continuance of our Life a great Mercy.

First, the small Acquaintance which we have with the Future state, and the necessity we are under to get as lively apprehensions of it as we can. There are many strange Vicissitudes in this World, many changes that we see in Countries, when Kingdoms pass from one to another; in Families, when the number is either increased or diminished; and we suffer many changes in our Bodies from Sickness to Health, and from Health to Sickness again, but there is no change that is so great as this by Death. It is a thing of which we know but little, and none of the Millions of Souls that have passed into the invisible World have come again to tell us how it is. All that go hence remain fixed in their own state, some expecting, and others fearing the Resurrection and the Great Day. We have but very obscure apprehensions of that separated state, we know but little of the Great All-comprehending Spirit, and little with clearness and full satisfaction of our own Souls. When we know something of Spirits by their effects and the discoveries they make of themselves, and would more fully know their nature and have adequate Conceptions of them; we are like little Children that see the Image and Representation of some delightful object in a Glass, and then turn the glass hoping to see it in its full dimensions but by that means lose the sight of it altogether: so it is with us in our most Critical Inquiries

into Spiritual and Immaterial Substances. Nevertheless it is very desirable to know in what condition our Souls will be when they leave the Body, and what is the nature of that abode into which we must go but which we never saw. Into what Regions we must then take our flight and after what manner this will be done. When that Soul which touched and wrought by our hands, spoke by our tongue and heard by our Ears, shall have her present Organs taken from her, and pass from sensible objects on Earth to a spacious unseen World. When as in the twinkling of an Eye our spirits will go from this lower state through the Aiery Region and the visible Heavens soaring till they come to the Throne of God. All the Animal Actions of Nourishment and Growth, all the Sensations that arise from outward and Material objects will cease, and these spirits will be more vigorous and Active than now they are. When Death comes it leaves the body though far different from what it was yet still in our view. We see where it is, and what Qualities it is invested with; how it is disposed of we know, and are able to give some exact Account of its Condition, of this we have a more distinct Apprehension, but none of a separated Soul but what is very imperfect.

'It is certain the Soul will then preserve the Faculties that are natural to it, viz. to Understand, to Will, to Remember, as 'tis represented to us under the Parable of Dives and Lazarus. So long as 'tis lodged here it sees and perceives Corporal things by the Organs of the Senses, and reasons upon the Images that are labored in the Fantasy; but there are in our Souls Idea's purely intellectual, and which have in them nothing Material as the Contemplations of the Nature of God and of his Attributes. We little know how the People of the disembodied Societies Act, and Will, and Understand, and communicate their Thoughts to one another. What Conception can we have of a separated Soul, but that 'tis all thought, and that either in the Calmness of an elevated Joy, or the bitterness of overwhelming

Anguish, according to the state in which it is and the sentence that is past upon it. When a Mans Body is taken from him by Death, he is turned into all Thought and Spirit, either infinitely more pleased or more amazed than he could be in this World. How great will be its thoughts, when it is without any hindrance from these material Organs that now obstruct its operations.

In that Eternity (as one expresses it) the whole power of the Soul runs together one and the same way. In this World the soul sends out Parties of itself, divers ways, or to several ends; the Judgment may be pleased in the main, and yet the Affections disturbed; or these more still, and yet the Judgment dissatisfied and disturbed: One thought goes out in high discontent, another flies after it, recalls and reconciles it: On the other side, one thought leaps out of the Soul with pleasure, another reproves daunts and dejects it, with a correction of its haste. But in Eternity the soul is united in its motions, which way one Faculty goes, all go; and the Thoughts are all Centered as in one whole Thought of Joy or Torment. Beverley Great Soul of Man, pag. 292.

These things cannot but occasion great variety of thoughts in every Considering Man; and the soul especially when it looks toward that World and thinks itself near it, can no more cease to be Inquisitive about it than it can cease to be a soul. We may indeed be too curious in this matter, though it seems to be a Curiosity that is most excusable, because it concerns a man's self, his own soul, and his own Eternity; and when we have searched as deep as we can, we must confess our Ignorance, and say with the Prophet upon another occasion, Lord thou knowest! In these Contemplations we must make the Word of God our only Guide, and it is a Mercy greatly to be acknowledged that God allows us time wherein to converse with that Gospel that has brought life and immortality to light; and with that

Savior who is the great Prophet and Teacher of the Church, who came from Heaven, and is now gone thither, and we may fully rest and Acquiesce in the discoveries that he has given us of that Country for he knew it very well, was very faithful in the discharging of his office, and does not impose upon us anything that is either false or incredible; by our Holy Prayers we are to maintain a Commerce with him and with that World, and by our frequent going thither in our Meditations we may gain a clearer knowledge of it. Though there are no bounds on which our thoughts can terminate, but only the Revelations which God has been pleased to make in his own Word. What is above those Heavens, and that Firmament that we see, there's none can tell us but God and our Savior who are there. For when Men have abstracted their Thoughts with as much industry as they can from All that is material and sensible, when they have refined their Understandings to the greatest spirituality, and pored never so long upon the state of separation, they will still remain in the dark about it. And he is the most happy Man who in the sincere performance of the Duties of Religion can resign his Soul to Christ in Death, and trust him though he is to be removed to a strange and a new World. For immediately after he is loosed from the Body he will understand more in an instant than all the most Learned in this World have ever understood by the labor and diligence of many years.

Secondly, That which renders the continuance of Time to us wherein to prepare for Death, a great Mercy, is because we are to die but Once; and upon the well or ill doing of it depends our future Happiness or Misery. It is a great Mercy that we have time wherein to make ready for our last Combat, for if we lose the Battle once we are overthrown forever, it must not be fought over again. It is a Mercy that we have leisure to complete our journey well, for we must never travel over the same Road again. There will be no second

Edition wherein to Correct our former Errors, when a period is once put to the last Line of Life. Oh what Faith, what Courage, what Strength is necessary to Conquer the Fears of Death, and Death itself? If men fail in their Trades they may by the kindness of their Friends be set up again, if they have suffered Losses by Shipwreck, by Fire or by Plunder, they may be repaired, but a Soul once lost will remain so forever. 'It is a long, long Eternity that succeeds our Time; if we should live on Earth as many Hundred years as the most Aged live Months, it would bear no proportion with that vast and endless duration. Whoever compares the shortness of our present state with the continuance of that into which we enter when we are to die, cannot but esteem the being brought back from the Grave to be a great Mercy. If you have been careless of hearing at one season you may hear the Word again at another; if you have heretofore been cold in your Prayers, you may now excite your Hearts, and pray with more fervor; but if you once die ill, you must never mend so concluding a Miscarriage. All the Tears we shed cannot give Life to the Body from which the Soul is fled. All the Anguish of Miserable Souls cannot procure for them another Trial. They that are once cut down must never be planted by the Rivers side anymore. There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of Water it will bud and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away, yea man giveth up the ghost, and where is he. Job 14. 7, 8, 9, 10.

Reason 5. Those who are brought up from the grave have cause to be thankful, because by that means they have more opportunity to be serviceable to the Glory of God, and to be useful in the World. Merely to live is not a thing very desirable, considering how many Miseries there are in Life, to what Evils and Inconveniences our Bodies are

obnoxious, and that the pains which they may suffer may be both very long, and so secret that none can understand either what they are or how to remove them. But it is a most desirable thing to Live when we can thereby obtain the Ends that are truly Great and Noble. For,

First, hereby a man may do good to others. He may teach the Ignorant, reduce the wandering; and by the sincerity of his Counsel, by the zeal of his Prayers, and the Luster and Holiness of a good Example, advance the power of Religion. Our Lives are not our own, they are God's by a double, title both of Creation and Redemption; they are to be used for him who preserves, or takes them away as he will. Not only Ministers but every private Christian is obliged by the Name he bears, and by the Relation that he has to the holy Society of Believers, and to the Kingdom of Christ, whereof he is a Subject, to enlarge it by all good ways that he can; and every man is the more obliged to this when God has bestowed a new Life upon him. When we are near to the Gates of the Grave, and look back and see with how little Zeal and Diligence we had spent our time, and how little we had done for him who blest us all our days, then we are inclined most earnestly to beseech him that he would grant us another Trial, and that then we would improve it much better than we did our former time, and when he does grant us what we have asked, then it should be our great endeavor not to frustrate and disappoint the designs of his Goodness and Mercy. Then must we teach transgressors his way, telling them how dreadful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Then we may tell the Healthful what Sickness is, what we have found it to be by our own Experience, then we may tell them how it makes very uneasy and troublesome Companions of our now beloved Bodies. How it deprive us of all our Pleasures and Recreations, in the day, and of our rest at night. That all their Friendships, Conversations, and Merriments without true

Religion are altogether vain; and not only so, but they leave a sting of guilt behind when the sweetness that once allured is gone away. We may warn them to provide for the days of darkness, and for the many Miseries of Life that will sooner or later overtake them. When we are Recovered we can tell the Diseased, of the Goodness and the Power of God, that they can never be so distressed, but that it is still in his power to help them, and a Word of his Mouth can heal them when other Physicians are of no value. We can then by what we felt ourselves tell them something of the Evil effects and bitterness of Sin. Though what we feel in some Cases is far more than what we can express. We can after our Sickness excite all our Acquaintance to Fear and to love God, to fear him who can in a few days bring them very low, and to love him who can quickly raise the lowest up again. A Man has much more to do on Earth than to secure his own Salvation: The World, the Church, the Nation to which he belongs, do all claim a part in him. The Converted and the Unconverted, his Relations and Friends, the good and the bad do all need and require his help; and it is a Mercy greatly to be acknowledged, that God renews our strength and opportunity that we may do some service for him before we die. There are many Duties to be performed here, which cannot be done in another World, Psal. 88. 11. His loving kindness cannot be declared in the Grave nor his Faithfulness in destruction. Psal. 6. 5. In death there is no remembrance of thee, in the grave who shall give thee thanks. Psal. 115. 17. The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. Now it is a blessed and a glorious privilege to praise him here on Earth; for though he be praised among the glorified, it is without any propagation of praise to the name of God, for that is the Privilege of the Saints on Earth, where they make known his name to those that knew it not before, or make it more known to those that knew it. As also to advance the Kingdom of Christ in the World, to which the dead contribute nothing at all, and to give good Examples by the

sincerity and inoffensiveness of their Carriage, for in heaven there is no need of good Examples. There is no Evil Person to be reduced, and all there are possessed of their Happiness. (Vid. Hook 's Privilege of the Saints on Earth beyond those in Heaven in regard of many duties, pag. 12.) Here it is that we may feed the Hungry, clothe the Naked, visit the Sick, lodge the poor that have no dwelling place. Here it is by our Sympathy that we may weep with those that weep, and in some respect imitate the kind Incarnation of our Savior by putting on the Wants and Miseries of others. But in Heaven there is no Miserable person to relieve, no opportunity to show our Mercy and Compassion to the afflicted, and yet this Grace is one of the fairest Lineaments of the new Creature, and which causes in us a near resemblance of our Heavenly Father. Here we may pray for the Sick, the Tempted and the Persecuted, but there is a happy freedom from Sickness and Temptation. While we live we may by Intercession and Prayers for our Friends do them good, but in that World for ought we know, such an Intercession ceases; and we are sure there is neither Command, Example or Promise in all the Scripture to encourage us to make our Application to the Saints departed for the Relief of our wants; that Homage is alone due to Christ the Great and only Mediator, whose Mediation is founded on the excellency of his Person, and the Ransom that he gave to God. 'It is here on Earth that the strong in Faith may assist the weak; 'tis here they may speak words of Comfort and Refreshment to the weary soul; whereas above they all rest from their Labors. 'It is here they must strengthen the weak hands, and Confirm the feeble knees, and say to them that are of a fearful heart be strong, fear not; Isa. 35. 3, 4. 'It is here that the fathers to their children must make known his truth, Isa. 38. 19. and endeavor that his name may be celebrated from Generation to Generation, and that the people which shall be created may praise the Lord. Psal. 102 18. 'It is here that in the midst of sore Trials we must exercise our Faith, for there it will be turned into sight and full

Assurance. 'It is here that we must wait in hope for there the good which we expect will be possessed. 'It is here that we must love our Enemies and bless them that Curse us. And this Faith and Hope and love are greatly serviceable to the Propagation of the Gospel. 'It is here on Earth that we must acquire and use these Graces and exercise the Gifts which God hath given us for the common good. For whether there be prophetesies they shall fail, whether there be tongues they shall cease, whether there be knowledge it shall vanish away, 1. Cor. 13. 8. What a Mercy is it to have Life and time wherein to perform so many good Works for the advantage of our Neighbors? What a Mercy is it for a Magistrate to live, that he may shine with more brightness and fill his higher Orb with clearer Light: That he may by his own good Example and by his discouraging of Profaneness and Irreligion, promote the Kingdom of Christ as well as contrive for the Honor of his own Dominions? What a Mercy is it to a Minister that he may live to speak in the name of God, to bring the glad tidings of Salvation, and to be long employed in bringing home poor wandering sinners to Jesus Christ? To unfold the Mysteries of the Gospel and the unsearchable riches of Grace and Mercy that are therein, and to use the Talents that are given him for his Masters Glory. How much more desirable is it to such an one to be speaking in the Pulpit than to be silent in the Grave? And to have all his knowledge that he acquired with painful Labor and waking Thoughts to be as it were buried with him, or at least not to be of any further use to the World? What a Mercy is it to a Parent that he may Live to educate his his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; that he may instruct and Antidote them against the Contagions of this World, where Evil Examples are so numerous and good ones so very rare to give them warning of the dangers which he himself narrowly escaped, and to acquaint them betimes with the ways of God? And by his conduct and prudent advice, and frequent Exhortations and constant prayers to recommend them frequently to

the blessing of Providence, and to fortify them against the rashness, and haste, and folly of their Careless Age. 'It is easy indeed for those that are faithful in their several stations to desire Death, as a Traveler desires the shadow of a Rock in a weary land; and as a Laborer after a days hard labor is glad of the approaching Night that he may go to bed. 'It is a piece of self-denial for very Holy Men to be content to Live and to stay on Earth when they have a well-grounded hope of Heaven. To stay in the midst of hard service, Tentation's and Trials, and to endure the heat of the day when they might have their Reward; especially if they be afflicted with tedious bodily pains, for to serve God with cheerfulness in the midst of pain is a noble effect of Faith. It is a very Generous thing to desire to Live when they have no pleasure in Life but as it gives them an occasion to be serviceable to the Church. It is not altogether so with those who are in full health and Ease. For as their strength is greater, so their work on that account is more delightful, and may be done with more vigor. There is not a more Remarkable Instance in History than that of our Apostle, Phil. 1. 21, 22, 23. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: 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. Was there ever seen anything in the World greater than the frame and behavior of this Apostle, this Holy Man of God; this Angel in Flesh we might have called him but that he speaks of dying? 'It is no great matter for a Man to desire to Live and to be serviceable, who is under Doubts and Fears about his Salvation; 'tis what he ought chiefly to desire, that he may renew his Evidences and work out his Salvation with more diligence. But this was not the case of Paul, he knew that to die would be his gain. It was (as it were) put to his choice whether he would go to Christ, to that dear Master who had loved him and whom he had loved, or stay below in this World, a World that had

given him very coarse and rude Entertainment, that had afflicted and scorned and vilified and persecuted him wherever he came. And yet this poor weary Traveler is willing still to travel for the good of others when he might have been at home. He is willing to stay amidst the reproaches and pains and sorrows of this Earth, when he might have gone to Heaven where he would have had a Crown of Glory and have been in the midst of Joys and Hallelujahs. He might have gone to Triumph and Victory, but for the sake of his Neighbors and his Friends he is willing to renew the Combat. He had been long tossed on a very stormy Sea, and might now if he had so pleased have gone into the Port; but for their sakes he is willing, from the very Harbors Mouth, to put to Sea, and to abide new dangers and storms again. No Soul, excepting that of Christ, was ever sired with a greater Zeal for God, and the Salvation of others, than this of Paul. There is a different behavior visible in Hezekiah, who when it was told him by the Prophet, Isa. 38. 1, 2. Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live. He turned his face to the wall and prayed, and wept sore, ver. 3. One would have thought it should not have been an unwelcome Message to a good man, especially to one who could reflect upon his Sincerity, and appeal to God about it; to one that as we may Imagine might have been, after so pure and so sincere a Life, accustomed to the Thoughts of so great a Change; that knew that the setting of his Sun, was that it might rise again in a glorious Immortality. It is a wonder to see those Cheeks bedewed with Tears which one would have thought should have been adorned with smiles; as a Soldier is glad to be discharged from long duty, or after having long maintained a Place with great Hardships, to have the Siege raised, and to be set at Liberty. But there are Three Reasons usually, assigned for it.

First, Though he was a very good Man, yet he was still but a Man, had those Humors and Passions which are usually put into a great

agitation upon the thoughts of sudden Death. The Body and the Soul have been so long Acquainted that they are loath to part.

Secondly, Because he had no Issue, he was descended from David, and in a probability as he might think of having the Messiah come of him according to the Flesh. And,

Thirdly, He desired to Live longer for the Reformation of the Church. For his Age is reckoned to be then but 39, and that he died at 54. We ought to be very thankful when God brings us from the Grave and will use us in his service. He needs us not; if a thousand such as we are should die, how quickly can he supply our places with such as may be more faithful, and on whom he will bestow more Grace and better Gifts. When he took away such great Men as Moses, Aaron and Elias, he found others to put in their steads, and the Church and the Interest of Christ will not die with us. Those that are most devoted to the service of God, would not have the opportunities even of difficult obedience taken from them too soon. Having often dishonored God in the time of their Health, they would still serve him though it be in pain. Indeed though Believers may sometimes earnestly desire to go to Heaven when this World through their languishing Afflictions and sore Trials is become uneasy to them, yet God will have them to serve him here on Earth though' it be with much trouble. Christ prays not that he would take his disciples out of the World. Tho' they were persecuted and hated in it, Joh. 17. 15. And this may give us some Light into one of the most mysterious parts of the Providence of God, why he suffers his servants to conflict with violent pains when he could ease them with a word; why he suffers them to make their Couches to swim with Tears, when he could quickly wipe all their Tears away; why he suffers them to groan long in Misery, when if he pleased he could translate them to Heaven without a sigh. 'It is, that they may live to serve him even in these Afflictions, and by the

Experiences which they have of his Faithfulness be encouraged more and more to trust in him. He could at their first Conversion give them the Reward, and as soon as they are adopted to be his Sons, make them actual Possessors of that Inheritance to which they are Heirs. Or he could strengthen their Sanctification and complete their Grace, that they should not complain and mourn as they now do, for the hardness of their hearts, their deadness and unbelief. It is not that he takes delight in their Grief, or that he finds an Harmony in their Groans. 'It is because even they shall feel the bitterness of sin, they shall know the way to Life to be strait and narrow; that so they may at length wonder more at the riches and freeness of his Grace, that brings them to Glory even by such unlikely ways. He will have them to be trained up with difficulties, to strive, and to wrestle with them, that so their Fervor may shame the coldness and indifference of others who take no pains for their Salvation. He will have them to go laden under the sense of their Corruptions, that so finding their daily need of Christ, they may still remember him who is their help, and finding so much guilt in themselves they may apply themselves to his unspotted Righteousness for Justification, and to his Word and Spirit for new degrees of Holiness; that they may have experience of his Goodness and he of their Obedience and Love; that they may know the Loving-kindness, the Care, and the Wisdom of that God that Pilots their Ship when it is covered with waves and storms; for storms are the Triumph of his Art and he steers even the sinking Vessel to the Port.

Secondly, By being brought from the Grave, a Man may be enabled to do much good to himself as well as to others; that so he may at last with joy give an account of his Stewardship; that he may increase his own reward, and by God's Grace make his Crown of Happiness more sparkling and more full of weighty Glory. As no man ought to be satisfied with the lowest degrees of grace, so everyone may and ought

by an Innocent Ambition, and a multitude of good Works, to endeavor to sit near to the Throne, and not only to save himself, but to carry others with him to heaven that may be his Joy and his Crown in that Day.

Reason 6. and Lastly, there are several circumstances that may enlarge the kindness of being brought from the Grave, and which ought to render us more thankful for it. Those that are good may have their iniquities visited with stripes, and it cannot but be a terrible thing to fear that they shall be snatched away whilst they are punished with the rods which their own Sins have made. As the Prophet was devoured by a Lion for his Disobedience to the command of God, 1 King. 13. 21. It is a great Mercy to live to see the good of his Chosen, and it is a punishment to be taken away just when some great deliverance is coming to the Church. It was a thing which Moses greatly desired to see the Promised Land, and to go thither; to see it indeed was granted him, but to enjoy it was denied him because of the provocation at the Rock. It is a Misery to see Plenty for others, and not to taste thereof ourselves like that Lord of Samaria who perished for his unbelief, 2 King. 7. 2. 17. 18. It is a great Mercy to be delivered after we have been afflicted and ready to die, when the terrors of God have amazed us and his fierce wrath has gone over us, Psal. 88. 15. How sad a thing is it to die under a sense of the weight of sin, and to have no prospect of a Pardon; to feel as it were the very scorching flames of Hell, and to have no hope that these will ever be cooled or removed, but rather grow more hot and scorching; to have no Comfort from Heaven or Earth, no rest for the Body, no composure for the Soul; to be sinking and to have nothing to lay hold upon, to stand shivering on the brink of destruction and to see no way of escape, to be compassed in with sin behind and with Miseries before, to be in darkness and to see no light, not to know where our Lot will be fixed, not to know but that it may be among the

damned. To be near to the Judgment Seat of Christ, and to be afraid of appearing there. This is a state in which no man would choose to die for it is inexpressibly terrible; and it is a most wonderful mercy to be delivered from a Case so sad as this. For how uncomfortable is it to a man's self to be roaring in the disquietness of his soul, not to be able to live because of the insupportableness of his Pain, nor to dare to die because of the greatness of his sins that are always before him, and that are like to lie down with him in the dust. How uncomfortable is it to the Relations and Friends of the sick and dying, that see him struggling and crying under pains which tear him to pieces. How uncomfortable is it to them, to hear his doleful Expressions about his Eternal state, to see the anguish of his soul and the arrows of the Almighty sticking in it, which makes him a terror to himself, and to those that are round about him. How woeful a thing is this! And if a man get to Heaven at last by the mighty Grace of God, yet it is a thing very undesirable to go thither as by the very gates of Hell, for a man to have his days shortened and his strength weakened in the way, Psal, 102. 23. and to have his Sun go down at noon, looks like the displeasure of God; and no man would die by the frown of God. A man cannot be blamed who is loath to die till he save some Hope that it shall go well with him forever. 'It is a sore Evil to be thrown aside as a broken vessel in which there is no pleasure, Jer. 22. 28. It is a great mercy to be kept from raging violent distempers, and to be delivered from such, after we have long groaned under them. It is a great Mercy to have such a sickness as will allow us time to exhort, and direct and counsel others; and 'tis very desirable that we may by a Christian Carriage set our Seal to Religion, and show its Power and Reality. 'It is a most glorious thing to die in the Lord, i. e. as one Paraphrases it, in the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Spirit of Faith and Love, in a Spirit of Elevation towards God which makes the dying believer to go towards Heaven with all his force, and like his Savior commit his soul with joy into the hands of his

heavenly Father. Du Bosc Sermons. p. 354. We ought to pray that we may not be like the wicked in our death, and that we may be found of our Lord in peace; and that we may say with old Simeon, when after long expectation he saw the Messiah and embraced him in his arms, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Luk. 2. 29, 30. This we may beg of God, for it is not only for our happiness but for his Glory, when we can trust him though' we go into a state which he has promised indeed, but which we never saw. What a glorious thing is it, when we are drawing near to the end of Life to be able to wait, and not only to wait, but to long; not only to believe and hope, but to rejoice and triumph in the thought of seeing God? To give to those that live, an Example of dying well, which is the most difficult thing in the World. What a mercy is it when a man after many long and weary steps on Earth is going stored with Experiences and a well-grown Faith to his Journeys end? When a man arrives at Heaven like a vessel well freighted and richly Laden, that after a long and dangerous Voyage is coming home. To shine all his Life with the beauties of Holiness, and when he dies to set like the Sun in beams, to rise again. Oh what a pleasant thing is it to a Believer to have the sweet foretastes of heaven here, and hereafter to enter into the joy of his Lord? To be blown along with a full gale of assured and undaunted Hope. To be able to say, I know whom I have believed, I have fought the good fight of faith, I am going to that God whose I am and whom I serve; to that God who has loved me, and whom I have loved, who will be my own God forever and ever. What a glorious thing is it when a Christian by the assistance of the blessed Spirit has mortified all inordinate desires after anything in this life; when he can say, Let me arise and go hence to a better place; when the Affections and all the powers of the Soul are on the wing to meet its Savior on the way; when it is in an actual readiness, and as soon as ever it hears the voice saying, Come up hither, will freely go and

with such holy haste as if it would prevent Christ in his coming to fetch it. It is a thing greatly to be desired and prayed for, that when our last hour comes, we may not only in the General be prepared to die, but that we may be in a dying Frame; and a man is so when he is very submissive to God and his blessed Will, when he is pleased with that order of his Providence, that calls him hence. When by Faith he is entirely loosened from the World and Worldly things, and in assurance of Salvation can yield up his Life with this, Lord Jesus receive my Spirit.

Inf. 1. If being brought from the Grave be so great a mercy, and for which we ought to be thankful, then what cause have those to be thankful who are delivered so as never to be in danger of dying anymore. Happy are they who are delivered so as ever to be delivered, never to feel the same bitterness which they once felt, nor to groan under the same Miseries and Calamities. We praise God here on Earth but alas how low and how weak are our Praises to what he deserves for his own Excellencies, and for his Mercy to us? How cold are our warmest praises to theirs above, who are all in admiration, Ecstasy and Love? And well may they praise him in the most elevated manner, that certainly know that all their diseases are healed and their Iniquities forgiven. That by their nearness to God see his Face and how well-pleased he is with all they do, they praise the riches of his Grace in pardoning so many sins and so great; they praise his power and his Wisdom that guided their poor trembling Souls to his own Glory; their hearts are full of Love, and 'tis that which produces Praise and Joy. Oh what a cheerful Society is above in Heaven, where so many Millions of Angels, and so many Saints join together in the same blessed work, and all their several Anthems meet in one loud and pleasant Hallelujah, how vastly different is their Assembly from such an one as this? Here we are with our unbelief, with our fears, with our strong Corruptions, and with our

many sins, whereas they are all perfect and complete in Holiness. Here are we liable to manifold Calamities, the very thoughts of which may be justly afflicting to us, but in their World they have no change nor variation. They have one continued and unalterable Felicity, after a long and doleful sickness, it is a pleasant thing to behold this World again; it looks as a new World to me who have dwelt for so many Months on the very borders of the Grave. But alas what is this World that at the best is a Region and a state of death, to that above which is a Region and a state of pure and undisturbed Life. The deliverance which God has been pleased to give to Me is in many respects as a Resurrection, but it is such a one as that of Lazarus; after which I must be sick again and die, for Recovery is but a delay of certain death. And indeed our praises for our escape from death are very much damped and allayed by this thought, that we must for all the deliverances we have at present, yet in a little while go into the Grave. The remembrance of those fore and dreadful Calamities that surrounded me, and this Consideration that I am, whilst in this body, obnoxious to many thousand more distresses makes me to rejoice with trembling. It is a very sad Consideration when a man looks upon such a number of people as is here this Evening, to think, how many several sorts of miseries may be our Lot before we die. All of us are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. We can no more avoid affliction then we can run away from ourselves. What vexations may you Parents meet withal in disobedient Children, that may send you mourning to the dust? What Curses may come to you who have careless Parents that suffer you to wander in the way of death? What disappointments and losses and decays may you that are Tradesmen meet withal, or if you avoid all these yet that which is worse may come upon you. I mean sharp and violent diseases, and these I call worse because a man will better bear any inconvenience without him, then that which fills his body with uneasiness and pain, and his Soul by its sympathy with its dear Companion with Anguish and

Vexation. In how little a while will all, who are now alive, be dead! In how little a time may the most strong and healthful person here, be taken off by sickness from all Employment and business! How does it trouble us many times to see the Tears and Sorrows of our nearest Friends, and we cannot mitigate them; with what earnest looks do they move our pity when they are in great pain but we cannot help them, their shrill Cries, and their doleful groans may pierce our hearts but we know not how to remove them. We stand by their Bedsides and see their Agonies, but by being sorrowful we do but for the most part add new grief to theirs. We see their Countenances change and how at length they pass away, and that shortly in such a case shall we ourselves be. But oh what a welcome and glorious day will that be, when we shall see those very friends alive again whom we once saw in the most dreadful Agonies of death? When though we parted with Tears, yet we shall meet with Joy. It will be a welcome day indeed, when their Looks, their Expressions, their Carriage, will all be changed for the better. There will be no appearance of anything that is dismal and grievous, and it will be more welcome to us because we and our friends, so suitable, so loving and so perfect shall never part again? Oh what a comfortable thought is this? Oh what will our praises be when we are there, where there will be no more sickness, no more death forever. We shall behold what we were in our Mortal State, how vain and how short-lived, and what we are when we are made Immortal. There will be no more restless and weary days, nor nights as restless as the day, not a sigh nor a groan will be heard in all the blessed place above. What would one that is in great pain give for ease, most readily would he give all he has in the World, but upon our first entrance into that Land of pleasure and of health, all our Diseases will be cured, and so fully cured that we shall never Relapse nor be diseased again. There will be no pain. This to those that are at ease may seem a little part of Heaven but to those of us that have been in long and terrible sickness, 'tis a very sweet and

reviving Consideration. In this World one affliction is scarce past till another comes, usually there is breach upon breach, and a new sorrow treads upon the heels of the old one, as one wave upon another. We have scarcely dried our eyes for one loss but another comes that will make us weep again; but in the Heaven which we hope for, there is no Language but that of Praise. Here we are always either bewailing our own Miseries or those of our Friends and Neighbors; but there it will not be so. God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be anymore pain, for the former things are passed away, Rev. 21. 4. Oh what a joy will it be to us, to be past death, that is so terrible and to be forever past it! The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with sons, and everlasting joy upon their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away, Isa. 35. 10. We praise God indeed here and we have Cause to praise him, but our Victories are not so complete as to make a perfect Triumph, we have one great Battle yet to fight, and one great Gulf to shoot, and a dark and a solitary way to go. This is that which is grievous to our thoughts; but oh what a joy will it be to us when we are past death and have died well, who can express the mighty pleasure of it? When the delivered Soul can say, I that have been so furiously tempted, so violently assaulted, so fiercely shaken by the blast of the terrible one, shall be so no more, all the Rage of Satan shall not come near me nor give me an unquiet thought forever. And I, that grieved and was disconsolate with tedious and uncommon pain, shall never droop nor languish anymore. What a reviving prospect will it be when we stand on the other side of the Grave, when the terrible forerunners of Death, and Death itself shall be no more? Then we may say indeed, Oh death where is thy sting, oh grave where is thy victory? What consternation, fear and perplexity filled the hearts of the poor Israelites when they were going out of Egypt when they were environed with rocks, with their

Enemies behind, and with the Sea before? They were in great trouble and knew not what to do. But how different were their looks and Apprehensions when they beheld the Sea to give way, and by an unheard of Miracle stand as a Wall on either hand till they past thorough! How delightful was it to them, when they were on the firm Land, to see those very Enemies, that Pharaoh and those Cruel Masters, that had for so many years kept them in cruel bondage to find a grave in that Element which yielded and made a way for them; Exod. 15. 1, 2. So will it be with us when we shall see all our diseases, all our Fears, all our Temptations, all our sinking thoughts to be destroyed forever. The day of our death that will convey us to the blessed State, will be better to us then the day of our birth that brought us into such an evil World as this. Our Eyes will then no more behold grievous objects; our Ears will no more hear any sad or doleful news. Here we have many National and Personal Deliverances, but alas we sin again, and so bring upon ourselves new Judgments: But there, which every sincere Soul reckons to be a great part of Heaven we shall sin no more forever. I that am now speaking come to you as from the Grave, and can give you an account of Pain and Sickness, but am not able to give you so distinct an Account of the Holy & Cheerful Employment that is above. But if one were to come to you from Heaven, if he were but enabled to tell what he felt, and your Capacities enlarged to understand the pleasing Narrative, how would your glad hearts melt with an Admiring Joy, and your Souls be raised to Praise and Wonder! They will be much more raised and more joyful when you have your complete and final Deliverance. Then you shall say with those in Rev. 5. 12, 13. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. And again, Blessing, honor, glory and power be unto him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.

The End of the Second Sermon.

SERMON III.

O Lord, thou hast brought up my Soul from the Grave: thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down to the Pit. - PSAL. 30. ver. 3, 4.

Sing unto the Lord, O ye Saints of his, and give Thanks at the remembrance of his Holiness.

IF Deliverance from the Grave be so great a Mercy, and for which we ought to be very thankful: what cause have they to be thankful that are delivered from a Death in Sin? As the Soul is much better than the Body, so the Mercies that are bestowed upon it are much more valuable: and without this spiritual Resurrection, temporal Deliverance and Salvation would not be so great a Mercy. A Soul under the Dominion and reigning Power of Sin, is in a far more deplorable Condition than a Body that is consuming in the Grave: the one suffers under a sort of innocent Misery which it cannot help, the other suffers under a willful Obstinacy and Impotence contracted by its own fault. How sad a prospect is it to see Men far from God, in whom alone there is Life; & a Separation from whom is far more terrible than the separation of the Body and the Soul, which yet is painful and sad enough. They that are under the Power of this Spiritual Death, taste not the Goodness of God, they hear not his

loudest Calls, they tremble not at his most dreadful Threats, they are not drawn with his Love, nor start at his approaching Wrath. They are very sick indeed, but they feel not their Sickness; their Ignorance has deprived their Souls of all knowledge of their own Miseries: they are in a state of Death and Insensibility; and their Case is the more sad, because they are like to fall under the Power of eternal Death: and though their temporal Life is prolonged for a Season, yet we may say of them, as of Malefactors under the Sentence of the Law for their Crimes, they are dead Men, though there be a Reprieve, or a delay of Execution for a little space. And if any of you (as I hope there are many here) are delivered from a state so dangerous and so miserable, what Thanks and Praise should you give to God, who hath quickened you, when you were dead in Trespasses and Sins? Eph. 2. 1. especially considering that you had no Inclinations, no foregoing Dispositions to this spiritual Life. You contributed nothing to your own Regeneration, no more than a Carcass in the Grave can raise itself and live again; no more than dry Bones can move of their own accord, or clothe themselves with Skin and Flesh. When he passed by, and saw you in your Blood, Ezek. 16. 6. then he said unto you, Live. The Hour is come, in which they that are in the Grave, shall hear the Voice of the Son of God; and they that hear, shall live, Joh. 5. 25. How many of your Friends, your Neighbors, and your Fellow-Citizens are there, in whom there are no Signs of Life at all? That notwithstanding all their Civility and fair Carriage, their Attendance upon the Word, and the performance of several outward Duties, have only a likeness to the Living, but no real Life. And why should God be so good to you, and not to the rest of Men? You were once the Children of Wrath, and Enemies as well as they. Were there any peculiar Excellencies in you more than in others to recommend you to his Favor? No, he has been merciful to you, because he will be merciful: and you may say as 'tis in Eph. 2. 4, 5. God who is rich in Mercy, for his great Love wherewith he loved us, even when we were

dead in Sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. 'It is a very great Mercy for those that have been sick to be restored to Health; but you are delivered from a worse Death, and have obtained a better Resurrection, in as much as the second Death, to which they were obnoxious, is infinitely more painful and dreadful than the first. What a Mercy do you enjoy to be brought from a state of Wrath and Condemnation, into a state of Peace and Favor? From the Guilt of your Sins, which made you dead in Law, you are freed in your Justification: and from the Power of Sin, which would have kept you in continual Slavery, you are delivered by the sanctifying Influences and Operations of the blessed Spirit; you have cause to be thankful for yourselves, and for your Relations too, if God has given the same Mercies unto them: you may invite your Neighbors and your Friends to a Participation of your Comforts, and say as the Father of the Prodigal, Come and rejoice with me, for this my Son was lost, and is now found, was dead, and is now alive. To raise your Thankfulness, consider what a condition you would have been in, had not God blessed you with a part in the first Resurrection. You whose Eyes are now fixed on Heaven and Glory, had been still slumbering as unconverted Sinners are, on the very brink of Hell; you had then been without all relish of that word which first produced, and which does every day maintain your Life, and which is sweeter to you than Honey, or the Honey-Comb, Psal. 19. 10. You had now been without all Esteem and Value of that dearest Redeemer, who purchased for you this Happiness at a very dear price; and that you might live, was himself content to die: you had then been without that reviving hope of seeing him forever, that smoothes your way, and guides your Steps, and upholds your Spirits, though you meet with many a sharp and bitter Cross. You would now perhaps have been profaning his Sabbaths, vilifying his Ordinances, tearing his Name to pieces with execrable Oaths; you might not have known what is the Sweetness of a sincere and hearty Prayer, what is the Blessedness of a Soul whose

Sins are pardoned, and how honorable is the Privilege of having the great God for a Father, and Christ for a Mediator: You are delivered from spiritual Diseases, which are worse than all bodily Distempers; for Pride and Envy, Impatience and Discontent, and Ambition and Revenge, are worse than even the worst of Pains, than the Stone, the Cholic, the Strangury, or the like. These cause a momentary Trouble; but the evil Habits, the corrupt Inclinations, and the disorderly Motions that bear sway in that poor Soul that is dead in Sin, tend to an everlasting Misery. Continually adore and magnify the Power of your Savior, that made your Hearts at length to yield to his own terms, though they gave him a very great Opposition: Bless the Skill and Wisdom of your gracious Physician, that cures all the Diseases of your old Nature, that is not in any part of it sound and healthful. It is easy to kill and ruin and destroy, that we can all do too well; but who can recover and save but he alone? And if he was to be admired when on Earth, He healed the Sick, and made the Blind to see, the Lame to walk, and the Dead to live: He is much more now to be adored, and his Power is not less miraculous when it displays its virtue in Regeneration; and when he makes all the boisterous unruly passions of Nature to be still and quiet, than in commanding the Seas and the Winds. These things should be the matter of your Praise and Wonder, as they will be the cause of Praise and Wonder to his Saints forever: and if David is thankful here, when he says, O Lord, thou hast brought my Soul from the Grave; what matter of greater Thankfulness is it, when a Christian can say, O Lord, thou hast brought up my Soul from Hell, from the Power of Satan, from the House of Bondage, and from the Neighborhood of the second Death.

Long Life is in itself a Blessing, and for which we may very lawfully pray. I say 'tis in itself a Blessing, for it may be clogged with those Miseries that may make it to be as a Curse: As if a Man were to live long only to row in Galleys, or to dig in Mines, or to pine in a

Dungeon, or to live in Pain and Torment, or to languish on a sick Bed for many Years together, without help or ease. As we do not say a Ship that has been in a Storm for many days has failed long, but the Ship has been long tossed: So life attended with innumerable Vexations and heavy Crosses, were not so truly to be called Life, as one continued Act of Dying. To live to see nothing but Desolations, to hear nothing but ill Tidings, and to feel nothing but Pain; these and many other things would make a long Life to be an Affliction; and such as these made Jeremy to say, Why died I not from the Womb? To have Life and to have no Comfort with it, to have such Diseases, it may be, as will not allow us to take any Delight in what we eat and drink, in the Society of our Friends and good People, or good Books; when we have no other Language but Complaints, no other work but to sigh and to groan, and it may be Pains which we cannot bear: Life with these Companions looks but as a poor and sorry thing: but Life as it includes a Recovery from Sickness, a Recovery from Distempers that hindered us either from the doing or the receiving good, so indeed it is a Blessing, and may be prayed for, though when we do so we must request it: 1st, With great Submission to the sovereign Disposer of Life and Death, to do with us so as may serve most his Interest and Kingdom in the World. 2dly, We must in the desires of long Life, propose to ourselves great and honorable ends: Some desire to live long that they may with more Freedom indulge and gratify their Appetites: Some that they may get great Estates, make some stately Buildings and Houses that they design to call by their own Names, and hoping thereby to perpetuate their Memory. These are the Desires of Men in whose Hearts the World bears too great a Sway, and who are little acquainted with the Nature of Religion; for this will teach us to make the Glory of God, the Edification and Profit of our Neighbor, and the Welfare of our own Souls, the only end in our Desires of long Life, and then we must inform ourselves in the right Notion of long Life. We commonly think that 70 or 80 is the

duration of a long Life; but it is not to be measured by the number of Years, so much as by our Proficiency in Heavenly Wisdom: He has lived long and well too, that has attained to the end of Living, that has got that Knowledge and those Graces which enable him to live to the Glory of God here, and to enjoy him forever; and a Sinner that is an hundred Years old, will be accursed, Isai. 65. 20. if he arrive not to this; he has been indeed a great while, but has not truly lived at all. And though the best are but Loiterers, and have not that esteem of time which its real Preciousness does require at their Hands;

Yet he that hath an hundred Years time, and loseth it all, lives not so long as he that hath but twenty and bestows it well: It is too soon to go to Hell at a hundred Years old, and not too soon to go to Heaven at twenty.

Baxter 's Saints Rest, p. 613. Barely to live, is a thing no way considerable; for Birds and Flies, and Gnats and other Animals, live as well as we, nay, and many of them have a more delicate Pleasure in Life, as wanting the Bitterness of our Grievs, and the Fears of a sad Futurity; but we then desire long Life aright, when we beg it for this reason, that we may live to God: 'tis what is very desirable in this respect, though we ought not to promise it to ourselves, for we must always work with Zeal and Fervor, as not knowing but we may have only a little time wherein to work. I believe there is scarcely one among us all, but hopes to live long, and to attain to the Years of some of our old Progenitors, and does not question but he shall do so. When we see very aged People, even in our dangerous Youth, we hope that we shall live till our greener Heads be covered with the Winter, and the Snow of Age. 'It is indeed a thing greatly to be desired, where one is planted in the Vineyard of God, not to be removed thence, till the time of Harvest, and not to have our Fruit blasted with rude and unseasonable Weather, but that we may come

to the Grave in a full Age, Like as a Shock of Corn cometh in his season, Job 5. 26. It was indeed a Blessing more insisted on, and more largely promised in the Old Testament than 'tis in the New; for that Economy was chiefly managed with respect to temporal Advantages and Prosperity. They had in many Promises the Discovery of another happy Life, though not so clear and distinct as that which the Gospel gives to us, yet they had the Belief of it, and their Belief was without doubt confirmed by the Translation of Enoch, and the Rapture of Elias: for they might easily think that God would not remove two Men, so very good, and so very useful, unless it were to place them in a better State than that was which they had on Earth. Long Life is a great Blessing, but not such an one as God is always pleased to give to the best of Men: Good Josiah, the Glory of all the Kings in those Days, did not live so long as many other worse than he: All Israel was forced to lament his early Death, whom to have seen alive would have been their greatest Joy. Our good King Edward the 6th, that was in his tenderest Youth so great a Scholar, so good a Christian, and so excellent a King, so hearty an Enemy to the Pope, and so sincere and true Friend to the Reformation, and so great a Promoter of it; he died (alas) very young. The Divine Providence is mysterious in its Conduct, and far above our Thoughts. For what Good might two such great and holy Men have done, the one in Israel, and the other in England? They did much Good in the few years while they lived, and might have done abundance more had they lived very long: these excellent Kings were soon taken away, whilst many Tyrants have waxed grey amidst the Hatred and the Curses of the People. When we think of two such excellent Men as Mr. Joseph Allein, and Mr. John Janeway, and how soon they died, that were less in Degree, but as great in Grace as the former two, we must needs be silent, and adore the Providence that we do not understand: we must needs conclude that there is something much better to be enjoyed in the next World, than long Life in this;

otherwise, such holy Men, so full of Self-denial, so very laborious for the Glory of God and the Good of Souls, should have lived very long: They were taken away by Sickness from that Work in which their Souls delighted, and which in their Hands thrived very much: The Tears and Prayers of their Hearers and their Friends that would have had them to flourish with perpetual Youth, and that were very sorrowful to see Men that filled them with such great hopes taken away, could not stay them here any longer: nor would God have them to stay longer from their happiness. It is indeed a Mercy to those that are good & fit for Heaven, to have an early Deliverance from such an evil World as this, where there is so much Sorrow, and Disorder, and Temptations, and Sins; to be taken away from the Evil to come, and from many sad Objects that such as live longer may be troubled to see; to be fully assured that God is their God, and Heaven their Home.

Jesus Christ did leave the World, (as one says) and ascend to Glory about the 33rd or 34th year of his Age; to teach us in the prime of our Years to despise this World, when we are best able to enjoy it, and to reserve our full Vigor for Heaven and for his Love.

Yet though this be a way to promote a Man's own Happiness, yet it must be received as a Mercy from God, when any one lives not only to promote his own Salvation, but the Good of others also.

Some will say, What need we to pray for long Life? What need we solicit God to no purpose, or tire him with our Prayers? For we shall not live a day beyond our time, nor die a moment sooner.

Do you not think yourselves concerned to eat and to drink, and to procure to yourselves other Gratifications of Life notwithstanding this? And why should you not think yourselves under an equal Obligation to use those other Means that are necessary to preserve

Life, as Prayer to God for his Blessing? Seeing Man lives not by Bread alone, Mat. 4. 4. You find that Hezekiah by his Prayers to God obtained fifteen years more after he had received the first Summons of Death. And Paul by the Prayer of the Corinthians was delivered, after he had received the Sentence of Death, 2 Cor. 1. 9, 10, 11. And whatsoever may be in the Decrees of God, yet I am sure he may justly deny us what we will not take the pains to beg; though the longest Life that we can hope to live will be some hundreds of years shorter than the Lives of Men before the Flood: for their long Lives are rather to be ascribed to some extraordinary Privilege than to the ordinary Course of Nature. The World was then to be replenished with Inhabitants, which could not be so speedily done but by an extraordinary multiplication of Mankind, neither could that be done but by the long Lives of Men. Again, Arts and Sciences were then to be planted; for the better effecting whereof it was requisite, that the same Men should have the Experience and Observation of many Ages. As also the Food wherewith they were nourished before the Flood, may well be thought to be more medicinal; and haply the Influence of the Heavens was at that time, in that Climate where the Patriarchs lived, more favorable and gracious. (Hakewell Apol. p. 38.)

If Deliverance from the Grave be a great Mercy, and greatly to be acknowledged, then it is a very evil thing in haste and passion to wish for Death. There are several People, when anything falls out that crosses their Inclinations or Designs, will presently say, I wish I were dead, I wish I were in the Grave, and out of such a troublesome World as this. But do you know what it is to die? It is to appear before the eternal God, and to render an Account of all that you have thought, or spoke, or done: it is to be judged to Heaven or Hell, and that forever. I cannot forget here that sad Story that is mentioned by Bellarmine, and quoted from him: He speaks of a Man notoriously

worldly-minded, whom he went to visit on his Death-bed; and when he did him duly to provide for another World, answered him, Sir, I have much desired to speak with you, but it is not for myself, but in behalf of my Wife and Children: for myself I am going to Hell, neither is there anything that I would desire in my own behalf. And this he spake, saith he, with such Composedness, as if he had been but going to the next Town or Village. The Ignorance of this miserable Person suffered him to be in no Commotion nor Horror at all; but what a doleful Change did he feel in his Thoughts and Apprehensions when he came to that real Hell, and to those Flames of which he spake in so cold a manner? People make very little of dying; and those that are poor, usually die with the least concern; for they imagine that having suffered so many Miseries in this World, they shall be very happy in the next. Life is a very dear Enjoyment, and it is a wonder any should desire in haste to be deprived of it, but it is usually then, when they are in very great and almost insupportable Pain, or under the fear of Evils that seem to be greater than what they are able to bear. Thus the Children of Israel being in great straits, wished they had died in Egypt, Exod. 16. 3. Thus the meekest of all other Men, pressed by the Calamities that he had in view, says, Numb. 11. 14, 15. I am not able to bear all this People alone, because it is too heavy for me: and if thou deal thus with me, kill me I pray thee out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight, and let me not see my Wretchedness. Thus Elijah, 1 King. 19. 4. and Job, chap. 6. 8, 9. and Jonah, the Sun beat upon his Head, and he fainted, and he wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live, chap. 4. 8. but by a Mercy of God not inferior to his former Deliverance, he was reserved to another Repentance, and to more peaceable Days. Thus even good Men have sinned through the pressure of some very great Affliction and Calamity. In this they followed the Motions of their sensitive Nature, and not those of Grace, the tediousness of their Trouble, and the weight of the Cross

that they groaned under, made them with too much eagerness and haste to pray for Death; which is always reckoned to be the last Refuge of the Miserable. But God is not used to grant these fretful and passionate Desires; he will make them to know their own Folly, and the Justice of his Sovereign Authority; he will have them not only to serve him, but to wait till he dismiss them from their Service; and all their Haste shall not make their Sun decline, till he see it is their time to die. And it is indeed a piece of Arrogance unsuitable to the Condition of a Creature, to desire it just at such a particular Season, as if we knew the most convenient time to depart, and were not in this as in all our other Actions, to be regulated by the Will of God, and not by our own. But indeed when a Man that has been very faithful and laborious in his Generation, is by Pain rendered altogether unfit for Service; when the Strength and Vigor which he laid out for God is wasted and decayed by old Age, or a tedious Distemper; when his Candle that has long burnt to enlighten others, burns with a feeble and almost undiscerned Light, he may then desire to die, as a poor weary Man to go to Bed. But the Saints of God do even then desire it with Calmness and Deliberation, if they be not in a raging Disease, for then it is impossible: they have much ado to bring their Hearts to be sincerely and freely willing to depart: Their Fears and Temptations and remaining Inclinations to the Body, and their Friends on Earth render it a Work of Difficulty: There are great Struggling's in that Moment between Nature and Grace, between Faith and Sense, though at last their Grace gets the Victory, and so they long to be with Christ.

If Deliverance from the Grave be so great a Mercy, then Self-murder is a very great Sin. The Law that forbids us to kill, does extend to this as well as to the Murder of another Man; this is a violating of that Sovereign Power that is in God, and a taking upon us to dispose of our Life, which is not our own but his. 'It is an usurping upon his

Providence, which has determined when, and after what manner we are to die: and though 'tis very likely there are several Accidents of Life, that are worse than Death itself; yet it is that Eternity that comes after Death, that is most formidable, and into which no Man ought to throw himself; and when we are reduced to such a condition, that to live seems to be far worse than to die, yet even then the Unalterableness of our State afterwards should be a most powerful Restraint, especially if we are uncertain where we are then to go. It is against that Patience and Trust, which we ought to repose in God: It is a woeful sort of dying, to die in the doing of such a thing as this which he has most severely prohibited, to tear our Souls from our Bodies, with our own hands, in such an ignominious and shameful manner, and because of our Distress, to pass Sentence upon ourselves, as not fit to live, and then to be our own Executioners: A Soul at Death should be in the Exercise of Grace, and in a quiet and humble Resignation; but in this case 'tis in Fear and Horror and Discontent; and what the Romans magnified so much for Gallantry, and an Heroic Spirit was the real Effect of Weakness and Cowardice, as it is much more Heroical to sustain and meet a coming Danger, than to retreat and fly from it. It was from a Meanness of Spirit that Cato chose to kill himself, because he could not see the Empire flourish under Caesar, whom he did not love: and however such Acts may be extolled by Heathen Historians, they are not so by that Scripture, which is the Rule of our Faith, and the Guide of our Actions, and which furnishes us with no Examples of those that did this, Samson only excepted, whose case had several things in it very singular) but such as were very bad Men, as Saul, and Achitophel, and Judas: and as we would not have our portion with them in the other World, so it is to be wished and endeavored, that our end may not be like to them in this: But so great is the Love of Life, and so strong the fear of Death in the most, so dark the Knowledge of Futurity, and so great our Unwillingness to go from a World with

which we are well acquainted, to that which we never saw, that few Men are in danger of Self-murder, till some great Affliction, and overwhelming Pain, and by the means of that, some great Perplexity seize their Spirits: I think few are in danger of it, till their Grievs are unspeakably great, or their Minds in that Anguish that is as the sad Foretaste of Hell; till all their Thoughts are in hurry and Confusion, and as then they are no way capable of being bettered by those Advices that seem proper to restrain them; so it concerns you that are at ease, and are able to pursue the Business and Affairs of Life, and of Religion; to pray earnestly to God that he withdraw not his Protection, and the Guard of his Providence from you, that he do not leave you to thick and gross Darkness, nor to the Power of Satan, who will push you forward to things that are most sinful and unwarrantable: Pray hard, that violent Tentation's, and overwhelming raging Pains may never overtake your for how evil soever Self-murder seem to you now, you know not what you may be then pressed to do: pray earnestly that you may never be without the sense or hope of the Divine Favor, for if (which God forbid) you once lose that, woe unto you, then you will be like a Ship without Sails or Rudder in a Storm, you may be swallowed up, or driven on the Rocks and broken to pieces. It is Distress and violent Sorrow that exposes Men to the Commission of this Sin: Saul fell not upon his Sword and killed himself, till God had forsaken him, and till he knew not what to do, though it was his own Sin that brought him so low. Cicero tells us indeed of one Cleombrotus, who reading the Discourse of Plato, concerning another more happy Life after this, which could not be attained but by Death, did thereupon kill himself to attain that Happiness; but if that be true, it is a thing that most rarely happens, that any that have either hope of Heaven or Assurance of going thither, are so impatient of being absent from it, as to kill themselves to go thither. And it may be you will be ready to ask me, If they have no hope of being better when they die, why do they long for Death, or

attempt to kill themselves? They should rather strive to live, that they may be better prepared for another World: It is a Question that has been asked me by some People; and seeing it is perhaps what you seldom have met withal, I will give you an Answer to it, and if it do not appear very rational, yet I am sure it will contain that which has been the real Apprehensions of People under those Temptations. I say then, Men may desire to destroy themselves, though they have no well grounded Expectation of Happiness after Death. 1. Because of that Pain of Body, and that Anguish of Soul which is intolerable to them; they have no natural, nor spiritual Rest, nor Prospect of either, and this fills them with Amazement and Horror, and in that Amazement there is nothing which they will not dare to do. 2. Because they may reckon that they are already as in Hell, and that if they be dead, they can but be in Hell, and so dare even to try the worst: They think the longer they live, they aggravate their Guilt, and heighten their Punishment, and add new Fuel to the Flame, which is already too too hot and scorching; the Burden under which they groan is so heavy, that they do not desire to have more Weight added to it. Or, 3. It may be they may have some little, very little hope, that were they out of the Body, they would be better than now they are; and therefore they'll venture. As to living to be better prepared, they have usually such dismal perplexed Thoughts, that they cannot think to any purpose at all, nor find themselves by Living, to be any better: You will say, these are desperate Conclusions, and so they are, but that makes me think that none but in Despair, or in very sad Diseases, for which the World has no Remedy, are under a Temptation to take away their own Life. And if it be a Disease, there is room for the more Charity as to those that die after this manner; for God will not impute the Effects of Phrensy, and a decayed and disordered Reason, to the Malice of the Will, nor judge the Disease to be a Sin, though he may have sent upon them such woeful Distress for their former Sins. There is another way of a Man's killing himself,

which because 'tis very frequent, is less taken notice off, and that is by Gluttony, and Excess in Drinking: When a Man continually loads himself with vast Quantities of Meats and Drinks, and so suffocates and strangles Life, and brings upon his own Body Diseases and Death; and though this is not an Evil punished by the Judges, yet it ceases not to be an Evil, and a Man may by continued Intemperance and Riot, be as guilty of Self-murder in the Sight of God, as if he took a Knife and cut his own Throat. Some will say indeed, that such live apace, and if their brutal Actions deserve the Name of Life, 'tis very true, for they go with a swifter course into the Grave than they need to do.

Seeing the being brought up from the Grave is a great Mercy, how great a Mercy is Health, when the Restoration of it is so great a Mercy, and so greatly to be acknowledged? Some think it a very needless Labor to speak of this, seeing it is that which all People know; as it would be needless to praise the Sun which gives us Light, or the Air in which we breath. But though these are very common, yet they are nevertheless very great Mercies; like Gold which though it were never so common, yet would continue still to be a very excellent and valuable Metal: There is as much Difference between a Man in Health, and a Man in Sickness, as between a Man at Liberty, and a Man in Chains. Sickness whenever it comes, will give you great Subjects of Sadness and Disquietness; and long before you die, you may see the Days wherein you will have no Pleasure; you cannot then, (especially if it be violent) with any Freedom or Clearness of Thought, express yourselves either to God or Man, you will be very ill able to manage the civil Affairs of Life, or with any vigor to perform the Duties of Religion: and the Truth of this you would see, if you went often to the Chambers of those that in long and grievous Pains languish away; if you heard their doleful Groans, saw their pale and decaying Looks, it would give you a new taste of Health; but there is

such a nice Delicacy and Tenderness for the most part in those that are well, that they care not for the Visitation of the Sick, nor to be near to Persons when they are dying. It would affect them if they saw more frequently their Fainting's, their Convulsions, and their Agonies; but they care not for it; and yet so to be sick, and so to die, may in a very little while be their own Lot. Health is not less a Mercy for being common. What is more common than Sleep, which is but a part of it, and yet in all the World there is not a thing, the having of which is more sweet, or the want of which is more terrible; for as I have observed in a former Discourse, all Business and the Comforts of Life depend upon it, and the Refreshment that it gives to our natural Spirits; for let but a Man be for one Week or two without Sleep, and he will be fit for no Business; and if Health were not so usual a thing, it would be a Miracle, considering to what Variety of Evil we are every day exposed, by the Frailty and Weakness of our Nature. It would make a Man tremble to read what others have endured, or how many several sorts of very painful Diseases belong to almost every part of human Bodies, how painful are the Methods that must be used for a Cure, and how these painful Methods may be used, and yet but increase our Pain, and be to no purpose;

And indeed when I consider, (saith Mr. Boile in his Occasional Reflections:) how many outward Accidents are able to destroy the Life, or at least the Health even of those that are careful to preserve them, and how easily the Beams of a warm Sun, or the Breath of a cold Wind, or too much or too little Exercise, a Dish of green Fruit, or an infectious Vapor, or even a sudden Fright, or ill News, are able to produce Sickness, and perhaps Death: and when I think too, how many inevitable Mischiefs our own Appetites or Vices expose us to by Acts of Intemperance, that necessitate the Creatures to offend us, and practices of Sin whereby we necessitate our Creator to punish us; when we well consider this, and consequently how many Mischiefs

he must escape that arrives at gray Hairs; the Commonness of the Sight cannot keep me from thinking it worth some Wonder, to see an old Man, especially if he be anything healthy.

It is not to be imagined but by those that feel it, what a damp the Pains and Indispositions of our Bodies, put upon the motions of our Souls; their Faculties are straitened, bound and fettered, that they cannot in their former manner perform their usual Operations: When the Soul either in natural or spiritual Actions essays to do as it used to do, it finds itself under a very great Weakness and Disability; for the Body lies as an heavy Clog and Weight upon it, as you know it is in the Head-ach, the Toothache, or other pains, which though they be of a short Continuance, are very troublesome, and would be more so, were they to continue for many Months together. How speedy an Alteration will the sharp sense of Pain, make in the briskest and most merry Man: For as Doctor Harris describes the sick Man, (Hezekiah's Recovery, p. 172.) He hath Eyes, and scarcely sees; Ears, and hears not; Mouth, and speaks not; Feet, and walks not. Those very Senses which let in Comfort to the Healthful, are an occasion of a new Sadness to him: The sight of his Medicines is ingrateful to his Eye; so is the smell of his Meat, and the taste of his Drink, the least noise offends him, the least Air pierces him. This turns his Comforts into Crosses, his Bed tires him, his Chair troubles him, his Friends disquiet him, their Absence offends him, and so does their Presence, their Silence, and their Discourse, their Mirth and their Sorrow: Being uneasy himself, everything is uneasy to him; poor Man, something he would have, but he cannot tell what: he is not well, and therefore nothing is well about him. Health is the Repose of Life; 'tis that alone which gives a relish to all the other Blessings of it: The poorest Clothing, the meanest Fare, the sorriest Cottage that is blessed with Health, is more blessed than if it were thronged with Gold and Silver, but with Sickness and Diseases. For if a Man have

never so vast an Estate, never so glorious a Reputation, never such honorable Friends, never so well-furnished a Table, never so sine an House, and yet be without Health, all these are dead Comforts, they are as nothing, emptiness and vanity.

Health, (as the forementioned Person expresses) 'tis the poor Man's Sauce at his Table, his Cloak in his Journey, his Warming-pan in his Bed, his Boots in the mire; and whatsoever else he is destitute of, he can rejoice in this.

What cause have we that are returned to some measure of Health, to return Thanks to God for it? And you that have always been healthful, have cause to prize it, lest you be taught the value of it, as the Men of Succoth were, with the Briars and Thorns of the Wilderness. O what Miseries belong to Men, which you have yet escaped, and for which you have great cause to be very thankful? Do not attribute your longer Health to your Temperance, to your own Prudence, or Forecast, or Recreations, or Exercise, or Skill, but give the Glory of your Preservation to the Providence of God, that alone gives you Ease and Health, whilst others are in Sickness. If you were to survey the Hospitals, and to see but how many poor lame People are there, how many dying by degrees with incurable Diseases; if you were to go to the Chambers of the Sick, and see under what various Miseries they are groaning there, you would see great cause to return and praise God, that has not brought you so very low.

I come now in the next place to show what Improvement we are to make of our Sickness, and of our Recovery from it; and so to close this Subject with an Use of Exhortation.

First, That we may in a due manner improve our being brought from the Grave, we must always remember so great a Mercy. We ought especially to remember the more signal and eminent Mercies, and

Afflictions of our Lives, our great Straits, and our wonderful Deliverances: And we must also remember what Condition we were in before we were delivered. It is commonly said, that nothing makes us better understand the excellence of Liberty, than the consideration of the Miseries of Bondage. The hideousness of Obscurity sets off the beauty of Light; and the sweetness of Health is best represented by considering the bitterness of Sickness. Seeing therefore I would desire to praise God myself for his great Mercy in my Recovery, and also beg of you to praise him in my behalf, I will give you a short Account of the deplorableness of my Condition before I was delivered. I would indeed remember so much of it as may enable me to glorify my great Deliverer: but the whole of it, as it would be most astonishing to you, so it would be very overwhelming to me: The consideration of the greatness of the Danger heightens the Mercy of Deliverance and Salvation from it. It will be somewhat a melancholy Relation that I am going to make, but it shall be very true; for I would not lie for God, nor make the Danger from which he has saved me, greater than it was: It will not be a very delightful Account; but yet as Solomon says, Eccl. 7. 2. It is better to go to the House of Mourning than to the House of Feasting. It is better sometimes to hear sad, than always pleasant Things. And in as much as Grief and Mourning is in itself a very grave and homely thing, that requires not Ornament or artificial setting off, I shall without affecting to be thought eloquent, give You

A plain Relation of some part of my sore Distress.

After an ill habit of Body that had for some years attended me, together with some little Illnesses now and then, which were but as drops to the greater Storm that was to come upon me, and which I could not foresee, it pleased God at length in his just and righteous Judgment, to suffer my growing Distemper to arrive to a most

formidable height: So that before I desisted from coming to this Place, my Sleep departed quite away; and for several Nights in a week I slept no more than I do at this time: upon which there immediately followed a general Weakness and decay of Spirits, a general Listlessness, and a total Indisposition; and by feeling of this I had a strong Impression in my Mind, that I should very speedily die; as strongly fixed in my Apprehensions, as if it had been said to me as to Hezekiah, Thou shalt surely die. I thought I was immediately to go to the Tribunal of God; and the Thoughts of immediate appearance before him continued with me for about a year: there was not a Day past wherein I did not think that I should be dead before Night, and at Night I should be dead before the Morning. I thought myself just at the entrance into the Grave: And what a strange prospect that is, and what a mighty Change it causes in a Man's Thought, none know but those that have apprehended themselves so near it; nor do they fully know it, unless they have been near it for many Months together. Those Nights that were Nights of comfortable Rest to the most of you, were tedious, and long, and doleful Nights to me. I could say with Job, chap. 7. 3, 4. I am made to possess Months of Vanity, and wearisome Nights are appointed to me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the Night be gone? And I am full of tossing's to and fro till the dawning of the Day. And ver. 13, 14. I was all the day and all the night long in Pain and Trouble, and in a Pain very singular and uncommon; so secret, and yet so violent, that as I fully believe it was not known what it was, so I am sure none of the Methods that were used to remove it, though painful enough, were of any value. I have been sorely wearied with Anguish and Trouble. I have often said, though I have had no Rest the Night before, yet perhaps in that which is to come I may; but I have had no Rest at all then, nor the next, nor the next, scarce any discernible Sleep, I am sure none that was refreshing, for above three quarters of a year together: And if at any time I rested a little, that little Rest was all the

while disturbed with terrible and amazing Dreams; and when I awaked, I always found myself in strange and inexpressible Pain, in Anguish and Bitterness, such as nothing in this World is able to represent even as to its lowest degrees. And judge you into what Confusions and Disorders this alone would throw a Man if it were single. My Disease, and my Fears, and sad Apprehensions came upon me as a Whirlwind, like the rushing of many mighty Waters; strange and horrible Pains, and great Fears, so that it was as a universal Storm, from which there was no retreat. I said with Hezekiah, Isa. 38. 12, 13. Mine Age is departed, and is removed from me as a Shepherd's Tent: I have cut off, like a Weaver, my Life: He will cut me off with pining Sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I reckoned till morning, that as a Lion, so will he break all my Bones; from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me. I was continually full of restless Pain and amazing Thoughts. I often said, I am now cut off, I am come to the End of my Journey; I am going to the Grave, there was but a Step, but a Minute, as it were, between me and Death; nay, how often have I been by most terrible Convulsions in the very Jaws of Death. They were to me as a Den of Lions, and are as painful and as terrible as if a Man were actually torn to pieces. And in all these not the least help nor prospect of Relief, and these returning every day for many weeks, or rather one continued Convulsion-fit, and that always with a very quick and cutting Pain; it never came upon me but as a Giant, or an armed Man; and whenever that was, I thought myself in the very Moment of my Separation from the Body: I thought myself very often just going to the Bar of God: I was in Death often, often as in the very Agonies and Pangs of Death, but I could not die: I seemed to have the strength of Brass; it seemed to me as if I had been raised up by Almighty Power only, that I might be capable to suffer Pains very strange and very terrible: I sunk as in the deep Mire, Psal. 69. 2. I saw indeed sometimes the Light of Day, but it was never refreshing

nor comfortable to me, for I was often saying with Job, chap. 3. 23, 24. Why is Light given to a Man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in? For my Sighing cometh before I eat, and my Roaring's are poured out like Water. I was not in Safety, neither had I Rest, neither was I quiet: yet trouble came. For the thing which I greatly feared, is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of, is come unto me. I often said, I shall never see the World till it be in Flames, never see my Friends or Acquaintance, nor they me, till the Heavens be no more, and till the vast Appearance of the great Day: Thus, my Feet stumbled on the dark Mountains, and all was hideous Darkness, Woe and Desolation with me. Sometimes by the Greatness of my Trouble, I was even stifled with Grief, that I could not for a great while speak a Word, and when I spoke, it was in a mournful manner; for many Months I could not breath without a mighty Pain, and as soon as with Difficulty I had breathed, every Breath was turned into a Groan, and every Groan was big with a very deep Sorrow. I was weary with my Groaning, Psal. 6. 6. All the Night made I my Bed to swim, and watered my Couch with Tears: Nay the Sadness and the stinging Particularities that I apprehended in my afflicted Case, made me to weep even till I had no more power to weep. Psal. 88. 3. My Soul was full of Troubles, and my Life drew nigh to the Grave, &c. I saw the Grave as beneath me continually opening to swallow me up: I often said in myself, I shall no more see the Congregations or Assemblies of God's-People; I shall never anymore enter into his Court, nor sing his Praise; I shall no more speak in his Name, nor experience his loving-kindness in the Land of the Living anymore. These were some of my Thoughts, and this was my inexcusable Infirmary and my Unbelief: Those that are in Health will scarcely perhaps credit what I say, they will think I am a melancholy Man, and aggravate my Trouble, and set it out more than needs, or than it was, and that in the whole there was a great deal more of Fancy than of Reality; but I pray God they may never taste

one drop of that bitter Cup whereof I was made to drink, for if they should, they'll find it whatever Names they now give it, to be then full of real Miseries. As I have spoke nothing but what I fully believe to be true, so I have spoke the more of it, that it may be of some use to others, that though Trouble and Distresses fall upon them which are very strange and very perplexing, or such as rarely happen, that they would hope even in the Depths, for they may see by me that nothing is too hard for God. There are few that having been so near to Death, revive again; few that have been near it so long together; and fewer that after they have recovered, are willing to speak of what they then saw and felt: but methinks it is not unnecessary to show to what woeful Miseries we are obnoxious in this World, and how many ways God has wherewith to correct and punish the Sins of Men. Most People are unwilling to speak of such things as these, because others are unwilling to hear such doleful Relations; they invent some other Discourse to put it off, but their hearing of it is better than to feel it, and this may help them to avoid manifold Mischiefs before it be too late. You think it may be that I have spoke a great deal, and your Attention may be wearied; but I assure 'tis many hundred times below what I felt. Great Grievs, as well as mighty Joys, exceed all our Words, and Bitterness is not to be described: Never was any, I believe, nearer to Death, not to die, never was any compassed with a greater Danger; never any had less hope of an Escape than I, and yet the Mercy of a God that is Omnipotent, has relieved me. And as 'tis commonly said that Music sounds best upon the Water; so by setting our Sorrows and our Mercies together, our Praise may be more harmonious. You may in this behold the Severity and the Goodness of God: his Severity in continuing on me so many smart Strokes for so long a space; and his Goodness in giving me help, when no Power on Earth was able to give me the least Relief: His Severity in continuing my Pain for so many long and doleful Months, without any Mitigation; and his Goodness in bringing me back when I was as

in the Grave: His Severity, in withholding his Blessing from all those innumerable Means that were used with a design to help me, so as that nothing that was intended for my Cure, could any way promote it, and 'twas his Goodness that he himself became my Physician, and that I did not continue to groan under the same Miseries as many Years as I did Months: Remembering my Affliction and my Misery, the Worm-wood and the Gall, my Soul hath them still in Remembrance, Lam. 3. 19, 20. The Storm indeed is in a great measure over, blessed be God; but I cannot without trembling call it to mind, nor dare I think very long upon it: I was brought very low, as low as Calamity and Distress could make me, but the Lord has kept me, he has turned again my Captivity; and I am really as in a Dream; though it is a more pleasant one than any I ever had during my long Sickness and Calamity. I can scarce believe that I am at so much ease as I now am, I can scarce believe that I am in this Assembly, of which I confidently thought I had taken my leave forever. When I look back upon the rough Waves, and the stormy Seas, I am ready to say, Can it be that God has brought me safe to Land? After I had conversed with the Dead, am I now among the Living? am I now with People under Hope? Blessed be the Name of the Lord, I am? It is a great Mercy to me, and it is the more so, as it was unexpected and above the Power of Nature, contrary to all my hopes, and above all human help: Those that have heard my Groans, and seen my Agonies, and heard of my Affliction, cannot but wonder at it. I often said that I could not be delivered without a Miracle, and God himself has wrought it. He has showed Wonders to the dead, Psal. 88. 3. For the raising them up is so, from a case very sad and sadder than by any Words can be expressed, has the Lord delivered me; and certainly so terrible a Visitation, so dreadful a Disease, and so heavy a Judgment, and so gracious a Rescue from it, should never be forgotten: To be rescued from Death, from so great a Death, is a very great Mercy: Psal. 71. 19, 20. Psal. 116. 3, 4, 5, 6. It was by the

Sovereign Goodness and mere Mercy and Grace of God, that I obtained this Deliverance; all this he did for a most unworthy Sinner, for an impatient and fretful Sinner too; is not this wonderful, Mercy with a witness, a Mercy never to be forgotten as long as I have a Day to live; and I may say to you, Come and bless the Lord with me, come and help me to praise his Holy Name: But on this I shall insist more when I come to that place that we ought not only to praise God ourselves, but to exhort others also to give Thanks at the Remembrance of his Holiness. I have cause to do so; for how many has he suffered to sink, when the Waves were not so high against them, as those that rolled over me? The Storms and the Winds that blew them down, not so fierce in some respect against them, as they were against me, and yet they are covered in the Grave, whilst I, though sorely weather-beaten, have outlived the Storm. How many are there dead, since I was ill? Many excellent and Holy Men are now silent in the Dust, who were more knowing, more useful, more zealous and better qualified than ever I am like to be; and yet God has spared a poor Shrub, whilst he has torn up some of the Cedars of our Lebanon by the Roots.

Therefore to quicken myself, and in some measure to excite others who have been recovered after long and sore Affliction; O let us all agree to remember such reviving Mercies as God is pleased to vouchsafe us, when he brings us from the Grave: Let not a day pass wherein you do not call to Mind what he has done. When you awake, then remember what a great Mercy your Sleep is, and what you would once have given, even all the World if you had had it, for one Hour of sound Rest: Never bow your Knees in Prayer, but call to mind his Mercy, that has loosed your Bonds, mitigated your Distress, and enabled you to pray. When you enter into such Assemblies as this, on his Holy Day, then remember what sad Sabbaths those were, when you were confined to your sick Beds, and could do nothing, but

if you had so much hope, send your sorrowful Requests to beg the Prayers of others; and when instead of singing his Praises as you now do, you could only sigh and groan; when you are with others, speak of his excellent Goodness; and when you are alone, delight to meditate upon it; let nothing, no Tentation's, no Diversions or Business, draw you to forget so merciful a God, and so gracious a Benefactor. If you have any remaining Pains left, let these make you thankful that you have no more, and that you are not as you once were. 'It is much easier to think of our Wounds, when they are in some measure healed, than to bear their Smart when they are upon us; and when you see others seized with Sickness and with manifold Calamities of this vain Life, then bless God that you have a shining Sun whilst they are overtaken with a rainy Day. I speak to those of you that have been sick, having been so myself; with what care and Compassion did this good God remember us? He remembers his tender Mercies and his loving-kindnesses, for they have been ever of old, Psal. 25. 6. If we any way help the meanest of his Servants in their Distress, he forgets not our Work and Labor of Love, which we have showed to his Name, Heb. 6. 10. He remembers the Service we have done him, so as to reward it; he remembers the Sincerity of our Endeavors and Desires, so as to encourage us, and we should keep in our Minds his Bounties and his Love to us, that we may serve him more, and especially those that come to revive us after a long Misery, and to bring us out of a State that seemed altogether helpless and unrelievable. There is not a Moment of our time wherein he does not load us with his Benefits, and there should scarce a Moment go from us without some Ejaculation or Breathing after him: He has not been as a barren Wilderness to us, and we should give him Thanks, whilst as with the Joy of Harvest we reap the Fruits of his Benignity. There is not any, the greatest or the least Deliverance that we obtain, but 'tis first produced, and then carried on by his alone care. Let us that are recovered, remember the Gift that he has given us, for there is

none more excellent among all natural things than the Gift of Life, and whilst we hug and embrace this dear Enjoyment, let us not forget the Donor of it: Let us remember God who is the Fountain of our Life, and lets us also remember that gracious Mediator, by whose Death this and all other Mercies were purchased for us, and by whose effectual Intercession they are bestowed and made our own. Could they that were cured of Fevers, Palsies, Blindness, Lameness, and other Distempers, by Christ here on Earth, ever forget so skillful and so tender a Physician? Doubtless where-ever they came, they spake of him; wherever they met him, they gave him Thanks: and we should be no less thankful than they, seeing his Goodness, his Power, and his Compassion, has been the same to us that it was to them: for (as one says) he shows his Power in the Greatness, his Wisdom in the Seasonableness, his Truth in the Constancy, his Grace in the Freeness, the Riches of his Mercy in the Fullness of his Blessings and Deliverances: How great is the sum of all his Thoughts and his Benefits to us? They are altogether innumerable, and too many for us to remember: but however, we ought to suffer nothing to make us forget such as are greater and more eminent. There are two great Changes that we ought always to remember, when we are changed from a Death of Sin to a Life of Grace, and when we are brought from the Grave to the Health and comfortable Enjoyment of this natural Life; for in the Beginning and in the Consummation of our Deliverances, there is nothing on which we should with more delight fix our Thoughts, than on the Goodness and the Power of God, who alone is able to save us from our Distresses, and who is most willing to do so when we call upon him.

The End of the Third Sermon.

SERMON IV.

O Lord, thou hast brought up my Soul from the Grave: thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down to the Pit. - PSAL. 30. ver. 3, 4.

Sing unto the Lord, O ye Saints of his, and give Thanks at the remembrance of his Holiness.

I Now proceed to inquire after what manner we must remember our Deliverance from Sickness and Death. And this we may do three ways.

1. Remember them with an Admiration of God, that he should be so good to you. Admiration is the first of all the Passions next to Pleasure and Pain. When an Object is perceived that hath nothing new in it, we consider it indifferently, and without any commotion of the Soul: but the Mercies that we have from above are new to us every Morning, and to be admired for their being so, Lam. 3. 23. When we are intent upon the Creature, we may be guilty of an excess of Admiration, which by immoderate fixing of the animal Spirits in the Brain, may hinder their usual Influx into other parts of the Body, and be very hurtful to the Health (Natural History of the Passions, p. 90.) But when God is our Object, and Things Divine raise this Motion in our Souls, there is no danger of Excess. There are two things that may cause us to admire the Goodness of God, that he will bestow any of his Mercies upon us.

(1.) The vast and immense Distance that is between him and us; his unspeakably glorious Majesty and Greatness, and our own poor mean being, that is in itself very low, and does appear much more so, when compared with him. When we consider the large extent of his Dominions, the splendor of his Court, the numerousness of his Attendants, the glory of his Heaven, the brightness of his Sun, the beauty of his Earth, and the largeness of the whole Creation; and then from the sight of these behold our little selves, have we not cause to say. Lord, what is Man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the Son of Man, that thou visitest him? Psal. 8. 4. Is it not a wonderful thing that so great a God will take care of us when he needs not our Services, nor all the Duties we are able to perform? If we were to set in Darkness forever, he would shine with a Light as bright and clear as he now does. It is a mighty Condescension in him to pity our Distress, to help our Weakness, to cure our Wounds, to solace our Hearts, to pacify our Souls, and refresh our Bodies; and when we are dying, to revive us, and to bring us from the Grave: So that we may say with David, 2 Sam. 7. 18. Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my House, that thou hast brought me hitherto? Ver. 19. Is this the manner of Man, O Lord God? How freely dos he do us good when we could lay no Obligation at all upon him?

(2.) Another thing that causes us to admire him for the Mercies that he bestows upon us, is, Not only that we are inconsiderable Creatures, but guilty too, and have deserved the contrary at his Hands. We are not only, as Jacob says, less than the least of all his Mercies, but we are worthy of his greatest and most severe Punishments. We not only deserve to be plagued all the day long, and to be chastened every morning, Psal. 73. 14. but we deserve to be the Objects of his Fury for evermore. We murmur and think it hard to be laid upon a Sick-bed; but alas, we have all deserved to be laid on a Bed of Flames. We groan, and with impatient Complaints

express our Sorrows, when he for holy and gracious Ends casts us into a fiery Furnace. Whereas, were not the Lord infinitely merciful to us, our milder Sufferings might have been our Hell. Every medicinal and gentle Stroke of our Heavenly Father might have been the Lash of Devils that would have showed us no Mercy. Alas, where had you and I been long ago, had God dealt with us according to our Sins? I should not have been speaking to you, nor you hearing me in this Place with hope: We should have been all silent in the Grave, or all in Torments in a worse Place. 'It is our Self-love and our heinous Pride that makes us to be so impatient in our Sickness, and so unthankful when we are recovered: We think we are injured when we are afflicted; and that we have but what we merit when we are delivered. But what Miseries and Desolations have our Sins deserved, our Original Corruption and all that impure Offspring that has descended from it? How many thousand times do we sin every day? How much Evil do we commit that we ought to forbear? And how much Good that we ought to perform, do we let alone? Who is there among us that hath those serious and abiding and lively Thoughts of God that he ought to have? Who is there that in his Trade and worldly Business maintains his Commerce with Heaven, and with spiritual and pious Ejaculations? Who is it that by constant Exercises of Religion makes his Family as a Little Church when he is at home? And that by an unintermitting Diligence and Watchfulness antidotes himself against the Contagions of bad Examples and vain Company, and the Temptations of an evil World, when he is abroad? Who is it that walks so circumspectly, as to be unblameable, and without Offence? Who is it that is so courageous in his Reproofs, so zealous of good Works, so tender of his own Salvation, and of the Salvation of others, as he ought to be? Our neglect of many thousand Duties, calls for long and severe Punishments at the Hands of God. And it is a Subject of great Wonder that he will be gracious even to any of the Sons of Men. And what reason has everyone that is

delivered from Sickness, and Pain, and Death, to bless his holy Name, and to say, What am I, O Lord God, that thou shouldst visit, and uphold, and refresh so great, so inexcusable, so willful a Sinner as I have been? What am I, a poor Worm of the Earth, that thou shouldst so mercifully regard me? What am I that I should live by thy Goodness, when I have so often deserved to die by thy Justice? What am I, that when I had spent so much of my Time to little purpose, thou shouldst give me still more time? That he should again put me into his Vineyard, when I had loitered in it for so long a space, and when I had misimproved many thousand Talents, and knew not what to answer for them, he should pass by and remit my former Debts, and put into my Hands a new Stock? What am I, that his Dew should remain upon my Branches, when he might have said of me, as of the barren Fig-tree, Cut it down, why cumbreth it the ground any longer? O what Grace is this! That a God whom I had so frequently and so heinously provoked, should spare me to recover Strength? That when I had mocked him with so many cold and lazy Prayers, he should give me opportunity to pray again? When I had so often misimproved his Sabbaths and his Gospel, and the Offers of his Son, that he should continue to me the Blessings of his holy Day, the Invitations of his Word, and the Calls of Christ? That so I may repent of my careless Hearing, my Lukewarmness and my Unbelief? In the humble sense of our own Unworthiness, let us contemplate and admire that God that brings us from the Grave. Many People will say, If we were humbled, and if we did repent, God would soon help us. This is very true: but if God should never be merciful to us till we are prepared for Mercy, his Mercy and his Help, I am afraid, would come very late. For as we may say, It is of the Lord's Mercies that we are not consumed, because his Compassions fail not; so 'tis of the Lord's Mercy that we are delivered; and he is gracious because he will be so.

2. When we are delivered from Sickness, and from the Grave, we must remember that Deliverance so as to excite ourselves to more Fervor and Affection. Before all our Duties we should stir up ourselves; and that is to be done by an intense and serious application of our Minds to that particular thing which we go about, by considering aright the Nature and Consequence of a well performed Duty. Thus when we are going to pray, we should say, Remember, O my Soul, to what a glorious God thou dost approach; and with what humble Self-abhorrence thou shouldst look unto his Majestick Throne: Remember thy own Vileness, thy Sins, thy Miseries and thy Wants, and what need thou hast of a Mediator, to make thy poor and thy mean Oblation to be an acceptable Sacrifice; what need thou hast of wrestling and striving, that thou mayst obtain a Blessing. Thus when we give Thanks, we may say, Remember, O my Soul, the excellent Perfections of God, and the Benefits which thou hast received, their Seasonableness, their Worth, and all the wonderful Particulars they are attended with. This excitation of ourselves is not acquirable by a few cold and transient Thoughts; 'tis not one Sally of Religious Meditations now and then, but a continuance of these Acts, arguing and pleading the Case with our own Souls, till the Fire of our Love and Thankfulness begin to burn. We should think of the Mercies of God till our Hearts, under the sense of his Goodness, begin to melt and warm; till all that is within us move and stir with holy Elevations towards him. Then will the Holy Spirit cherish our Endeavors: And when we are, with all the Skill we can, tuning our Harps, he will come in to our Assistance, and make the Music more harmonious, and our Praise more sweet, and by his vital Influences banish all that Coldness that does usually damp and clog our Hearts in the Duties of Religion. There is a great advantage in Soliloquies, and a Man may in this Work talk to himself without the reproach of folly. This is a means to quiet and appease a rising Storm, Psal. 42. 5. and this is the way to make us look upon it

with Delight and Thankfulness when 'tis past and gone. We know that those Sermons which do but explain Truths to us, and present them only in their native Excellency and Reasonableness, do not equally affect us, as those do that are pressed with a fervent and lively Application: Nor do those Mercies which we only remember, make so much impression as those which we often call to mind, and as often urge upon our Hearts. When we come before God, we must make his Altar smoke with burning Frankincense: we must cover it with our cheerful Praises, and a flaming Love. Our knowledge of his Perfections is obscure and weak, but our Sense causes us very distinctly to feel his Benefits; and therefore all our Affections should ascend towards him. When his Sun shines full upon us, our Hearts should open at his Coming, smell with a sweeter Savor upon the being visited with his comfortable Beams. As upon our being brought from the Grave, and restored to Health, there is a new Strength in our Bodies; so there must be a new Vigor in our Souls: and as we discover a very great Earnestness in our Petitions when we want a Mercy, so there ought to be as much Fervor in Acknowledgment and return of Thanks when we have received it.

3. After we are delivered from the Grave, we ought to remember such a Mercy with very great Sincerity, i.e., there ought to be a Correspondence between our outward Expressions and the more undiscernible Motions of our Hearts. There must be in our Understandings a high Esteem of him who is the Author of all our Good, a most deliberate and free choice of him as our Happiness; and this Esteem and this Choice is the genuine Product of a real Admiration. There is nothing indeed more common than for People on the smallest occasions to say, I thank God for this or that; but the manner in which they speak it, plainly discovers that the sense which they have of the Divine Goodness is but light and superficial. Their Air, their Countenance, their Gestures, and their whole Carriage

shows that they are not fully thankful: They many times, by the formality of their Expressions, take that Name in vain, which they ought to magnify and bless. But when we bless God, there must be a very deep Reverence and sense of him upon our Hearts; and we must sacrifice our dearest Lusts at his Command as well as the Calves of our Lips. We must not remember in the general that God has been merciful to us, but frequently let our Thoughts dwell upon those particular Mercies which we have received. For as he is seldom truly penitent that makes a Confession of Sin only in the gross, and descends not to the particular Transgressions which have stained his Life: so neither is he sincerely thankful that contents himself with a cold Acknowledgment of God's Mercies, without a distinct Enumeration of those which were bestowed upon him by a more than ordinary Power and Goodness, and which upon that account should make a more particular and lively Impression upon his own Soul.

Secondly, Another way by which we may improve our Recovery, is, in constantly praying to this God that has delivered us from the Grave. He has pulled our Feet out of the Snare; but if he leave us, we shall soon be as much entangled and as much in Danger as we ever were; for it is not in Man that walks, to direct his own Steps. His Wisdom is as necessary to guide our Feet in the right way, as his Power was to draw us out of the Pit.

We need (as one says) not only to be cured, but to be preserved: We need not only a Cordial to recover us, but an Antidote to preserve us against an after-Poison.

Whilst we were hedged up with Thorns, as Hos. 2. 6, 7. we are not so liable to wander as we shall be now. The most of us that God has recovered from the Grave, have some little Pains or Indispositions

left, that now and then attack us, like the scattered Soldiers of a defeated Army, which though they are not so strong as entirely to ruin us, yet give us a considerable Molestation. Some Mercies God bestows that we may not altogether faint; and some Evils he continues, that we may not be too secure and careless. He gives us something to encourage us; and all that we would have he denies, that we may still wait upon him: We must join our Praises and our Prayers together. Psal. 116. 13. I will take the Cup of Salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord. We must praise him for the Deliverances that we have had, and pray to him to secure us from the Dangers that may without his Care come upon us. We must praise him, that so we may give him the Glory of his Goodness in helping us in our low Estate; and pray for his Blessings that can only make our Life comfortable and easy to us. In the greatest of our Triumphs there is need of Humility, as in the greatest of our earthly Joys there will be some mixtures of Sorrow; nor will our Day be so clear as to have no Cloud. In the highest of our Praises there will be need of Prayer; and this Duty is the very Pulse and vital Motion of the Soul when it is renewed; and by our Fervor, or deadness in the Performance of it, we may very much discern the Advances or Decays, the Strength or the Weakness of the spiritual Life. We that have been near to Death, should with a more exact care maintain our Communion with God: for we have more sensibly felt the need of him than others have: What would have become of us, had not he appeared for our Relief, when all the Help of Man was vain? And shall we not delight to draw nigh to so good a God, to whom is an easy Access through the Mediation of Christ? Who heard us out of the Depths, and will still hear us if we call upon him. It may be in our Affliction we sought him early, and the violence of our Distress made us restless and importunate; let our many Wants, that none but he can supply, make us still to be so. We have a very convincing Experience of the benefit and the use of Prayer; how by the Prayers

of others our Chains have been struck off, and how it hath opened the Doors of our Prison. Let a Duty which has brought us such a Crowd of reviving Mercies, be forever a welcome and acceptable Duty to us. 'It is an Act of Homage that we owe him as our Sovereign Lord, as Praise is that which we owe him as our gracious Benefactor. Besides, God alone can teach us to profit by the Cross; and make the Rod to blossom and to yield us Fruit when the Smart is gone. Unless he uphold us, we shall soon be diseased again. Every Day of our mortal Life is pregnant with new Changes and Alterations, with new Dangers and Vicissitudes: and innumerable are the Miseries which may yet overwhelm us, if he be not our Sun and our Shield. Let us humbly beg of him that as he has been our Deliverer, so he would please to be our Guide. This is a Posture and an Action suitable to us as we are Creatures, who cannot be, nor live, nor move without him. And such an Address to his Throne will be graciously received, because it is an Evidence of our Gratitude, and testifies that we are sensible of the Blessings of his Providence. And what Mercies we obtain by this method, will be throughout Mercies; and the Goods that are bestowed upon our humble Petitions, we shall possess by a more lasting Title, and with more Satisfaction than they do that never pray. And if we should omit this Duty, God may withdraw his Protection, and then our Sins will quickly betray us to new Distresses and Calamities.

Thirdly, Another Improvement that we ought to make of the being delivered from the Grave, is, To yield Obedience to that God that has delivered us. And he gives us seasonable Mercies in the time of our sorest Distress, to this very purpose, That his Name may be magnified, Psal. 50. 15. The Showers of his Mercy should render our Lives more fruitful; and the Beams of his Favor are to make us shine with Holiness.

We must (to use the words of Mr. Claude on another occasion) give our Hearts entirely to him, making a good use of our Afflictions. We must call upon him with Humility, serve him with Zeal, love him with Fervor, and have a horror for all that which may offend him.

He is gracious both to our Bodies and our Souls, and we must employ both in his Service, and consecrate and devote that Life to his Honor, which he hath so wonderfully preserved. His Benefits by their usefulness, and by their seasonable approach, must kindle the Flames of Love in our Hearts; and that Love will produce the most sincere and constant Obedience. For that which is the sole effect of a slavish Fear, as it will be forced, so it will continue but a little while. We are his own by a double Title, by that of Creation, and by his innumerable Preservations. We are his by the common Care of his Providence that maintains our Life; and more his, by the manifestations of his extraordinary Power and Kindness when he brings us from the Grave. What can we poor Creatures give to so good a God for all his Mercies? We are below the possibility of a Recompence. But however, we must give him our most earnest Desires, our most painful diligent Endeavors, our frequent Meditations, our highest Praises, our very Souls, and all that is within us, seeing he is pleased to require nothing else. His, must be all the Motion, all the Being, all the Strength that we have: and to divert any part of these from his Use, is both Ingratitude and Sacrilege. We must not be like the greatest part of Seamen, that are very devout whilst the Storm lasts, but when 'tis over they return to the same Sins. At his Command we must part with our dearest Sins, with our earthly and our sensual Inclinations, with our Pride and our Follies, and deny ourselves. And there is more true Thankfulness expressed in one Act of Self-denial, than in twenty Thanks, giving-Days without it. Leaving of Sin is not only the way to Thankfulness, but the proof of it: So many Sins as the Love of God constrains us to

leave, so many Songs are, as it were, presented to God. For every slain Lust is a gratulatory Sacrifice. And Men will rather than do this, run to all the toilsome Poms of a ceremonious Gratitude, and outward Ostentations: for 'tis much easier to perform a thousand external Duties, than to kill one Sin. A Man will more easily part with all his Goods and Substance, than he will cut off a right Hand, or pull out a right Eye. What can a miserable Beggar add unto a Prince that gives him an Alms? What can we by our mean Acknowledgments return to the Mighty God? But they are such things as he requires, and which we are bound to give. 'It is usually, after some very great and remarkable Deliverance, the next Enquiry of a Soul that is under the Power of Religion, What shall I render to the Lord for all his Benefits? What shall I do that may bear some proportion with so great a Mercy? What Thing, what Service is there, that I may set about, to testify my Thanks to my gracious Benefactor? O, can I ever do too much for that God that has done so much for me? I have born Chastisement, I will not offend anymore: That which I see not, teach thou me: If I have done Iniquity, I will do no more, Job 34. 31, 32. And we must expostulate with ourselves, as he in Ezra 9. 13. And after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds, and for our great Trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our Iniquities deserve, and hast given us such Deliverance as this, should we again break thy Commandments? It is a very great Blot that is left upon the Memory of so good a Man as Hezekiah, though in that far unlike himself, that 2 Chron. 32. 25. he rendered not again according to the Benefit done unto him: for his Heart was lifted up. Let us often set before ourselves that most earnest Exhortation of our Apostle, Rom. 12. 1.

There are two things that should render our Obedience after the Receipt of very great Mercies, such as is this of being brought from the Grave, more sincere and uniform: for if we do it not;

(1.) It will greatly aggravate our after-Sins, and make them more sinful; as it was with Solomon after the Lord had appeared to him twice, 1 Kings 11. 9. Not to use that Life and Strength for God, which he hath given us, is to fight against him with his own Weapons, to affront him with his own Royal Bounties. There is no Contempt of which he will be so sensible, and at which he will be more displeased, than when we despise the Riches of his Goodness which should lead us to Repentance, Rom. 2. 4. To sin against a patient and a loving God is inexcusable; against a God that has helped us in our Troubles, that by the wonderfulness of his Mercy has been vastly better to us than our feeble Hopes and our unbelieving Fears. How often have we said, that we should one day fall by this or that Distress, and he has held us up from our Birth to this very time? How often has his Justice seized us for our Sins, and called upon him to cut us off, and his Mercy has interposed and saved our Lives? How often hath the Idleness and Unfruitfulness of our former Health, and the base Impatiencies and Murmurings of our later Sickness provoked him to destroy us, but he has not done it? He has spared no Pains, he hath tried us both by Affliction and Prosperity, by his gentle and his louder Voice, by Judgments and by Mercies, to do us Good. How often have our Iniquities made him to draw his glittering Sword, and yet his Compassions have sheathed it again, when we have been in all appearance very near to the killing Blow? How many others has his Displeasure struck dead, whilst he suffers us that were as great Sinners as they were, to live? He has waited upon us from Sabbath to Sabbath, from Year to Year. He hath stayed many long Years to see if we would repent. He has beseeched and entreated us to forsake our Sin, crying to every one of us, Wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be? We have wanted nothing, God has maintained us all our days, and shall we sin against Goodness and Love itself, such great, such undeserved Love? Shall we affront his mildest and most tender Attribute? Shall we trample on his Forbearance, and on his

very Bowels? God forbid. When he has tried so many several Dispensations with us, when he has tried us both by gentle Usage and severe Strokes, by his Frowns and by his Smiles, shall we be no better? The Day is coming when our sore Calamities will force us to cry, Mercy, Mercy, Lord. Let us now prize that, whereof we shall then stand so much in need. If we abuse his Mercy, what Plea can we hope to make? It will sink and overwhelm us, and no Reflections will be so terrible as those that cause us to remember how we did forsake, and sin against a good and a patient God: this will wound and cut us to the Heart; and we shall be continually upbraided with that stinging Question, Deuter. 32. 6. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish People and unwise? And give him cause to say of us as in Isaiah 5. 3, 4.

(2.) Our not yielding Obedience to God after he has brought us from the Grave, may bring upon us more heavy Punishments than what we have yet felt. The Miseries that some of us have undergone, have been such as the very remembrance of them is amazing, and their Terror inexpressible. But how terrible soever they have been, yet God has more Arrows in his Quiver, more Thunder in his Clouds, more Judgments under his Command. Let us therefore take that Advice of our Lord, John 5. 14. Behold, thou art made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. There are those here that would not for the enjoyment of all the Greatness of the World, undergo that Anguish and Tribulation for one Week which distressed them for many Weeks and Months together. O, let us sin no more, lest the Clouds return after the Rain; lest after one Storm is ceased, another begin to blow. Let us improve our present Calm to the Glory of our Helper, lest another Earthquake come. The best Security from future Miseries, is to profit by the former: We cannot take a better Medicine to fortify us against Evils to come, than by remembering and improving such as are already past. We are escaped with our Lives; O

let us not for the Lord's Sake look back with Affection upon our old Sins, lest we that are now Monuments of Mercy, be made Monuments of Justice. Let us sin no more, lest the Bones be broken again that are but newly set; and lest the Wounds that seem to be healed, bleed afresh; and lest that Almighty and loving Physician that has once helped us, depart and help us no more. Let us sin no more, for after such a deep distress, and such a miraculous deliverance how hateful will our Sins be? And if we knew not what to do in our former trouble, what shall we do in the next and more terrible Visitation? Woe unto us if we should provoke him to let us fall into longer and more violent, and more irrecoverable troubles. What a dreadful place is that, Josh. 24. 20. If ye forsake the Lord, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you after that he hath done you good. We that are now alive may set up our Ebenezer, and say, Hitherto the Lord hath helped us, in his wrath he hath remembered mercy. Oh let us not force him to do as Gideon with the Men of Succoth, Judge. 8. 7. To tear us with thorns and briars of the wilderness. In other storms we have been like the Passengers that were in the Ship with Paul, Act. 27. 44. Tho we have suffered Shipwreck yet in one way or other our Lives have been saved and with much difficulty we have escaped to Land. Oh let us beware, lest in the next storm that comes he suffer us to be cast away: the Furnace into which we have been thrown has been very hot. Let us desire God to purge us from our dross lest he cause one to be made for us that is seven times hotter. Surely some of us have felt enough of the bitterness of Sin: Oh let us not force him that does not willingly grieve the Children of Men, to mingle for us another bitter Cup; have the strokes that made us to groan in the perplexity of our Souls been so very small that we should force him by our disobedience to send many more, and to turn his Rods into Scorpions? Lev. 26. 23, 24. If ye will not be reformed by these things, but will walk contrary to me, then will I also walk contrary to you and will punish you yet seven times for

your sins. Jer. 7 8, 9, 10. Will you come and stand before me and say you are delivered to do all these abominations? I even tremble at the mentioning of these things; and God grant that neither you nor I may ever know anything of them by our own experience. If we will not for the love of him, yet for the love of ourselves our own, Souls and Bodies, Let us sin no more.

Fourthly, Another way whereby we ought to improve the Mercy of God's having brought us from the Grave, is by trusting in him for the time to come. We have greatly dishonored him in our former straits by our own unbelief: Let us in all future occasions give glory to him by our Faith: Let us remember in the most violent and pressing troubles, the years of the right hand of the Most High: Let us after the wonderful experience of the great things that he has done for us, such as our Forefathers could hardly tell us of; but which we have seen in our days with respect both to the Nation and ourselves; let us never question his Goodness, nor dispute his Power, saying, Can God provide for us, can he deliver us? Let us never murmur nor repine or despair again. Having tasted how good the Lord is, and being fortified with the sweet experiences of his Lovingkindness, let us meet every new strait and danger with a greater Courage, and never admit the least doubt of God's Ability, or of his Willingness to help us. He that has delivered us from the paw of the Lion and of the Bear, from the Pains of Hell and from the Agonies of Death, can still save us, though in outward appearance we be like to perish. His Faithfulness and Truth, his gracious Nature and his promise will yield us in all our troubles a most comfortable and strong Support. 2 Cor. 1. 9. We had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves but in God, which raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us. When our Sense and Reason can discern nothing but Miseries and Desolation, let our Faith lead us to

that Rock that is higher than us, to that God whose Wisdom is never at a loss, and whose Hand can with ease and speed accomplish that which our Flesh and our Blood will tell us is impossible to be done. Do not affront your great Deliverer by thinking that he who has wrought such great Miracles for us by his own Power, will not complete what he has so magnificently begun and so far advanced, or that he will not perfect that which concerns us, or that he will forget the Work of his own Hands. We place a trust in those persons of whom we have had a trial in matters of difficulty; and much more do we owe to God, whose Mercy and Faithfulness we have experienced when none was able to give us the least relief, but he alone: He is a sure and a tried Friend, we ourselves have found him to be so. Let us not be jealous of his future Care, nor grieve him with unreasonable suspicions of his Love; and this is a more needful caution, because our base and corrupt Hearts upon every sudden and approaching danger are apt to resume new distrusts and doubts, and we then feel the stirring of our old unbelief; and when the Waves begin to rise we question the Care of our Master, and give him cause to upbraid us as he did his Disciples, Why are ye afraid O ye of little Faith? But this will be most inexcusable in us whom God hath brought to the very grave and back again: The remembrance and experience of so great a Mercy should forever preserve us from the least distrust of our Benefactor. Psal. 56. 13. Thou hast delivered my Soul from Death, wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before thee in the Land of the Living? Psal. 23. 6. Surely Goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the days of my Life. Psal. 63. 7. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy Wings will I rejoice. Psal. 71. 20.

Fifthly, Preserve those serious Thoughts now which you then had when you were near unto the Grave. What a cold damp did the sight of death bring upon all our former joys? What a low and

contemptible thing did this so much adored World seem to be when we were just about to leave it? How little charming then were all its gayest Smiles, and how little terrible all its frowning Threats? There did not appear then to be anything that was enticing in a great Name and Reputation, in pompous Honors or in vast Treasures: We saw then that all our fellow Creatures, and all that we ourselves are apt to doat upon, was very vanity. All the Contentment's and Satisfactions of our Appetites and all the Pleasures that we had ever taken in eating or drinking, in our Travels or in our Recreations, did all pass away like a Vision in the night. Then we saw indeed the great worth of Faith and Patience, and Self-denial, and a Conquest of this World. Then we could heartily wish that instead of all the vain Books we read, we had more delighted in the Book of God: That instead of all our unprofitable knowledge, we had known Christ and him crucified: That instead of all our Contrivances for this Body and the present state, we had spent all our strength and our whole vigor to get Heaven and Eternal Life. Then we were apt to say, Oh that we had heard his Word with more attention whilst we had our day, and whilst the joyful voice was sounding in our ears! Oh that we had prayed in our Closets with more fervor whilst God called us to seek his Face! Oh that we had bewailed our Sins with a more sincere and hearty Sorrow when we were called to the Duties of Repentance and Humiliation! Let us do all those things now, which we then wisht we had done. Let it forever dash all our confident and foolish Projects for this World, remembering how by a sudden stroke all our Purposes were broke asunder. Let us not trust too much in mortal Men, for we can remember the time when as to us all the help of Man was vain. Let us now prize all those divine Truths, embrace those Promises, and fear those threats which we then saw to be very true. What did we then think of time, when our glass was even running out, and our day covered with the shadows of the night? There was nothing in all the World that did appear to be of so great a value, let

us now prize it at the rate we then did. What Company was it which we then most admired? Whom did we esteem the most excellent and happy People? Were they those that trample on the Laws of God, that profane his Sabbaths, that scorn his Word, that defy his Threats and dare venture to go to an Eternal Hell? or those that are afraid to sin, that season their Entertainments with Spiritual Discourse, that are sober in their Lives, fervent in their Prayers, conscientious in all their Dealings, and that are going to Zion with their faces thither? Surely these were the Men that we called Blessed, and these are the Persons to whom we should now join ourselves, and have the most delightful Conversation, and the greatest Familiarity.

Sixthly, Perform all those things now, which in your Distress you resolved to do, if God would but bring you from the Grave. Psal. 116, 13, 14. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord; I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. When a Man seems to be just entering into Eternity, then 'tis a common thing to say, If God would but give me another Trial, if he will but save my Life, and give me another year and another day of Grace, I will amend my ways, and serve him more, and be better than ever I was? When we have not enjoyed those opportunities that we now do, have we not said within ourselves, If God will trust us again with his Gospel, and the privileges of his open Sanctuary, we will acknowledge his Goodness, and be more fruitful? It concerns us to see that the Resolutions that were formed in our Hearts in the day of our distress, do not expire with our departing Trouble. In Sickness and the Neighborhood of Death Sin does appear to be quite another thing than we took it to be in the time of our careless Health; its Aspect then is very formidable, and its Wounds very deep. In whatsoever disguise it may come to us hereafter, let us in the fear of God, and by his Grace courageously resist it, for it is the worst of Enemies; and when it wraps itself in false and alluring colors, let us

remember what a hideous and frightful Look it had when Sickness took the mask away: Let it still appear as an odious and abominable thing to us. When we were near to Death, what Seriousness, what Zeal, what Holiness did we then vow to God? Was not this our Language, If I may have but a few more Talents bestowed upon me, I will improve them better than I did before? I will hear his Word with more Reverence, and read it with more Care? I will with more frequency and impartiality it search and try my own Soul? Now the time is come that you wished for! Let it appear that your serious resolutions were not the fruits of Fear, but of Love. Let not our sense of God and of Eternity decline as our Troubles wear away. God will not be mocked: He will observe and punish our hypocritical Intentions, if all that we promise him in our Distresses prove but as Chaff before the Wind, and as the Dew of Morning which is exhaled and scattered with the Rising Sun. God has loosed our Bonds, but it is that we may be tied faster to himself: Let us shine with as great a brightness as we hoped to do, and said we would, if God would but recruit our dying Lamp, and pour in fresh Oil again. Oh let us now improve our Time as we then intended to improve it! And let us, among our other expenses, remember that we are then most prodigal when we waste this Treasure; and that we give our Friends and Companions too much, when we give them a great deal of our Time, which they are not able to return us back again: Let us neither suffer it to lie upon our hands as an useless Commodity, nor put it off to every coming Chapman, to every Friend or Diversion, who can give us nothing for it, that is equally valuable. Let us work hard, for we have known such a night wherein we were not able to work; and such an one may come the second time. Can we so soon forget what Thoughts and Apprehensions we then had? Can we so soon forget those dismal Hours when our Hearts beat with Fear, and we thought every Minute would be the last? What shall we do for that God, who is the God of our Lives; who has taught us what we are to do by a

very sharp and terrible Visitation? Let us have a warm sense of his Love preserved upon our Heart, and an high esteem of that Savior, by the purchase of whose Blood we have obtained our Recovery from Death, and all our other Mercies. Tho we are by the Providence of God placed at a further distance from the Grave, yet we ought to retain the same serious Thoughts that we then had; for we have still the same Wants and Necessities to be supplied; that Religion which was then our Object, is still as excellent and amiable; our Constitutions are still frail and perishable: Why do we not then stir up and excite ourselves to put in Execution what we then resolved to do? In our Sickness we think that if we were delivered, we would be more than ordinary Persons. But I know not how it is, that the various Objects and Business, the Diversions and Conversations of this World, hinder us, that we have not the same Thoughts when we dwell in it, as we usually have when we are about to leave it: But it ought not to be so.

Seventhly, After you are brought up from the Grave, let the new Life, which God has given you, shine with all those good things of which your former Life was destitute. We that have recovered from Sickness that was almost unto death, have received two Lives from God, two states of Trial. We first received our Lives at the hand of God as others do when they enter into this World; we have now received them a second time, when they were even gone from us, God has saved them from destruction and restored them as so many new Talents to us. After we have been long near to the Grave, the World looks as a new World to us, all things in it seem to have a new appearance. Let us among so many new things which the Providence of God bestows upon us, quit our old Sins, those Sins into which we most frequently fell before our Sickness came, and those more indiscernible ones, which our Consciences presented to our view in the time of our Distress and Tribulation; and indeed our own doleful

Experience, one would think, might powerfully persuade us to have no more to do with those guests, which after we had entertained them, left us nothing but Miseries and Vexation; they are such sort of Companions as we may very well spare; they have now sure lost all that amiableness which our Ignorance and Folly made us believe they once had; they have cheated us with vain Promises: Let us be no more cheated and imposed upon; let us not embrace the Vipers that have stung us, nor run into the fires that have scorched us, nor drink that Poison again, which a little while ago had like to have cost us our Lives. We did then live many days and years in ease, but how few of all those did we really spend for the Glory of God and our own Salvation? Let us not do so for the time to come; let us live to nobler and higher purposes than we did before: Where we did but creep before, let us now run with all our force and speed; where we did but wish before, let us now strive and wrestle. Let us not be guilty of a cold Prayer, or a misimproved Sabbath anymore; nor make by a sinful silence and omission, the sins of others to become our own sins; but labor to obtain that Wisdom, Prudence and Courage whereby we may boldly reprove Sin wheresoever we see it, whether it be in those that are high or low. Let our Conversations be as an Ointment which cannot be hid, but spreads its pleasant scent round about. Let our Actions preach Righteousness, that the Seriousness that is so eminent in us may cause others to be serious by the sight of our good Example, that there may be abundance who may have reason to bless God for us. Let our Closets no more be Witnesses against us for the shortness and haste and luke-warmness of our Prayers to God. Let not these public Places of our Worship be Witnesses that we have been here careless and irreverent and vain, and have gone away from them no better than when we came hither. Let all the Company we are in be no more a Witness against us, that we have there forgot our Creator; and whilst we have been unmindful of him, have discoursed with too much eagerness and delight of

trivial and unnecessary things. Let our Tables no more be Witnesses against us for our Intemperance and Gluttony; nor our Bibles have reason to complain that they have been slighted, whilst we have with delight read other vain and unprofitable Books. Let us beware of abusing our Liberty in lawful things, and of running too near the borders of a Precipice. Let us beware of that Company and those occasions that once tempted us to sin. Let us remember where we fell, and walk with a more even step and a more watchful Eye. Let all People that knew us before, see that our Sickness and Affliction has been a Mercy and Advantage to us, to teach us those things which we could not learn by more gentle and easy Methods: Let the great troubles we have met withal be a warning to us, that we run not again into any of those Sins for which we have paid so very dear. Our Deliverance is indeed a Resurrection to us: Let it be so like the Last, that we may rise from our Graves pure and free from all that Ordure, Filth and Pollution that was upon us. As it is a life from the dead, let us not have our Consciences anymore filled with dead Works: Let us be in some measure, like the Angels of God, as we shall be in the great and final Resurrection; and though our eating and drinking, and the many petty cares which we are to take for our Food and Raiment and many other things that concern our present poor Life, hinder us from being very like them; yet nevertheless this should not discourage us from endeavoring to be as conformable to them as we can even now, and then to long for that day, when we shall have a more exact similitude. Some indeed when they recover, fall to all their old Intemperance and Excesses again; the first Visit they make is to their old Good-fellows, as they call them, and they are welcomed into the jolly Company with full Bowls and with loud Huzzaes; but let us go to such as will entertain us with Praises to God for our deliverance, and not drink our health's, but seriously pray for them.

Eighthly, When God has brought us from the Grave, let us by all means see that so sore an Affliction, and so great a Deliverance may be sanctified to us: And we may know that they are so when they produce these following effects. First, When they take off our hearts from the World and the Creatures, and drive us more to God. Secondly, When they make us more frequent and fervent in our Prayers. Thirdly, When they produce those holy ends for which they were sent upon us. Fourthly, When they make us to acknowledge God, and to see his disposal and his hand in all that is come upon us, Ruth 1. 20. The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. Ver. 21. The Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me. Fifthly, When they make us to humble ourselves, and to lay our Mouths in the dust, knowing that though our troubles were very severe, yet they were very just, Ezek. 16. 63. That thou mayest remember and be confounded, and never open thy mouth anymore, because of thy shame when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God. And Job 42. 5. When they fill our Hearts with Admiration and our Mouths with his Praise. Seventhly, When the Mercies we receive carry our Affections with more flame towards the Benefactor from whence they came: As the warmth of the shining Sun causes a new fragancy and a sweeter smell among all the Flowers of the Garden. Eighthly, When they bring us to more knowledge of God, and to more true calmness and joy in him. These are glorious Effects of a sanctified affliction and of a sanctified escape from it, and a sign that they came not by a common, but by a special Providence; and by a right of the Covenant of Grace by which all things are ours. I might add in the ninth place, when we taste his Fatherly Goodness and Love in all that we enjoy; if we find these things within us, 'tis a sign we have both heard the Rod and him that did appoint it, Mich. 6. 9. Oh how happy are we if God by taking away our health has given us himself; and if by sending sharp sickness and pain upon us, he has prepared us for a sweeter relish of

his Love? Happy are we if our Temporary Sickness tend to an Eternal Health, and our short Sorrows to an Everlasting Joy: Happy yet again are we, if he have not only Commanded us to take up our beds and walk, but also said unto us, that our Sins are forgiven; if we can say with Hezekiah, Isa. 38. 17. Behold, for Peace I had great Bitterness, but thou hast in Love to my Soul delivered it from the Pit of Corruption, for thou hast cast all my Sins behind thy Back. It must be our great endeavor, that after we have been tried we may come forth like Gold; and that we do not as the three Children in another case, come out with our old Garments, and with the same Sins upon us. Let us earnestly beg of God that we may have a complete Salvation and a total Recovery: That as our Bodies are supplied with new strength, so our Souls may prosper also. For to be diseased in our Souls whilst our Bodies thrive, is as if the House in which one lives, were very well repaired and adorned to all advantage, and the Man that dwells in so fair an Habitation were forced to go in rags; so fine a dwelling and so ordinary an Inhabitant would not agree well together. Oh let us take care, that whilst God has healed our Diseases, we be not inwardly distempered with the Plague of our own Hearts: That Man is not to be called healthful, that let him look never so well has a Disease in his Vitals, that by slow Degrees preys upon his Life: Neither can that Man be truly said to be recovered, whose Soul is either void of Grace, or that having had it in some measure, languishes and decays. He is composed of Contradictions, of Life and Death; at the same time he is alive and well as to his Body, but his Soul is dead in Trespasses and Sins: The most excellent and valuable part of himself does remain under the power of Death; and whilst it is so, is an Object more displeasing to God, than a dissolving Carcass in the Grave would be to us. The Welfare and Recovery of our Souls is what we ought more to seek than the Welfare of our Bodies: Both indeed are Mercies, but the former is much the greater of the two. What is Purple and fine Linnen and soft Raiment that sets off a Man,

to the Eyes of others, to that Faith and Love, and Patience, and Hope and those other Graces of the Spirit that beautify the Soul, and render it amiable in the Eye of God? What is all the Meat and Drink that refresh our Bodies, to that Heavenly Manna, that Celestial Nourishment that a healthful holy Soul feeds upon? The prosperity of our Bodies, their ease and capacity of performing their several Actions, is one of the greatest Temporal Mercies; but alas this will signify nothing at all, if we do not prosper in our Souls. There is a way indeed whereby we may gather Grapes of Thorns and Figs of Thistles, i.e. Refreshment and Comfort from those Afflictions that pierced us to the quick; and that Sorrow which was at first unwelcome to us, may prove an Angel of Light, and strike off our Chains; if we can say with David, It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes, Psal. 119. 71. Ver. 67. Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy Word. His was a very blessed Cross that flourished into such fruit as this. I think I should not say amiss should I say that God has as it were brought every person here from the Grave, and saved him from going down into the Pit, from a Grave and a Pit which has been often digged for us by the Plots and Designs of our Enemies, and into which we had long ago fallen, had not God mercifully saved and helped us. God has very lately done great things for our Brethren in Ireland, whereof I do believe your Hearts are glad; for as you mourned with them in their Sorrows, so tis fit you participate with them in the Joys that they now have by the quick advances of their increasing Deliverance, and from the dangers that so nearly threatened them. And God has not after the mighty wonders of his Providence left us here in England; when destruction has been coming towards us with hasty paces; when it has from the proud Fleet of our Enemies threatened us at our Coasts, and at our own Doors, this gracious God has kept it off: And if we repent, we shall not perish. You in London have seen your Civil Liberties rescued from the Grave, in which they might

have laid very long, had not he raised up our present Protestant King to be that glorious Instrument that should give them a Resurrection. Our Country after a long Sickness and Indisposition, under which a few years ago, we were afraid it would have languished quite away, has begun to recover; and it is our Wish and Prayer, that by the same Goodness and Power of God that has turned our Captivity; it may at length flourish with a perfect and complete Recovery: For indeed it is not so, as long as there are still so many Blasphemies and execrable Oaths to be heard in our Streets; as long as there is so much heedlessness and irreverence in our Assemblies; so much Injustice and Deceit in our Shops; so much Omission of Prayer in our Families; so much Luxury and Riot at our Tables; so much Profanation of this Holy day: But to this we hope the Zeal and the Care of our Magistrates will at length put a stop. But whilst these things continue, though blessed be God we are much better than we once were, yet still these will be ill Symptoms upon us. What cause of Joy should we have, if the Mercies we have already received were sanctified and improved? Oh what a Joy would it be, if God would save England with a Spiritual Deliverance; if he would save us from those Sins that expose us to his Wrath? And if we would in our particular stations do all we can to promote such a Salvation which would be much more glorious than what we have yet seen: Then indeed we should have cause to turn our days of Humiliation into days of Praise. If we would forsake our strange Sins we need not fear in the least to be punished by People of a strange Language and which we understand not. We need not fear all the powers of the World nor all our Enemies, if we did not cherish the worst Enemy of all in our own bosoms, I mean our Sins; and (if which God avert) we should still continue to cherish these, they will rout us without another Enemy. Let us obey and love that God that has so wonderfully preserved and continued our Peace, that so there is no crying out nor complaining in our Streets: That has made all things

to be still with us, while the Nations round about have heard the Voice of Spoilers, and the Noise of bloody Wars. Let us take heed lest we forget our Deliverer, lest we abuse his Goodness, lest we forsake our own Mercies. There are no Judgments so severe which we have not all deserved, and which we may not fear; but yet there are no Mercies so great, for which we may not hope; if the large Experience that we have of the Goodness of God in our frequent Deliverances, have their due influence upon us; and if he be for us as he will then be, who can be against us? Jer. 3. 22, 23. Return ye backsliding Children, and I will heal your backslidings: Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Truly in vain is salvation hoped from the Hills, and from the multitude of Mountains; truly in the Lord our God is the Salvation of Israel.

SERMON V.

O Lord, thou hast brought up my Soul from the Grave: thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down into the Pit. - Psal. 30. ver. 3, 4.

Sing unto the Lord, O ye Saints of his, and give thanks at the Remembrance of his Holiness.

ANOTHER Way whereby you are to improve your Recovery from Sickness, is, to take heed that you do not overmuch value your Bodies: Look upon them as still obnoxious to great Pains, and let that abate your too great Indulgence to them. This I know is not a very pleasant direction, because as there is nothing for which our sensible Nature has a greater abhorrence than Pain, so there is nothing of which we are more unwilling to think; and when by any ways 'tis

brought to our remembrance we endeavor to turn it off, by turning to some other Discourse, or avoiding those places, where by the Groans or Tears of the Sick we shall be forced to remember it whether we will or not. Few People care to talk of Sickness, till they are sick; or of dying till they come to die: They make much shorter Visits to the diseased than to those in health; not only because they are afraid of troubling their Friends by their Discourse, which is likely enough; but principally because this is more unpleasant than their other Visits. It is very advisable therefore that we render those Evils which we cannot avoid, familiar to us by frequent Meditations; and this will diminish their formidableness and violence; though indeed when a Man has thought never so long, pain will be pain still; a thing that whenever it comes will cause undelightful sensations in our Spirits. The Body by its near alliance will communicate to the Soul a perception of all the Miseries it suffers; and when the one half of a Man is ill, the other half cannot fare very well. It was the peculiar Vanity of the Stoics, as some observe, That they would be philosophizing after the rate of Angels, and discourse without considering that their Bodies are one half of their Natures, and that their Souls are not disengaged from Matter, and by consequence have sensual Appetites too gross to be satisfied by bare Thoughts and Reflections; and sensitive Pains too sharp to be allayed with Words and Subtilties. When we consider what Evils our Sickness brought upon these poor frail Bodies of ours, surely we should never too much doat upon them, when all the Care we can use will not preserve them from the Grave. He that is proud of his Body, is as foolish, as if he should doat upon a Flower, which an unseen Storm may deprive of all its Glory; or which, if it be let alone, and meet with no accident, will of its self wither and decay. Or as if he should admire a Stream of Water and the Bubbles that are upon it, which in the very moment of our Admiration, slide away and stay not for our Praise or our Love. Or as if he should fall in Love with some of those brighter Clouds

which roll above our Heads, and which, for all their taking Brightness, will quickly disappear. It would abate that tenderness and delicacy, wherewith we treat our Bodies, if we did but leisurely consider what strange Miseries may afflict them before the period of this mortal Life. It is a sad Reflection (as one says) to consider, that when Life is so short and so fading, so much of so little should be worn away in Misery and Torment. Some indeed by a particular Dispensation, and a most favorable Providence, are allowed to pass into the other World without much pain in this; but this is not the common Lot. You know that the poor Man at the Pool of Bethesda, had an Infirmity thirty eight years, Jahn 5. 5. You are told in Luke 13. 16. of a Woman that was a Daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound eighteen years; and when so malicious and cruel a Spirit had the management of her Bonds, no doubt but he made them very strong. It was without doubt a painful Distemper, as appears verse. 11. she was bound down and could in no wise lift up herself. If you inquire of those that usually attend the Dying; or if you look upon the Weekly Bills, you will find there by what painful Diseases Men go to the Grave: By the Stone or the Gout, raging Fevers or Cholic, or which is of all others most formidable, and which more generally die of every Week than of any other Distemper, i.e. Convulsions: Or if they die not by these, yet by others, that by their length are as grievous and as uneasy. Your bodily Pains may be protracted to a very long duration; for it is a most false Maxim, that if your Pain be long, it will not be sharp, and that if it be sharp, it will not be long. It is a saying to which daily Experience gives a Confutation:

For how many are there that are groaning under Pains both very long, and very sharp? Fevers burn us, Agues shatter us, Dropsies drown us, Phrensies unman us, the Gout tortures us, Convulsions rack us, Epilepsies fell us, Cholic's tear us, and there is no

considerable Disease which is not very troublesome in itself, however Religion may sanctify and sweeten it.

Boyle, occas. Refl. Sect. 2. Med. 3. What a vain thing is our Body, and how vain are the Projects of Men for the preservation of it? How many are their Cares and Designs about it? It is for this, that Commerce and Navigation is maintained to bring home Foreign Drugs for Physic, and Sauces of other Countries to raise our Appetites; Pearls and Jewels for Ornament and Splendor. The greatest part of Men are employed merely for the service of the Body: Physicians by profession are obliged to study what may repair its defects, and contribute to our ease and health; the Husbandman labors all the year that the Ground may yield us Corn and Bread and Fruit: Some build us Houses, others beautify and furnish them: Butchers are employed to kill the Creatures for us, and Cooks to dress them; and yet these Bodies are liable all the while to pains, which none of all these can remove: To sicknesses, of which no Perfumes, no costly Raiment, no pleasant Relishes can make us to lose the bitter Sense; and the Thoughts of them ought to lessen greatly all that inordinate Concern, which we have for what is only mortal; for its being so, makes it to be very vain. We must use ourselves to hardship, and relinquish our too great tenderness and delicacy. For he is the wisest Man, who knowing he is once to suffer, as we all are, does learn betimes to do it: Let us therefore keep our Bodies pure and clean and chaste.

First, Let us use a great Moderation in all those Accommodations, that relate only to them: Such as Houses, Gardens, Estates or the like, that they be not too expensive or take up too much of our time, or of our delight. That they be not designed as the Trophies of our Pride, or the means of Vain-glory, or to get a Name. We that have Souls to save, have something else to do than to follow needless

Superfluities. When we were sick, we knew that we were too much unwilling to leave the World. Let us not paint it with more alluring colors, lest we be still more in love with it, and more loath to leave it. For shall we more easily part with things sumptuous and splendid, than with things that are meaner and less suited to a fleshly Mind and Life? We are Pilgrims and shall we be so industrious to plant and build, and sow in a strange Country, when we confess we are distant from our home? What Man would set himself to adorn his Inn, from which he may dislodge the next morning, and it may be, never see it anymore?

Secondly, Let us use a great Moderation in our Apparel. When you dress yourselves, remember that you dress a Body that will shortly be a Carcass without Beauty, Life and Motion. Consider how soon all the Sprightliness of your Eyes, all the Pleasure of your Looks will be gone; the Cold of Death will quickly freeze that Blood which now circulates with so brisk a motion in your Veins; and Sickness in a few days may so change you, even you, that are most curious about your Body, that you will not desire even to look upon yourself: When pain and trouble has sunk your Eyes, and hollowed your Cheeks, and turned your once delightful red into a decaying pale; how seldom then will you visit that Glass, to which you now go so often, and at which you stay so very long? What will your softest Raiment and your finest Clothes avail a decaying Body, which God hath clothed with the Garment of Heaviness? Let the Consideration of this be a powerful Motive to excite you, not to go to the highest Excesses of a luxurious Age; but after the Fashion of the grave, the modest and the religious part of People; that allow to themselves some large portions of their Time to adorn their Souls with those Graces that make them shine with real worth, and do not spend it all to set the Body off. What is this Body but a Lump of animated Clay, a poor ruinous Habitation that has a thousand decays ready to come upon it, and

whilst we are contriving how to repair it for many years, it may be, we have not then a Month to live? And what is it when the Soul that gave it all its pleasant sensations, all its comeliness and luster, is fled away? If we look but upon a Friend an hour after he is dead, how is his Countenance changed? There is nothing then to be seen in him that did attract our Eyes before: You then no more see any Smiles in that Face, where you have before seen the signs of Cheerfulness and Joy. Where is his former Comeliness and Beauty, his ancient Grace or his lovely Features? You can then take no delight in being with him, you have then no mind to look upon that very person that it may be a while ago, was the Delight of your Heart, and the Comfort of your Life. Will all the Finery in the World procure for us a sweeter slumber in the Dust? Why should we set ourselves with so much application to regard our Bodies? Is it to much purpose to paint a little Dust and Ashes? Those light impressions that we make upon it, the next Wind blows away. Think but how vain and short your Life is, and this will greatly suppress your inclination to Vanity: Look upon your Watches, and consider how they give you notice of the haste of Time; and to this purpose your Clocks may be of excellent use, if (as one says) you design them not only as Civil Servants, but as Militant Sentinels to advertise you every hour, that your Enemy is advanced a step nearer to you; for as every tolling Bell may be said to be the Clock of Death, so every Clock may not unfitly be called the Passing Bell of Time.

Thirdly, Our Sickness should also teach us to be moderate in all those Pleasures that relate only to the Body. Such we may use indeed as are necessary to divert our Minds, when we are wearied with Study or the Duties of our Calling. Such as are least expensive and take up the least time, such as are no way scandalous, and such as are both lawful and convenient; but we must especially avoid all those things that minister to Temptation, to Sensuality, to

Covetousness, to rash Angers, and whatsoever else it is that indisposes us for Prayer, for Self-Examination and all the other serious Acts of Religion, for which we must be in a constant readiness: We must enrich our Souls with nobler and higher Joys; in communion with God, in meditating on his Works and Attributes, the Wonders of his Grace in Christ, the mighty Preparations that he has made for our Happiness and Glory, and these will be a good improvement of our Sickness and Recovery: Nor will they be followed with such gloomy sorrows that eclipse all that which the World calls a brisk and a merry Life. After this manner should our Sickness teach us to regard our Bodies, not to be over-fond of them, not to glory in our Strength, in our Health, in our Riches, or anything that is but of a short Continuance: For wherein are all these things, or wherein is Man himself, whose Breath is in his Nostrils, to be accounted of? Jer. 9. 23, 24.

Secondly, Do not provoke God to cut off your Life. Your Life is an excellent Gift, which those of us that have recovered, have but newly received; let us not by any means abuse it, lest it be taken from us again, which God will do if we make no suitable returns to the Kindness of him our Benefactor, Eccl. 7. 17. Be not over-much wicked, neither be thou foolish; why shouldst thou die before the time? i.e. If we continue in a course of sin, the Divine Vengeance will overtake us and make us to feel the sharp Effects of his just Severity and of our own Transgression. To this end, we must, First, Beware of all gluttonous Excesses in what we eat and drink: For though by going beyond the bounds of what is lawful, we discern no great hurt for the present; yet we shall lay the foundation of manyfold Diseases which may break out afterwards, and vitiate our Blood, and waste our Spirits; and when the pleasure of our Appetites is past, we shall have a remaining Bitterness, and Wounds and Sorrow. Many wise and observing Men believe that of those that outlive their Childhood,

there is scarce one of twenty, yea or of an hundred, that dieth, but Gluttony is the principal Cause, though not the most immediate: There is nothing that makes a Disease more insupportable than the thought of having brought it upon ourselves by our own Carelessness and Security: How many by this Method are withered in the Flower of their Age, when they thought their Evening and Decay at a mighty distance? What Havoc and Murder, and Desolation is made in the World by the force of the Sword and the violence of unjust Wars?

and yet more perish by their own Intemperance; and all Diseases even those that are Epidemical, Natural or Casual, are by this and other Vices that attend it, rendered far more sharp, lasting, malignant and incurable, by that stock of corrupted Matter that they lodge in the Body to feed those Diseases, and that Impotency that these Vices bring upon Nature to resist them.

Hale's Letter to his Son, p. 17. Tho it be very true, That let a Man be never so Religious he must both be sick and die; yet the prevailing sense of a Deity will sweeten these Evils when they come, and also keep them longer off: As tis said of Wisdom, Length of Days are in her right Hand, Prov. 3. 16. And 'tis said by the Fear of the Lord, Prov. 3. 11. By me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy Life shall be increased. And Chap. 10. 27. The Fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened. But if our Belly be our God, our end will be destruction even in this World, Phil. 3. 19. When Men are gratifying their Appetites in all that they desire, they are undermining their own Prosperity, and giving fire to that Train which will certainly blow them up; and at the rate they live, they may well say, Come let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die: For indeed their Excess today may cause their Death tomorrow. How many are now in their Graves, over whom it may be truly writ, This Man killed himself with drinking? And how odious

must the Memory of such an one be that so made himself away? But let us remember, Life is so great a Blessing, that it is not for the sake of a few merry Companions, or to gratify their humor, to be parted with: There are a sort of People that through the Power of their Ignorance are very apt to quarrel with the Providence of God for making their Lives so short, and yet they will make them shorter than otherwise they might be: and truly such sort of men have the least reason, because their chief happiness lies in this World, and not in that which is to come; and their action is as foolish, as if one would make haste to pull down the House he lives in, and yet when he has done it, knows not where to get another.

Secondly, We must avoid all anxious Fears, all inward fretting and discontent, all foolish Anger, Envy, and the like passions; for these are great enemies to Life: As also all uncommunicated sadness and lasting griefs; for any of those troublesome Accidents will unavoidably molest our present state: And no less prejudicial are all uncertain hopes, all immoderate cares, and over-eager Studies; for the mind by too vehement an intention, will communicate its trouble to the Body, and this will pine and languish by its sympathy and nearness to that; and the Body cannot conceal the displeasure that arises to it from the more inward and spiritual troubles of the Soul. There will be a Cloud of Sorrow in the Forehead, when there is an abiding sadness in the heart: whereas the Right Government of our Affections will spread a cheerfulness both over the Body and the Mind. 'It is said of Moses, Deut. 34. 7. That he was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his Eyes were not dim, nor his natural Force abated; and to this the constant meekness and quietness of his Spirit contributed very much.

It was Mr. Burroughs his Opinion, that Mr. Dod was the meekest Man upon the Earth in his time, and speaking of him as then alive,

he says,

He is about fourscore and ten years old, and lately preached twice every Lord's-day; and the constant health of his Body was such, that he was able to continue heavenly discourse till midnight from day today, and to Preach all the day long, his Spirit not failing at all. And thus by keeping the constant frame of his Spirit, he was hardly known to be in any Distemper of Spirit. (See Burroughs Serm. on Matth. xi. l. 2. p. 358.)

Thirdly, That we may not provoke God to cut us off, our Lives must be laid out for his Glory. If we live to ourselves, he may well throw us aside as a broken Vessel wherein he has no pleasure. Which of us would suffer a barren and unfruitful Tree to Cumber the Ground for many years? And do we think that his Patience will always let us alone, and not, after it has been the witness of our Idleness, turn to Fury, and cut us down? If we do nothing for him and his Glory, how can we expect that his Creatures should give us nourishment and strength, that his Earth should bear us, and his Sun shine upon us? How can we ask our daily Bread from our most gracious Master, if we lay not out the refreshment we receive from it in his own Service? Which of you would keep a Servant in your Family, and give him all necessary Accommodations, and yet be content to see none of your Work done? Would you not with Anger turn him off? And do we deserve better usage at the hands of God? Would we have him to spread our Table, and to fill our Cup, that we may sin against him? What Prince is there that would give money from his Treasures to carry on a War against his own Crown, or to support a Rebel? If we oppose our Creator, or forget him, 'tis no wonder if he throw us out of the care of his Providence, 'tis no wonder if his Justice deprive us of a Life which we so vainly spend: And indeed when we consider how little we do for that God who has done so much for us, every one

of us may lay his hand upon his breast and say, Lord be merciful to me a sinner, for I deserve to die. Whatever care and temperance we use in our Diet, our Exercises, or our Recreations, yet if we be unprofitable Servants, he may be provoked to give us our last Summons, and say, Give an account of thy Stewardship, for thou shalt be no longer Steward. With what face can we pray to God to keep us from sudden Death, and to prolong our Lives, when the Language of our former Actions will declare this to be the sense of our prayers, Lord give me a longer Life, and I will sin against thee more? And is that a frame that becomes a Creature and a Sinner, to his great Creator and final Judge? It may cause God to say, It repent's me that I have made such a man whole, and that I have brought him from the Grave.

Thirdly, Live much in a little time 'It is no great matter if we arrive safe to Heaven, though we do not live so many years in the Body as others may attain to; though we lose the sight of the Sun, Moon and Stars, yet the first sight of the Face of God, will make amends for that, and all our other losses. Let us therefore rouse up ourselves, let us cast off all our former sloth, let us contend and strive with all our force, with all the powers of our Souls, that we may enter in at the strait gate, and lay hold on Eternal Life. It is for Heaven and Salvation; and methinks the very name of such a place and state should set our Souls on fire, it should enflame our desires, and quicken our diligence, and raise our hopes. Let us run with as hasty a pace as ever we can, let us not stay to listen to the charms or pleasures of the World. Let no Frowns discourage us, no Difficulties startle us, no Dangers keep us back; 'tis for a Crown of Glory. Let us keep that in our Eye; and let us consider, who are the Spectators of our Race. God looks on to help us here, and to reward us at the last. Angels applaud us, the Saints on Earth pray for us, and the World will admire us, though our Diligence will condemn their Sloth. How

busy and how unwearied is the Devil for our Ruin? And shall we shrink at any Labor, when we have the advantage of that evil Spirit? What he does is with Envy against us and with rage against God. But we have hope; and though we toil to the very Evening and Conclusion of our Day, we have a Master that will reward us very well: How solicitous and how careful are Men for the Affairs of this present Life; and shall not we be as much solicitous for those of the Life to come? How will they rise early and sit up late for a good Bargain, or a little Profit; and shall not we do as much to save our Souls forever? Oh let us suffer no day to go over our Heads, wherein we are not more watchful and circumspect in our Actions, more fervent in our Prayers, more concerned for the Welfare of our Neighbor and our own, than we were the day before. Let us now do as much in a Week as we did before in a Month, and as much in a Day as we have done in a Week before. Let us endeavor to have more Light in our Understandings, more Love in our Wills, and a greater and more universal Warmth in our Affections. Let us that have been sick, consider what an interruption that Sickness has made in our Life? When our sorrowful Months were upon the account of those Sorrows, to us Months of Vanity, wherein we were not able to pursue the true ends and business of Life; Let us fill up the vacant space with an after Diligence: And seeing our great Work in the World has had so long a stand; Let us now fall upon it with a fresh Vigor; and we may by running faster, and by the Grace of God, overtake some of our Fellow Christians that are at present, a great way before us, and who are many Paces before us on the way to Glory: We have, it may be, formerly done some small service for Christ, but now we must do more than we ever did: When we have obtained so many Blessings at his Hands, it would be inexcusable, if we had not a Mouth to acknowledge his Goodness, and an Heart to love him; a Mouth to speak for him and for his Glory upon all occasions, and an Heart to admire and depend upon his Promise: We have done too little for

him that has done so much for us. Let the consideration of this humble us for our former Sins, and direct us what to do for the time to come; that our Speech, our Conversation may be more profitable than it has been, 1 Cor. 15. 58. Eccl. 9. 10.

Fourthly, Let us live so that our Examples may do good whilst we live, and when we are dead: For every Man that has the Spirit of Christianity, i.e. a generous and a public Spirit, will not only be concerned for himself; but for others, and not only for the present, but for the future Generation: And as in this luxurious and most wicked Age of ours, there is like to be transmitted to Posterity a great number of very bad Examples; so it should be the Care and Endeavor of every good Man to prevent their mischievous influence, by doing what in him lies to mend the World. We live indeed in a time wherein the most part of People can talk very well, but never was there any time in which there was less Practice. It is a most easy thing to discourse well, but none, but a true Believer, can live as he ought to do according to the Gospel, which requires a universal and a shining Holiness. Our Actions and Examples will have a more powerful efficacy than our Words; and whilst the one does but touch the Ear, the other will penetrate into the very Souls of those that observe us; and render themselves Masters of their Approbation, even almost whether they will or not. We are obliged to have a great regard to the Salvation of our Neighbors, and there is no course more likely to succeed than this: They will easily follow us when we take them by the hand, and advise them to go in no other way, but in that where we go ourselves: When we are fervent in our Prayers, it will shame their Coldness; when we are serious in our attending on the Word, the sight of our seriousness will make them more attentive, and our Heat of Affection may kindle some Sparks of Love to God in their colder Hearts; and the necessity of a good Example seems to be greater in Cities than in other places; for as one observes, (Dubose

Serm. p. 495.) It is certain that great Towns are ordinarily great Theaters of Vices; as the Multitude is more numerous, so wicked Examples are more frequent. Sin hardens itself by the number, and authorizes itself by the quantity of Accomplices: And as the Fire burns more by a great heap of wood or coals put together, so the Ardor of Sin warms and inflames itself by a great Throng of Persons that communicate to one another their criminal Affections: Besides, in vast and populous Cities, they have more Liberty to sin, because it is less observed and taken notice of; as a Serpent conceals itself among a multitude of Bushes: Whereas in little Villages the least faults are soon minded; many times in greater places very great Enormities are not discerned; and it concerns us also whom God has raised from the Grave, to be more exact in our Course; for People will look with a more curious Eye upon us that are recovered, to see what we do, when they will not, it may be, look so much to the hand that healed us: As the People came more to see Lazarus that was risen, than Jesus that revived him from the Grave; much people of the Jews came, not for Jesus sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also whom he had raised from the dead, Joh. 12. 9. Wicked men are punished in Hell for all the Evil they have done in the World, and for all that they have been the cause of; it is a new addition to their torments, to think how many are going to the same miserable place, whose damnation will lie at their door: As 'tis commonly said, that Dives requested of Abraham, that some messenger might be sent to warn his Brethren, lest they came to the same place; not from any Love to their Souls, for there is no such Charity in Hell; but from a fear, that if they came to the same torment, his own misery would be the greater, for having been in a great measure the cause of theirs by his bad Example. And on the contrary, 'tis a great pleasure to those in Heaven to think, that they have been any way instrumental to the Glory of their great Lord; and that the Seeds that by good Instructions and holy Example they threw upon the World, flourish

into Fruit when they are dead. Thus they blossom in the dust, and their Actions, as 'tis fabulously reported of some of the Bodies of the Popish Saints, send forth a sweet perfume after Death, to all the places round about. The Saints of God do good indeed to the World when they are gone, not by Intercession as Mediators for us, but by the good Works which they performed here below; and though their Works follow them to increase their reward, yet the remembrance of them stays behind. It is hardly to be imagined how far the power of a good Example does diffuse its self, when the person that gave it, is removed from the World: It does encourage others to Religion, and to a perseverance in it, seeing it has no new difficulties, but only those which others have conquered, who are now at rest with God. Therefore are we commanded to be followers of them who through Faith and Patience have inherited the Promises, Heb. 6. 6. We are to follow their Faith, considering the end of their Conversation, Heb. 13. 7. Those of us that have been so happy as to have had a Religious Education, though we are deprived of our Parents, yet we full well remember their serious pathetic Exhortations, how they did earnestly entreat us to fear God and keep his Commandments: We can remember how they set some portion of their time apart every day for Reading the Word, and secret Prayer, and the other Duties of Religion; and when we are gone, if we have been truly sincere, others cannot but remember our Example. Your Children and Servants will greatly mind what you do that are the Master of the Family, and you either very much promote or hinder their Salvation, for which you must be answerable to God in the approaching day of Judgment. Is it not a Credit to your Reputation, when your Servant and Apprentice shall thus remember your Example, and say, Oh how Conscientious was my Master in his Buying and Selling! How afraid was he of imposing upon others, or of cheating them with many good words, whilst he had deceitful intentions in his heart? How afraid was he lest the business of his Trade should Justle out Religion, or the Shop

be an hindrance to the Duties of his Closet, or of Family Prayer? How careful was he to set aside some of his Gains for the Charitable Relieving of the Poor? As to you that are Parents, your Children will certainly mind more what you do than what you say. If you Sanctify the Sabbath, and are serious in your Service to God, you may have good hope that they will be so; but if you are immoderate in your Recreations, your Eating, Drinking, or your Apparel, 'tis very likely they will be so; and what flames will it add to your misery, to think that you were the Cause of their Everlasting destruction? And how will you bear it, to hear their Cries and bitter Expressions; when they shall Curse you for not having given to them good Instructions and seasonable Warnings, and a holy Example, by which they might have been enabled to fly from the Wrath to come? You may now do much more good by practicing one Command, than by causing to learn all the Ten: And though you be so poor that you have no Riches or Estate to leave them, yet you may leave your Prayers and your good Example to the next Generation. We commonly say of a rich covetous Miser, That he will never do any good whilst he lives; and we may say of him and all others, that are not true Christians, That they will never do any good when they are dead; for when they die, they are like Nero, they leave abundance of poison behind them; they infected the Air with their Oaths and Blasphemies, when they lived; and when they are gone the Contagion spreads, and their ill President meeting with corrupt Nature, which inclines all Men to what is bad, does convey its Venom to several others that they left behind. What an Impression many times does an unbecoming Word leave upon the Hearer for many years after? Much more does the Remembrance of an ill Example. Thus their evil Works prove Factors for the Devil, and enlarge his Kingdom, when they are rotting in the Grave: Whereas if you be zealous for God, the remaining Flames of your Zeal may awaken some luke-warm and slothful Christian to do what you have done: For he may thus argue, If that holy Man prayed so hard and

strove so much, what cause have I to pray and strive, for I have a Soul to save as well as he? And as the Gate was strait to him, so will it be to me; and as 'tis impossible to handle Perfumes without bearing away part of the scent; so it should be to converse with you, without savoring of your Goodness: You should so live, that others may reap the benefit of your holy Life, when you are gone: As the Earth does not lose the Virtue of its Beams, when the Sun is set; that Heat and Warmth and Vegetation, which it has given to Herbs and Plants does remain, and its Influence is felt, when it is no longer to be seen; thus you will be as Herbs and Flowers, which when they are gathered are medicinal, and yield juices healthful and necessary to the Body; or as the Corn which when it is cut down, is serviceable for Food and Nourishment: Thus every Man may so contrive it, that he may be serviceable to the World, when he does not live in it anymore: Thus the Apostles spread a most diffusive Light by their Holiness and Doctrine, which all the Malice of Hell and all the Rage of Tyrants has not been able to extinguish; but though they shone with an extraordinary Brightness, yet every Believer is a Child of Light, every Believer is a Star of great use and benefit, though one Star differeth from another Star in Glory; though he be never so obscure, yet he may be beneficial; as a Pearl or a Diamond, though it be set in Lead, does not cease to be of great Value: Thus your Name will be as sweet Ointment delightful and dear to others: Whereas if we be wicked, we shall have the same Fate with Jehoram, who died without being desired, 2 Chron. 21. 20. Thus I say, our Examples will do more good than many bare Instructions: As Soldiers will be more animated and forward, when they see one Example of courageous Fighting before their Eyes, than by a thousand Rules that teach them the Policies and Designs of War. Thus I have showed you what Improvement those that are recovered and brought from the Grave ought to make of it; and what mischief will ensue, if they do it not; and indeed it is a Mercy to the World, that the Lives of ill Men are so short; (for as one

hath lately observed) the World is very bad as it is, so bad that good Men scarce know how to spend fifty or sixty years in it; but how bad would it probably be, were the Life of Man extended to six, seven or eight hundred years? If so near a prospect of the other World as forty or fifty years cannot restrain Men from the greatest Villainies, what would they do if they could as reasonably suppose Death to be at three or four hundred years off? If Men make such Improvements in Wickedness in twenty or thirty years, what would they do in hundreds, and then what a blessed place would this World be?

And to excite you to be the more careful in the improving of your Sickness: Let me add these three following Considerations.

Cons. 1. How many are dead since you were first ill? How many excellent Ministers whom you must never hear again? How many of your dearest Friends are now in the cold Grave, with whom you cannot now discourse, and whose Faces you shall never see till the Great Day? Many have sunk in a Calm, and several among us have outlived a Storm: Many have perished with less pain and less violent diseases than those which some of us have had: This should engage us to make suitable returns to that God who has spared us when he hath taken them away.

Cons. 2. This Improvement of our Sickness and Recovery will exempt us from the Number of those hateful People, that are not only no better, but a great deal worse when they are brought out of Distress, than they were before; and 'tis generally thought that of a thousand People that make large Promises in their Sickness, there are scarce fifty that keep their Word and perform their Vows, when they are recovered: Those good Purposes which they had were the Product of their Fears, and when those are over, their intended Goodness does also vanish away.

Cons. 3. This good Improvement of your new Life may engage God to prolong your time to an honorable old Age. For though we can merit nothing at his Hands, yet if we labor hard in his Service, it may be, he will not cause our Sun to go down at Noon, but continue us in his Vineyard, till the Evening of the Day.

I now proceed briefly to consider the fourth Verse.

Ver. 4.

Sing unto the Lord, O ye Saints of his, and give thanks at the Remembrance of his Holiness.

From these Words I shall insist on this Proposition:

That Person that has received wonderful Deliverance from Death, ought not only to praise God himself; but to excite and call upon others to praise God with him: And all the Servants of God should be most willing to join in the return of thanks for any Mercy that they see bestowed on others. It is not enough that we have an inward and a silent Gratitude, we must publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all his wondrous Works, Psal. 26. 7. I shall not die, but live and declare the work of the Lord, Psal. 118. 17. And the grateful Leper, Luke 17. 15. when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. The poor Man was so full of Joy in the sense of the newly received benefit, that he could not forbear telling others what Mercies he had received. So says the Prophet, Psal. 116. 14. I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now in the presence of all his People. And there are these several things, that should cause our mutual Praise to God upon any great Deliverances.

First, Our mutual Praises will warm our Hearts better than if they were single. When many Beams of the Sun are united, they give a

stronger Light and burn with a greater force; and many small Rivers united run with a swifter Course to pay their common Tribute to the Sea. When many join together in the same Prayers, the Cry is more loud, and the Flame of our Desires ascends with a quicker and a more speedy motion; and when many Voices join in the same Psalms of Praise, then as in a Consort of Music our Praise is more harmonious and more sweet; and then it is that we find our Love and our Joy much more kindled, than when we are alone. The praising of God for our Mercies in public, will make others call to mind their own Mercies, and they and we shall both agree to yield our common Thanks to this Mighty Lord. Let all the people praise thee, O God, yea let all the people praise thee. And greatly to blame are those, who do not openly manifest their Sense of God's Goodness, but are as silent as to any public acknowledgment of it, as if they were in the very Grave.

Secondly, This mutual giving thanks will greatly encourage others to trust and hope in God. The Experience that we have had of his Goodness may be of great use to them; that when they come to be in straits they may wait upon him, and strengthen their Patience by remembering how gracious he has been to us; and that seeing he is ever faithful and unchangeable, he will be so to them; for his Arm is not shortened that it cannot save. The Righteous, Psal. 14. 27. shall compass me about, for thou hast dealt bountifully with me. They that fear thee will be glad when they see me, Psal. 119. 74. Glad to see that God has compassion for the desolate and the miserable: Glad to see that he does not shut up his Bowels in a perpetual Displeasure, nor forget the Work of his own Hands: What Encouragement have they still to pray, when they see in our Deliverance, that their Prayers are heard; and when they are very low, to consider, That this or that poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles, Psal. 34. 6? They have the same promises to plead, and late

Examples before their Eyes of his Goodness and his Readiness to save. It is a very merciful dispensation of God, that he will not have all his Servants under Troubles and Afflictions at the same time: Some will he suffer to be at ease that they by their advice, their prayers, and their seasonable pity and their love, they may minister to the wants of others whom he has bound with the cords of Afflictions: All Churches are not persecuted at the same time, nor all in the same Churches; that so those who are whole may bind up the wounds of others. Thus when the poor Protestants in Germany were under low Circumstances, it pleased God to set Edward the Sixth upon the Throne in England, under whose most excellent Government many Ministers and People, that were forced to leave their own Country, found a secure shelter and retreat: And when the Massacre was in Ireland, God was pleased to save this Land from so terrible a Judgment: And whilst France is at this day groaning under a most cruel and barbarous Persecution, we, by a wonderful Providence, have Ease and Liberty, and are in a capacity to give relief to our distressed Brethren. He does not fail to give us now and then some instances of his Wrath for our Sin in long and severe Trials; yet neither does he fail to raise up some wonderful Monuments of his Mercy after such Severities: That the Consideration of the former may teach us to walk with an holy Fear, and the Consideration of the latter may keep us from being overwhelmed in the greatest straits: Our being publicly thankful for our deliverance from great dangers may fortify the hearts of others against all unreasonable fears and despondence.

Thirdly, Because they are by the Profession of Christianity, to have a Communion with one another in all their Prosperities and in all their Troubles; to grieve in their Afflictions, and to rejoice in all their Mercies. They are all of the same Body, and one part cannot be at ease, whilst another is in pain; nor can one mourn whilst another

does rejoice; they participate in their mutual Sorrows and their Joys; they cannot see one of their Brethren sitting alone and keeping silence, but they condole with him for his sadness; and when they see him watering his Couch with tears, their Eye does affect their Heart and mingle their tears with his; they cannot laugh whilst another groans, nor be sad when another is exalted and delivered. For as you cannot touch one string of an Instrument, but all the rest sound; so no part of the Body of Jesus Christ, can be well or ill affected, but the rest discover their sense either of its joy or grief. The Saints of God have a similitude of Nature and inclinations of the same kind all the World over; they have a Conformity to their blessed Lord, who has a great tenderness and pity for the whole Body of the Church: The Wicked that are not of the Family, are no way troubled when Zion is in the dust, nor have they any pleasure when it is rebuilt. A private Spirit does but relish its own joys, and weep for its own griefs; but those that are good Christians are glad to hear that it fares well with the Servants of God, though such as they never saw; and when others are afflicted, though in Foreign Countries, yet their Groans, though at a great distance, do reach their Hearts. Thus it was with our Apostle, Col. 2. 1. For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh. Tho he was in dangers himself, yet he was full of fear and solicitude for them; neither the Prison in which he was at Rome, nor the death he had in prospect did abate his Care; in this like, to Christ himself, who in the night that he was betrayed, was providing a Feast of Comfort for his poor Followers.

Fourthly, It is very delightful to God when his Servants after the receipt of Mercies, join their praises together. If we had no experiences of his Goodness to us, yet so excellent are the Perfections of his Nature, that we ought even then to praise him much more when he is so kind to us, who have deserved nothing: He is pleased

with that homage which we give him by our Prayers and our hearing of the Word, and when two or three are gathered together he is there: It will also please him to see our Hearts and our Mouths full of Thanks; for to this very purpose he gives his Blessings to us, and it is grateful to him to see that they are not lost upon us. As it is pleasant to a Husbandman to see a seasonable Harvest, and that his Labor and Pains have not been in vain: When there is a Consort of Music, there is the greatest Harmony, and when a whole Assembly of sincere Christians join their Voices and their Hearts together, with what a delightful sound do they go up before the Throne of God? For (as one observes) the blessing and acceptance that Religion receives from the Divine Majesty, is much greater for the publicness of it; even in this sense two are better than one, for they have a good reward for their labor: In this sense their complicated services are more forcible, their threefold Cord is not easily broken: Not that God is prevailed upon to any change in himself or his Government by the services of his Creatures, though in a multitude; but he is pleased to find the occasions and opportunities of his most bountiful recompenses, in the drawing near of their greater numbers: For as when God was pleased to communicate himself more freely, he did it to a multitude of Creatures; so he delights in receiving back the glory of having thus communicated himself from a multitude also; and as there is more of himself in more of his Creatures, whether of several sorts or of the same; so there is more of his blessing in their approaches to him, *Whole Duty of Nations*, p. 9. What does the Great God obtain by all his Acts of Bounty to his Creatures, but a Revenue of praise? What other end does he design in all his Mercies? Therefore we should be most willing to pay him this easy Tribute. Oh how pleasant is it to come into the house of God with the voice of joy and praise, and with a multitude that keep holy day, *Psal. 42. 4.* Private prayer does not honor him so much as public; this therefore, as the now mentioned person expresses it, it was the Policy of

Nineveh's natural Religion to unite their Force in Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer, and to take advantage of joining the mute desires of the Beasts, that have a voice in the Ears of God. Abraham 's Servant made the Camels kneel down while he prayed to God: And it was, as he further observes, David's Art to gather up all the Praises even of the lowest of the Creatures that could so meanly give them; and inspiring them with his own Reason, made them as it were to follow his Harp, and to unite in his own Hallelujahs. Thus he served himself of them, that making by them a greater Present of glory to God, he might receive the greater Blessing from him. We ought to be as eloquent in the numbering of our Mercies as we are in the computation of our Sorrows; and our Praises ought to be as loud or rather louder than our Groans. And yet alas! How rare a thing is this mutual praise? And it may be as a sign of it, that so many desire Funeral Sermons to be preached for their departed Friends, and few desire any Sermons for their own Recovery from Sickness and Death, or for their Friends upon the like occasions. 'It is strange that we should be more ready to mourn than to rejoice; and that our Sorrows should be more passionate and fluent than our joys; that we are more inclined to bewail our Losses than to be glad for our Mercies; especially when one has the advantage of pleasure on its side which the other has not; we always meet and mingle our Tears together when our Friends are to be laid into the Grave, and we should as solemnly meet when any of our Friends have been nigh unto Death, and have escaped it, that for so great a Mercy we may return to God our Common Praise.

Fifthly, This mutual praising of God is a resemblance of Heaven. In doing this we are beginning that blessed Work which we hope to be employed in forever. We poor Sinners here below are then something like to those Holy Souls that are above. Will it not be a great part of Heaven to admire, and adore, and praise God for all his Deliverances

granted to us, to his Church, and our fellow Saints? There will be a common Joy and an Union of Praises for all his Mercies, from the beginning to the conclusion of the World. And then all the Myriads of his Elect being safely gathered into his own Kingdom, shall keep a Thanksgiving-day, and that Day shall be forever. It is to that pleasant and cheerful Country that we at length hope to go. Let us use ourselves now to the Language of the Place, and learn betimes to Sing the Songs of Zion. Let us raise our Voices as high as ever we can, in the Praises of our God; and then knowing how unsuitable our highest Elevations are to his Excellent and Glorious Majesty, let us long to join with Glorified Spirits in their louder and sweeter Hymns; and being sensible of our own Weakness, we may call to the blessed Angels, to all Beings that are in Heaven or on the Earth, in the Air or in the Seas, to help us to praise the Lord. As we have the Example of David in several Psalms, and in the 103. 20, 21, 22. Bless the Lord, ye his Angels, that excel in strength, that do his Commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his Hosts, ye Ministers of his that do his pleasure. Bless the Lord all his Works in all places of his Dominions: bless the Lord, O my Soul.

The Conclusion of the Whole.

And now to finish what I design to say from these Words. Having been delivered from a long and severe Sickness, I would most earnestly beg of you all to help me to praise the Lord for his great Goodness and Mercy to me. Long I was upon the very brink of the Grave, and nothing in this World could ease my Pain, or mitigate my Sorrows. God himself hath wrought Salvation for me: And 'tis for your sakes as well as mine own, that you may see an instance of his mighty Power and Goodness, who as he hath delivered me, can also deliver you when you come to Straits and Difficulties: I heartily wish that seeing my Sickness has not been unto Death, it may be for the

Glory of God. I am as it were risen from the Grave, very near to which I was for many long and doleful Months together; I wish that my Resurrection may have the same effect with that of Lazarus, for by reason of him many of the Jews believed in Jesus, John 12. 11. There are several Persons here, that wept with me when I wept, and that prayed for me when I was in trouble; to these and to others that had a tender Concern for me I now speak. Come, and let us now rejoice together; Oh come, and let us exalt and praise the Name of God together. Praise is pleasant and comely, Psal. 147. 1. It is pleasant as it is the Exercise of our Souls in the noblest Work which they are capable of here on Earth, and 'tis comely as 'tis an acknowledgment of those Mercies that we receive from God our Benefactor. Oh how much more pleasant is Deliverance than Danger, and Health than Sickness! How much better is the voice of Gladness than the voice of Sorrow? How much more pleasant is it to spend a day, yea many days, in cheerful Praises, than to spend one hour in Sighs and painful Groans? How much better is it to come to the Courts of the Lord, to see him in the Sanctuary, and to join with his Servants in the Solemn Parts of his Worship, than to be confined to a sick Bed, and to dwell as in the Dust? My kind Brother and Companion in this Lecture, when I was overwhelmed with deep Sorrows, did often pray with me, that God would bring me again to this Congregation, that I might here publish the Wonders of his Love: His Prayers and yours are heard, and I desire at this time to declare the Works of the Lord. Come and see what God has done: Come ye poor afflicted People that are even sinking with your many troubles: Come and see how God has helped and saved me from my violent and sore Distress. He has pulled my feet out of the deep mire, and the thick clay: and has helped me, though the sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of Hell got hold upon me. Learn to wait for his Mercies, and to put your trust in him. Come ye poor Mourners, whose way is hid, and whom the Wrath of God presses

very sore. Come and encourage yourselves by looking upon the Goodness and the Mercy of God to me. I also am the Man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his Wrath. I was not long ago compassed with Gall and Travel, and my Chain was heavy; he caused the Arrows of his Quiver to enter into one, and filled me with bitterness, and made me drunken with Wormwood. My Soul was removed far off from peace, and I forgot prosperity, and I said, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord. And yet he hath graciously helped me after all this. Therefore let your Souls be in as much Darkness, and your Case be as Low and Miserable as it can be supposed to be ye, yet never despair of help from such a God as this. Come ye poor dejected Christians; Wipe away your Tears a little, and let it be something reviving to you to behold what after long Afflictions God has done for me, though I was lower than you can think or I express. Come you that are saddened with frequent and continued pains, and encourage yourselves from my deliverance; I also had sharp and long pains for many months together; My Complaint was bitter, but my Stroke was heavier than Groaning; yet after all this God himself hath healed me, when all the Endeavors of my Friends were to no purpose. Say not that your wound is incurable, for that Almighty Physician that has with so much kindness afforded relief to me, can also speedily give a cure to you: Do not mistrust his power nor question his willingness to do it: Though you be never so sinful and unworthy, let not that overwhelm you when you see the riches of his Grace to me, displayed before your Eyes. O taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him, Psal. 34. 8. And you may say thus in Prayer, Lord thou hast been very gracious to such a one after his desolate and low condition; Oh be thou so to me, that being brought out of the depths, I may with him and others bless thy Name! Come, ye Servants of the Most High, and let us praise our God together; let our minds be filled with the most admiring thoughts of him; let our tongues speak of his Goodness; let our

hearts burn with the purest flames of Love, and then let us join our thoughts, our voices and our hearts to give him with delight a common Song of Praise: Come all you faithful People and help me to praise the Lord, for my single praises are too deficient. Surely our Souls may now soar higher, and take a nimbler flight than they were able to do when they were clogged and weighed down with Heaviness and Sorrow: Help me to praise him, that, after such a long and terrible sickness, I am not in the silent Grave. The Grave cannot praise thee, Death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the Pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day, Isa. 38. 18, 19. I call you all to witness, that I praise the God of my deliverance; I call you to help me to do it better; seeing you prayed for me in my Affliction, I may claim your praises as a debt that is due to God for the hearing of your Prayers; and I know it is such a debt as you are most willing to pay: As I was helped by the Prayers of many, so I desire that thanks may be given by many on my behalf, 2 Cor. 1. 11. I desire all those Ministers, those Congregations and Christian Friends that showed so much Compassion and Kindness, as to pray for me, that they would all praise God for having given to me such a late miraculous deliverance, and for having given to them such a late Experience of the successfulness and power of Prayer; Let us provoke one another to good Works. When will our hearts glow with Love to God, if not when his Sun shines upon us with such comfortable and reviving Beams? When shall we all be thankful if not now, when he has cast our Lot in an Age of Wonders and of Mercies? What would our Forefathers that lived in a darker season, and in times of Persecution have given to see such a bright and peaceful day as that is which we are blest with? What would the poor People in Hungary and in the Palatinate, give to have so much peace and quiet, as we now enjoy? What would our poor Protestant Brethren in France, that are groaning under a cruel and bloody Persecution, give to have the

Protection and the Favor of so mild a Government as that is, which we are now living under; and to have the Bread of Life, and their Ministers, and their Gospel in the same manner they once had them? Those poor Churches are not yet delivered, their Beauty and their Glory is departed, and their Zion is mourning in the dust; but they send their Sighs over to us; we have heard their Groans, the Language of which is, Come and help us with your Prayers. Let us pray for them as we would for ourselves in the like case; who knows but God will hear our Prayers for them also? And when England, Scotland, France and Ireland, and Piedmont, and all other places that have been in distress shall lift up their heads with joy, and congratulate one another, for the Salvations and Deliverances which God hath wrought for them, what a glorious time will that be? Happy shall be the day and the year that shall accomplish so great a Work; happy shall the Messenger be that brings us such welcome tidings; happy will be the Ears that hear so delightful a thing as this, and happy the Eyes that see it; and happy will those Countries be that shall flourish with Prosperity and Peace, when these present Commotions and Wars that disturb the World, are past and gone; and happy yet again will be those Instruments, whom God will honor to bring about so excellent a State of things: Then shall it be said as in Isa. 66. 10, 11. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her; rejoice for joy with her all ye that mourn for her: That ye may suck and be satisfied with the Breasts of her Consolations, that ye may milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her Glory. May we not hope that so pleasant a day as this hath begun to dawn; may we not hope, and have we not encouragement to beg of God, that the Light which is broken out in so wonderful a manner may shine more and more to a perfect day? That we may still say with the delivered Israelites, Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the gods, who is like unto thee, glorious in Holiness, fearful in Praises, doing Wonders? Exod. 15. 11. It will

greatly heighten the Mercy of our being brought from the Grave, if we should live to see such a sight as this: But however it be, the Mercies we have already received in our deliverance from Sickness, contain Motives powerful enough to persuade us to love and praise God; and the doing of this may procure us many more Mercies. There are two things which after our Recovery we have cause always to remember.

First, That we must live as those that know though we have escaped the Grave hitherto, yet we must one day take up our dwelling there. Tho we are reprieved for a while, yet the sentence of death that is past upon all Mankind, will one day be executed upon us, and we must die as well as others; and if we improve this Consideration, though death itself be not past, yet the bitterness of it will be so.

Secondly, That we ought most earnestly to pray that (if God please so to order it) we may not have very long nor very sharp pains before we die; and that when he calls us from the World, he would give us an humble and a quiet Resignation to his Will, that we may be found of him in peace, and in a temper suitable to the greatness of our Change; and that before he warn us to appear before him, we may have all that work on Earth finished, which he gave us to do; and so being assured that the Mediator is our Friend, we may everyone of us say with Stephen, Lord Jesus receive my Spirit.

The Song of HEZEKIAH Paraphrased by Dr. Woodford.

I.

REVOLVING the sharp Sentence past,
And how an end, e're thought was on me come;
How soon said I, have I approached my last,
And unawares reached Natures farthest Home?
Ah! Now I to the Grave must go,
No more, or Life, or Pleasure know,
But a long doleful Night, in darkness deep below.

II.

No more, my God, shall I see Thee,
Nor the great Works of Thy Almighty Hand;
No more a Votary at Thy Altar be,
Nor in the crowds of them, who praise Thee, stand:
Mankind no more shall I behold,
Nor tell, nor of Thy Love be told,
Even mine to Thee, shall like my ashes, Lord, be cold.

III.

Lo! As a Tent am I removed,
And my life's thread, which I thought wondrous strong,

Too weak to bear the Looms extension proved,
Ith' the midst broke off, too sleazy to run long:
With Sickness I am pin'd away,
And feel each moment some decay,
All Night in Terrors, and in Grief die all the Day.

IV.

For as a Lion hastes to 'his Prey,
And having gripped it, breaks the yielding Bones;
So on me came the Almighty, whilst I lay
In vain expecting help, but from my Groans:
O take, said I, Thy Hand away,
See how I feel my Loins decay,
All Night in Terrors, and in Grief die all the Day!

V.

Then like a Swallow, or a Crane,
I chattered over my Fears, his Heart to move;
The widowed Turtle does not more complain,
When in the Woods she has lost her faithful Love:

My Eyes, O God, with waiting fail,
Why shouldst Thou thus a Worm assail?
I am Thine, O let for once the Almighty not prevail!

VI.

Yet do Thy Will: I must confess,
Worse Plagues than these, my Sins deserve from Thee;
The Sentence past is than my Crimes far less,
And only Hell a sit Reward can be:
Ah! Let my Prayers that Doom prevent!
My age in Mourning's shall be spent,
And all the Years Thou givest, shall be, but to repent.

VII.

On Thy great Pleasure all depend,
During which only, I and Mankind live;
To teach us this Thou dost Diseases send,
And daily claim'st the Life, which Thou didst give:
Yet such is Thy resistless Power,
That when our age is quite past over,

What Thou at first didst give, Thou canst our Life restore.

VIII.

And thus with me, Lord, hast thou dealt,

Tho I for peace had only bitterness;

Th' effects of mighty Goodness thus have felt,

Beyond what words, or numbers can express:

For from the Pit Thou drewest me back,

And that I might no pleasures lack,

Upon Thy self the burden of my Sins didst take.

IX.

Triumphant Savior! The still Grave,

For so great Love, Thy Name can never praise;

Nor in the Pit canst Thou Memorial have,

Thy Truth, or hoped for, or adored Thy Ways;

The Living, Lord, the Living are

The Men, who must Thy Power declare,

And of them chiefly such, whom Thou like me, shalt spare.

X.

They to their Children shall make known,
As I do now, the Wonders of Thy Hand;
How when we even to Hell did head-long run,
To stop our passage, Thou in the' way didst stand:
Lord, since Thou hast thus delivered me,
Thus made me Thy Salvation see,
My Life, and Harp and Song, I will consecrate to Thee.
FINIS.

MONERGISM BOOKS

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