

A
SERMON

Preach'd at the Funeral

Of the Reverend

Mr. *Hercules Collins*,

Late Minister of the Gospel;

Who died 4th of *October*, 1702. and
was Inter'd the 9th of the same Month.¹

¹ From *Eleven Sermons Preach'd Upon Special Occasions*, by John Piggott (London: John Darby, 1714), 199-240.

TO THE
Church of Christ

Lately under the
Pastoral Care of the Deceas'd
Mr. HERCULES COLLINS²

Beloved in our Lord,

THE severe Strokes of Divine Providence, in the removing so fast those that labour in the Word and Doctrine, cannot but occasion a great many sad and gloomy Thoughts. Surely our Hearts tremble for several Churches, as good old Eli's did for the Ark of God. May these Rebukes awaken the slumbering, and quicken the luke-warm Professors of the Age; that our Stupidity may not occasion such a Complaint as was once made of the Jews, that they regarded not the Works of the Lord, nor consider'd the Operation of his Hands.

The Epicureans deny'd God's governing Providence, and represented him as an idle Spectator of Human Affairs; and indeed they do little less who account for all Events by second Causes, as if the Hand of God had nothing to do with them.

But the Holy Scriptures, which give the best account of the Doctrine of Providence, assure us, That the most minute things are under the Divine Care. Our Blessed Saviour is express, that a Hair cannot drop from our Heads, nor a Sparrow fall to the Ground without our Father's Permission. And I observe, that tho Job lost his Estate by Injustice and Violence, he acknowledges a hand of Providence in the Changes that attended him; and therefore as he own'd the Bounty of God in giving, so he confesses his Justice in taking from him what he had enjoy'd: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord.

Now if it be a favourable Providence, when God blesses a People with an able Minister; then certainly the Removal of such a one by Death must be a sad sign of the Divine Displeasure; especially when, according to the Course of Nature, he might have been useful for many Years to come. This, my Brethren, you might have hop'd for from your late Pastor, who was suddenly snatch'd from you. Your Loss is great, but Heaven can relieve you under it. The Stream indeed that formerly refresh'd you is dry'd up; but the Fountain is inexhaustible: The borrow'd Light that you enjoy'd is eclips'd, but the Sun of Righteousness will ever shine with an unfading Lustre; for he is the same to Day, Yesterday, and for Ever: and let such Thoughts as these be some revival under this terrible Stroke.

My Brethren,

The Subject of the ensuing Discourse is weighty and serious, tho the Management of it sinks below its Dignity. However I am content to be reckon'd in the low Class of Writers, if I can any way

2 Hercules Collins pastored the Church of Old Gravel Lane, Wapping, London [Ed.].

promote the common Edification of the Children of God, or be a happy Instrument in the Divine Hand, to save one Soul from Death. And if you, at whose Request I preach'd, and do now publish this Sermon, reap any Profit by it, may God have all the Glory, whose due it is, and let me have an Interest in your Prayers,

Who am your Servant

for Jesus sake

JOHN PIGGOTT.

MAT. XXIV. 44.

Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an Hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh.

HOW Death will approach us, we cannot tell; whether we shall have previous Notice by Sickness, or be cut off by a sudden Stroke, is a Secret seal'd up in the Counsels of Heaven. Yet this we know, *that it is appointed unto Men once to die*. Our Days are determin'd, as well as the Bounds of our Habitations fix'd; and He that is the Rector³ of the World, sends into it, and calls out of it how and whom he pleases.

Indeed the innumerable Diseases to which Human Bodies are incident, since the Sin of our first Parents, which let Death into this lower World, may cause us rather to admire that any live, than that so many languish and die; for 'tis by nothing less than a Succession of Wonders, that the frail and uncertain Life of Man is preserv'd from its infant State, to its maturer Age. And when Life is preserv'd longest, 'tis constantly wasting, and we daily decline towards the Grave, as the Sun does towards the Earth when 'tis setting, and ushers in the sad and silent Night. And every Day's Experience convinces us, that nothing can ward off the fatal Blow; but Ministers die as well as their People. *All things come alike to all, and there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked.*⁴

It has been esteem'd an instance of God's infinite Wisdom and condescending Goodness, that the Treasure of the Gospel is committed to Earthen Vessels; I mean, that God employs those to preach who are of the same Frame and Make with the People to whom they preach. But (as one observes) that which is a Happiness in one respect, is a Disadvantage in another, *viz.* That tho they are ever so eminent and useful, they must die as well as their Hearers. *Your Fathers, where are they? and the Prophets, do they live for ever?*

Now since none shall be exempted from Death, but those that are found alive at Christ's second Coming; and the hour of Death, and the time of our Lord's appearance being equally unknown, and consequently uncertain as to us, the Advice and Command of our Saviour in the Text, is very seasonable; especially considering the occasion of this solemn Meeting, the sad Instance of Mortality before us: for what can we imagine could be more properly the Voice of this Providence, than the Words just now mention'd?

Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an Hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh.

In the beginning of this Chapter we find, that upon the Disciples shewing our Lord the Buildings of the Temple, he takes occasion to inform them, that in a little time that Place should be entirely demolish'd; *so that there should not be left one Stone upon another that should not be thrown down*. Upon receiving of this Notice, they are very inquisitive to know, *When these things should be, and what should be the signs of his Coming, and of the End of the World.*⁵ The first Enquiry, *When shall these things be?* plainly refers to what our Saviour had been speaking of before, *viz.* The Destruction of *Jerusalem*; but the other Question was, concerning *the Signs of Christ's Coming, and the End of the World*.

Now 'tis not improbable, that the Reason of the Disciples putting these two Questions together, might be the Apprehension they had, that the general Judgment would be immediately after the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; for this Opinion seems to have prevail'd in the Apostles Days. But however that was, this I think is very evident, that the Return which our Saviour gave to the latter of

³ God, as the ruler of the world. rare after 17th cent. *Oxford English Dictionary online*.

⁴ Eccl. 9.2.

⁵ Ver. 3.

the aforementioned Queries, does refer to our Lord's second Coming to judge Angels and Men at the End of the World; as when he speaks of his Coming *in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory. And he shall send his Angels with a great Sound of a Trumpet, and they shall gather together his Elect from the four Winds, from one end of Heaven to the other.*⁶

Our Lord, a little after this, signifies how great a Secret the particular time of the General Judgment is; *But of that Day and Hour knoweth no Man, no, not the Angels in Heaven, but my Father only.*⁷ This could not be spoken with reference to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, because End of the World would be. *But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.* The People of the Old World apply'd themselves to the business and diversions of Life, *until the Day that Noah enter'd into the Ark; and knew not until the Flood came and took them all away: So shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.*⁸ Upon which our Saviour presses to constant Vigilancy: and in the next words represents his sudden Coming, by a Thief's stealing upon a Man at an unknown and uncertain Hour of the Night, when he has not the least expectation of being disturb'd or injur'd. *For (says he) know this, or, as some think it may be better render'd, You do know this, that if the good Man of the House had known in what Watch the Thief would come, he would have watch'd, and would not have suffer'd his House to be broken up.* q.d. If every Housholder would be thus careful to prevent the spoiling of his Goods, and the loss of his earthly Treasure; how much more reason is there for your providing against my Coming? For should it be while you are unprepar'd, you must sustain an infinite loss, that can never be repair'd.

Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an Hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh.

Our Blessed Saviour frequently calls himself the *Son of Man*, who as such is to be our judge; and under that Character he shall come, with all the Ensigns of Pomp and Terror, at the end of the World, to pass a definitive Sentence on the Quick and the Dead. The Nearness of our Lord's Approach, above sixteen hundred Years ago, was represented by his *standing before the door*. How suddenly that Door may open, and the Books too, out of which we shall be judged, remains conceal'd from the World; God having laid up this Secret in Sacred Darkness, that we might be *always ready*. I allow that the Coming mention'd in our Text does refer to Christ's second Solemn Appearance as Judge; yet I see no reason but it may be improv'd⁹ with respect to our Lord's other Coming previous to that: I mean, to summon us out of the World by Death, which unalterably binds us over to the final Assize; for the Day of Death does as effectually determine the State of Individuals, as the last Judgment shall that of the whole World. The suddenness of its coming may be the same, and the State of every Soul will be the same; for after Death there will be no opportunity for correcting the disorders of Life, and consequently the danger of being unprepar'd for Death must needs be the same as to be unprovided for the Day of Judgment.

Therefore be ye also ready, &c. The Words are a genuine Inference from the Consideration of Christ's second sudden Appearance to judge the World. Wherein we may observe,

First, A very Important Duty exhorted to, i.e. To get ready for that Awful Day.

Secondly, A forcible Reason to persuade to this Duty, in these words; For in such an Hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh.

6 Ver. 30, 31.

7 Ver. 36.

8 Ver. 38, 39.

9 To make use of for moral or spiritual betterment; esp. to interpret (scripture, or a situation, event, etc.), in order to impart or obtain religious instruction or moral guidance. Obsolete. *Oxford English Dictionary online.*

I shall (as God shall assist) speak to each of these, and then make some Improvement suitable to my Text, and the sad Occasion of preaching from it.

First, I am to open this Important Duty to which our Saviour presses us in the Text; and to tell you wherein consists a true readiness for Death, or the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And here I shall not scruple to make use of the common distinction of an *Habitual*, and an *Actual* Readiness.

1. I am to consider a readiness for Death and Judgment as *Habitual*, which consists *in a relative Change in the State, and a real Change in the Nature of a Man*. For we must remember that by the Apostacy of *Adam* we are not only made guilty, but polluted Creatures. The former renders us obnoxious to the Justice, and the latter odious to the infinite Holiness of the Divine Nature; by the one we have lost our *Right*, and by the other our *Meetness* for the enjoyment of God. Now we cannot be prepar'd for our Lord's coming, unless the former be restor'd, and the latter be recover'd.

But, (1.) In order to a readiness for Death and Judgment, there must be *a relative Change in our State*. All the Elect are by Nature legally dead; the Law curses every one that is not perfectly obedient to it. The Apostle *Paul* in various places of his Epistle to the *Romans* proves, that all Men by Nature are under the damnatory Sentence of the Law. *We have prov'd* (says he) *both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under Sin*.¹⁰ There are not any of the chosen of God, but by Nature are Children of Wrath. The first *Adam* was related to every one of us, both as a common Father and as a federal Head: so that we must be consider'd as Parties in the first Covenant that God made with him, and consequently that we sinn'd and fell with him in his first Transgression, and are thereby brought under the Curse of the Law. Now we must be brought out of this State of Guilt and Wrath into a State of Righteousness; which is effectually done by the *Imputation* of the Righteousness of Christ to the Soul, which it receives by Faith alone.

By the Righteousness of Christ, I mean his perfect and compleat Obedience to the Law, and his suffering the Penalty of it; the whole of what our Saviour did and suffer'd, his active and passive Obedience, which is imputed or reckon'd to every believing Sinner. For the Apostle says, *Christ is the end of the Law for Righteousness to every one that believeth*.¹¹ As the Disobedience of the first *Adam* makes us Sinners, so the perfect sinles Obedience of the second *Adam* makes us Righteous. *For he hath made him to be Sin for us who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him*.¹² *Every Phrase here it wonderfully emphatical; *He hath made him to be Sin for us*: This supposes Christ's being substituted in the room and stead of Sinners, and that he sustain'd the Punishment due to Sin, the Guilt thereof being charged upon him as our Sponsor and Surety. 'Twas not the Filth of Sin, or the Obliquity of any Act that could be suppos'd to be in the Nature of our Saviour, which was more pure than the unstained Light. *He was Holy, Harmless, undefil'd, and separate from Sinners*. For tho he was *made Sin*, 'tis said he knew no Sin, *i.e.* by an experimental approbative Knowledg; to *know* in the *Hebrew* Dialect, signifies to love, to act, to like. Therefore, *his being made Sin*, must intend his being judicially charg'd in our stead with the Guilt of Sin, and bearing the Punishment due to it: for *Sin*, in the Holy Scriptures by a Metonymy¹³ of the Cause for the Effect, is put for the Punishment of Sin, as the Scriptures, in the Margin shew.¹⁴ And some-times the †*Hebrew* word for Sin, by a Metonymy of the Adjunct for the Subject, signifies the Piacular¹⁵

10 Rom. 3. 9.

11 Rom. 10. 4.

12 2 Cor. 5. 21.

* Vide *Turretini de Satisfactione Christi Disputationes*, p. 117, 118.

13 In extended use: a thing used or regarded as a substitute for or symbol of something else. Also (esp. in Linguistics and Literary Theory): the process of semantic association involved in producing and understanding a metonymy. *Oxford English Dictionary online*.

14 Gen. 4. 7, 13. Zech. 14. 19.

† Lev. 5. 9, &c.

15 Making expiation or atonement; expiatory. *Oxford English Dictionary online*.

Victim, or the Expiatory Sacrifice it self. *He hath made him, &c. i.e.* He hath constituted or appointed him to be a Sacrifice for our Sins, as the *Greek word is us'd. *That we might be made the Righteousness of God in him: By the Righteousness of God,* is not meant the essential Righteousness of Christ as God, which he has in common with the Father and the Holy Ghost, for that cannot be communicated either to Angels or Men; But the Righteousness here spoken of, is the Righteousness of the Mediator, and may be call'd the *Righteousness of God,* as 'tis the Righteousness of him who is God-man, which was necessary to his Suretiship: for no Person but he who was God, of the nature of his Father, and Man of the substance of his Virgin Mother, could have wrought out and brought in such an everlasting Righteousness, as should finish Transgression and make an end of Sin. Now until we are interested in this Righteousness, we are under a broken Covenant of Works, the Curse of the Law, and Wrath of God. And if a Man cannot lift up his Head under the heavy Guilt of one Sin, when God sets it in his view, and charges it on his Conscience, how can that Person live? Live! did I say? how can that Person think of dying, that lies under the Guilt of Millions of Transgressions? O how dreadful must be the prospect of Death to such an one! when he considers that the Judg he is going to appear before, is that very Jesus, whose Spirit he has griev'd and resisted, whose Love he has slighted, and whose Blood he has despis'd and trampled upon.

Therefore (Sinner) if ever thou wouldst be ready for the coming of the Lord, *submit thy self to the Righteousness of God,* and labour to be found in Christ, not having thy own Righteousness, which is of the Law; but that which is through the Faith of Jesus Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.¹⁶ Christ is *Jehovah our Righteousness,* and we can make mention of no other Righteousness with advantage to our Justification. By the first Adam's Sin we lost the Robe of our Innocency; by the second Adam's Obedience and Sufferings, we obtain a Garment of more Glory and greater Security. For they that have receiv'd this Change of Raiment, tho at Death they lay down their vile Bodies in the dust, yet being thus cloth'd, they'l not be found naked, but fitly adorn'd to enter in with the Bridegroom to the Marriage-supper of the Lamb.

(2.) To make us habitually fit for Death and Judgment, there must be a real Change wrought in our Natures.

A Change must pass upon all the Faculties of the Human Mind. The Darkness of the Understanding must be scatter'd with a pure Beam of Light from Heaven. Persons before they are regenerate are said to be *Darkness*; but when renew'd in the Spirit of their Minds, to be *Light in the Lord*. The Obstinacy of the *Will* must be overcome, and the Will inclin'd to chuse that which is good: *Thy People shall be willing in the day of thy Power*. Again, the Affections must be diverted from improper Objects, and plac'd on Him who is infinitely desirable and lovely. The defil'd Conscience must be purg'd from dead Works, by the sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus. The Memory must be made the sacred Repository of the Divine Precepts and Promises; the former to direct, the latter to quicken and encourage in the discharge of true Evangelical Obedience. In a word, as all the Faculties of the Soul are truly ennobled by the Grace of God in this Change; so the consequence will be, that all the Members of our Bodies will be employ'd as Instruments of Righteousness unto Holiness. For that Divine Principle and Habit, which by Omnipotent Grace is convey'd into the Soul, to raise it from a moral Death to a spiritual Life, will exert it self in suitable Deportments towards God and Man: So that such an one will live a Life of Communion with God, and Conformity to him; for he that is truly regenerate has not only a negative, but a positive Holiness: He not only *denies all Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, but lives righteously and soberly and godly in this present World*; as one that *looks for the blessed Hope and glorious Appearance of the Great*

* Mark 3. 14. *χαὶ ἐποίησε δῶδεχα* So Joh. 6. 15.

¹⁶ Phil. 3. 9.

God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ.¹⁷ And let me tell you, whatever pompous Pretence or glittering Shew Men make as to an outward Profession, if they are not regenerated and renew'd, cleans'd and sanctify'd by the Grace of God and the Spirit of Christ, 'tis all insignificant and vain, as to their readiness for the Coming of the Son of God.

For no Person can enter into the new *Jerusalem* without a new Heart; and the beatifick Vision is promis'd only to those that are holy: *Blessed are the Pure in Heart, for they shall see God.*¹⁸ *Follow Peace with all Men, and *Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord.*¹⁹ And †one thinks that the degree of Vision in *Heaven* is according to the degree of Sanctification. However that be, this is certain, that Persons must be made meet, before they shall be made Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. And when Persons are thus far advanc'd in their readiness for Death and Judgment; then, *whether they live, they live to the Lord, and whether they die, they die to the Lord; so that whether living or dying, they are the Lord's.* But I proceed.

2. There is also an *actual Readiness* for Death and the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The former refer'd to our *State*, this latter to our *Frame*.²⁰ The one puts us in a safe Condition, and the other into a comfortable one; by one we are secur'd with respect to Eternity, and by the other enabled to view Death in its approaches with Joy and strong Consolation.

Now an *actual Readiness* for Death and the coming of Christ, may be consider'd as consisting in, and as being promoted by these following things.

1. In a conscientious avoiding those Sins that otherwise would darken the Mind, and fill it with too much Horror, either to be ready or desirous to leave this World; such as, *Sensuality, Oppression, and Uncharitableness*. I mention these Sins, because our Saviour takes notice of them, and warns against 'em in this very Case. *Take heed to your selves, lest at any time your Hearts be overcharg'd with Surfeiting and Drunkenness and Cares of this Life, and so that Day come upon you at unawares.* By Surfeiting and Drunkenness I do not barely understand those two Sins, but all the sad effects of Gluttony and Intemperance; which as they stupify the animal Spirits, so they make the Mind insensible; they abate the Appetite, and spoil the Relish of Spiritual things. And then for Uncharitableness, 'tis particularly warn'd against on this occasion: *The Lord was wroth with that wicked Servant that would not forgive his Fellow-Servant a few Pence, and commanded him to be deliver'd to the Tormentors.* A Man of a rigid implacable uncharitable Spirit is very unfit to live, but I am sure he is much more unfit to die; for how can such a Man expect the pardon of Myriads of Sins from the Judg of the World, when he will not forgive his poor Brother a trifling Debt or a small Offence?

2. Endeavour after a Weanedness from this World, and all the Enjoyments of Sense. As 'tis inconsistent to serve God and Mammon, so 'tis morally impossible to be *actually ready* for the other, while we are anxiously sollicitous about the Affairs of this World. The Cares of this Life are of a distracting nature; and a State of Wealth as well as that of Poverty, is attended with many Temptations and Snares: And indeed a Rich Man is commonly more distant from an *actual readiness* to die, than he that is poor; because his Eyes are dazl'd with the Glories, and his Heart is

¹⁷ Tit. 2. 12, 13.

¹⁸ Mat. 5. 8.

* οὐ χωρίς, The Masculine Article sheweth that it must be refer'd to ἀγιασμός

¹⁹ Heb. 12. 14.

† κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν καθαρότητος Naz. [this phrase means "proportionate to their degree of purity" It comes from Gregory of Nazianzus' 40th Oration, On Baptism. The English text can be found at : <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf207.iii.xxiii.html?highlight=proportionate#highlight> . Dr Samuel Renihan, personal communication. Ed.]

²⁰ A mental or emotional disposition or state (more explicitly, frame of spirit, soul, etc.); in later use chiefly in frame of mind. *Oxford English Dictionary online.*

fasten'd to the Treasures that he has in this World: so that the very thoughts of leaving his Wealth and Conveniences behind him, create an inward Pain that is very acute, like the tearing of his Heart from the midst of his Bowels.

And let me tell you, there are some good Men, who having abundance in this World, tho they are *habitually* fit to die, yet find it extremely difficult to work up their Minds to a chearful disposedness to leave the World; yea, tho they are almost sunk into the Grave with Age, yet with what kind of Uneasiness and Passion do they look behind 'em, like *Lot's Wife* when she was leaving *Sodom*? Alas! whatever we affect with too strong a Passion, when 'tis snatch'd from us, or we from it, it occasions a proportionable Pain: therefore if we would set loose by the things of this World, and be always ready to quit them, we ought to have the same thoughts of them in the time of our Health, as Men ordinarily have when they are sick and dying.

It may be, some that hear me now, at one time or other, have had *the Sentence of Death within themselves*, and have expected every Moment when their Souls would have dislodg'd from from their Bodies. Pray what were your thoughts then of this World, and those Enjoyments in it that now strike so hard upon your Senses? Did you not then think that they were all Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, and that they had not that in them which your flattering Expectations promis'd you? When you thought that you were just leaving the World, did you not look on it as a contemptible Trifle? Labour to recover the same Thoughts again now you are in Health, which will help you to sit loose to this World and the Enjoyments of it, and to promote your *actual* readiness for Death and Judgment. I shall close this Head with the Advice of the Apostle: *But this, I say, Brethren, the time is short; it remaineth, that both they that have Wives be as tho they had none, and they that weep as tho they wept not, and they that rejoice as tho they rejoic'd not, and they that buy as tho they possess'd not, and they that use this World as not abusing it; for the fashion of this World passeth away.*

3. An *actual Readiness* for Death and Judgment consists in a freedom from the *fear of Death*. I do not mean from the *natural* Fear Death, but from that which is tormenting and *slavish*. The Love of Life is not more natural than the Fear of Death, and therefore the Son of God himself does not seem to be exempted from it; the reluctancies which our Saviour discover'd against his dying, did not in the least impeach the Rectitude of his Nature: there were no Irregularities in the Affections of his Human Soul, which always mov'd agreeably to the Quality of those Objects about which they were conversant. Therefore, I say, such a *natural Fear* of Death is not sinful, nor inconsistent with an *actual Readiness* for it.

Indeed many that are *habitually fit* to die, are so much indispos'd by a slavish Fear of Death, that they earnestly desire longer Life, and cry out with the Psalmist, *O spare me, that I may recover Strength, before I go hence, and be no more*. With what Concern and Uneasiness did good *Hezekiah* receive that Message, *Set thine House in order, for thou shalt die and not live?*²¹ For tho he had walk'd with God and liv'd to him, tho *he had done that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and had done it with a perfect Heart*; yet upon the notice of his Dissolution, when he understood he should be remov'd from his agreeable Society, and suddenly sink down into the Solitude of the Grave, *He turn'd his Face toward the Wall, and pray'd unto the Lord, - and wept sore.*²² The Apostle speaks of some, *who thro a predominant fear of Death, are all their Life-time subject to Bondage.*²³ And indeed there is too much of this Fear obtains upon those that are *habitually fit* to die; for tho they have receiv'd the *Spirit of Adoption*, yet at sometimes they are as full of Doubts and Fears as those who are under the *Spirit of Bondage*: 'tis no unusual thing for them that are *dead*

21 Isa. 38. 1.

22 Ver. 2, 3.

23 Heb. 2. 15.

to the Law by the Body of Christ, to imagine themselves still under it. They that are in a very safe State, may be in a very legal Frame, especially such People as are somewhat addicted to Melancholy.

Now the best way for a Believer to overcome this, is to consider what Christ hath done for him. This the Apostle plainly intimates, who having said, that *the Sting of Death is Sin*, immediately adds, *But thanks be to God, that giveth us the Victory thro our Lord Jesus Christ*, i.e. The Victory over Sin, and consequently over Death: *For the Sting of Death is Sin*. Now Christ having by his Death fully satisfy'd for Sin, Death hereby is disarm'd of its Sting and Terror, the Guilt of Sin is remov'd by the Merit of our Saviour's Blood, and the Power of it destroy'd by the Efficacy of his Spirit: And when these are witness'd to the Conscience, and the Person is well assur'd concerning 'em, the slavish Fears of Death do vanish; which by the way, should make Christ more precious to our Souls, and should engage us to love him equally to the strong Obligations we are under to him.

One of the antient *Romans* (as Dr. *Bates* has observ'd) "did highly celebrate the *Astronomers*, who discover'd the true cause of the Eclipses of the Sun and Moon, and freed the World from the double darkness of Ignorance and Fear; for before that discovery, Men believ'd the obscuring of those great Lights were the fainting Fits of Nature, and mortal Symptoms threatning an universal Calamity."

But how much more Praise, Honour and Glory is due to our Blessed Saviour, *who hath abolish'd Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel*, and has assur'd us, that the Death of a Believer is but a Passage out of this World to a better; where such shall never be at a loss by reason of Darkness, but live under the immediate Rays of Divine Glory and Love?

But in all this I would not be mistaken by those that are unconverted: You, Sirs, are not the Persons that should not fear Death, for you have all the reason in the World to fear it; for when you see Death riding on a pale Horse, what can you expect should follow but fiery Indignation and an eternal Hell, which will strike your guilty Minds with an infinite Terror? *For who among you can dwell with devouring Fire? who among you can dwell with everlasting Burnings?*²⁴ Indeed such as are freed from the Fears of Death, and the Bondage that is consequent thereupon, can welcome Death in its approaches, and say with the Psalmist, *Tho I walk thro the Valley of the shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil, for thou art with me*. They look on Death as a Messenger sent to call them home to their Father's House, where they shall enjoy a Freedom from all moral and penal Evils, and be rais'd to the Enjoyment of the highest positive Good. *For in God's Presence is Fulness of Joy, and at his right Hand there are Pleasures for evermore*.

4. If we would be actually ready for Death, we must be diligent in the discharge of every Duty, and in the exercise of every Grace, as the Place and Circumstances wherein God has fix'd us, do call for. Whatever God has enjoin'd us, whether publick or private, whether a Branch of our general or special Calling, whether personal or relative, we should be always ready to discharge these Obligations, to answer our Abilities, and improve all the Opportunities that God gives us for his Service; for the least allow'd Omission will fill us with Uneasiness and Confusion. If our Talents are not improv'd, our Hearts will reproach us; and we cannot think of standing with Comfort at the Divine Bar, if we have been unfaithful Stewards. Therefore, *let us have our Loins girt about, and our Lamps burning; for blessed is that Servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing*. One thus employ'd will have the thoughts of Death sweeten'd to him, especially if his Graces are vigorous and active, as the Circumstances of his Condition call for. The Life of every Christian is chequer'd with Mercies and Afflictions; and according to the different States of Sorrow or Triumph, are our active or passive Graces to be call'd forth into Exercise. So that *we may abound in all the*

24 Isa. 33. 13. [This should be Isa. 33:14, Ed.].

Fruits of Righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the Praise and Glory of God the Father. In a word, do not defer any thing to a Death-bed, that may and ought to be done in the time of Health. Let your House be set in order as well as your Soul, and then you'll have nothing to do but to die, when you are call'd hence.

5. Live a Life of Communion with God, and daily wait for your Change, and the Lord's second Coming. If a Believer has for a time been off from his Watch, and intermitted the Exercise of Grace, and has not had any Communion with God, the Thoughts of Death will be somewhat startling. He that would be always ready to leave this Earth, must constantly have his Conversation in Heaven. And such a one that's conversant in the other, will be like a Stranger in this World: He walks with God here, and when he leaves the World (to use the Words of a dying Saint*) *changes his Room, but not his Company.*

God was always with him on Earth, and he shall be ever with God in Heaven. I shall close this Head with the words of the Apostle *John: And now, little Children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have Confidence, and not be asham'd before him at his Coming.*²⁵

6. Let us revive in our Minds those Promises which gave us encouragement at first to come to Christ, and venture our Souls upon him. The Spirit of God works by the Word, and every Christian has some Word upon which God has caus'd him to hope. Now in order to an *actual Readines* for Death, we must labour to be putting forth frequent Acts of Faith on Christ, thro those Promises that have been powerfully impress'd on our Minds, and which have encourag'd us to hope in the Mercy of God thro the Redeemer. And here let us observe, whether these keep us at the foot of Christ, and raise our esteem of him; whether they engage to a thorow unaffected Piety, to a close regular Walk with God, and Dependence on him: And if these are the Effects, we shall be capable of clearing up our Evidences for Heaven, without which we cannot pass out of this World with Comfort.

Indeed we read that *Abraham, when he was call'd to go out into a Place which he should after receive for an Inheritance, obey'd; and he went, not knowing whither he went.*²⁶ But certainly none can be willing to go out of this World into the next, while he doubts whether he shall go to Heaven or Hell, whether he shall ascend into the *Hill of God*, or drop into a *Lake of Fire*. To be doubting and dying at the same time, is a very uncomfortable thing; yet this has been the Lot of some of the Children of God, who tho they have been *habitually* fit to die, have not been *actually* ready. Therefore as you would avoid being perplex'd and uneasy in your last moments, labour after a well-grounded Assurance of the Divine Favour; which being obtain'd, will enable you to say with old *Simeon, Now lettest thou thy Servant depart in peace, for mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation.*

7. An actual Readiness for Death, and the Coming of Christ, is promoted by the lively and vigorous Representation to our Minds of the Glories of the Heavenly Inheritance. Therefore frequently think of the Weight and Lustre of those Crowns that are prepar'd for the faithful Followers of the Lamb: Think of the Society and Employ of the Blessed, the Perfection of their Knowledg, Purity and Love, the Magnificence and Grandeur of Christ in his glorified Humanity, and how Millions of obsequious Spirits bow at his Feet. Think again how officious and ready the chief Principalities of the glorious Empire are to convey the Souls of such as die in the Lord thro the vast Regions of Air to their Father's House. And can you think of these things without earnest Desires to depart, and to be with Christ? Surely a good Man that has been long inur'd to such Contemplations, can very easily quit his Body, and very joyfully commend his departing Spirit into his hands that has bought it with his Blood.

* Vid. *Dr. Bates on Death*, p. 128.

25 1 John 2. 28.

26 Heb. 11. 8.

Secondly, I proceed now to consider the forcible Reason our Blessed Saviour uses to press this Duty of being *Ready*; *For in such an Hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh*. I have already signified to you, that by the *Coming of Christ*, we are to understand his second solemn Appearance to judg the World, the Certainty of which is here suppos'd and taken for granted. But that wherein the force of the Argument lies, is, *That he shall come in an Hour we think not of*. When he is least thought of or look'd for, when Men are stupid and insensible, and do not expect his Coming, then shall Mankind be surpriz'd with the Appearance of their Judg, as were the Old World with a destroying Deluge; *For as a Snare shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of the Earth.*²⁷

We are as certain that Christ will come, as if his Coming were past or present, as if we now heard the Sound of the last Trump, and saw the Heavens open, and the Son of God moving towards us thro the Air in the Chariot of a bright Cloud: But we cannot tell whether he'll appear in the first or second, in the third or fourth Watch of the Night; so that 'tis reasonable that we watch the whole Night, I mean, that we be *always ready*.

We are as ignorant about the time of our Death, as we are about Christ's second Coming; for People are call'd out of this World in an hour they think not of. There is no Place, Time or Company can secure us from a sudden Death.

We read that the ten Virgins were called while slumbering, and at Midnight. So, Sinner, God may stop thy Breath when thou art most secure, and call thee hence when thou hast the least thoughts of thy Departure. *When Sinners cry Peace, Peace, then comes sudden Destruction, as Travail upon a Woman with Child*. Some of you that are hearing this Sermon, before Midnight may be laid out for your own Funeral, and the Sound of that Messenger's Feet may be at the door, that shall carry you to your Grave.

Ahab little thought the Hour of his Death was so near, when he reproach'd the Prophet of the Lord, and threw him into Prison.

Agag was very confident of his living, when he cry'd out, *Surely the Bitterness of Death is past*:²⁸ but, alas, in a very little time his Confidence is turn'd into Confusion; for the Man is *hewn in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal*.²⁹

Pharaoh in the height of his Rage resolves to satisfy his Lust, and to divide the Spoil when he pursu'd the *Israelites*; but before he could gratify his Ambition, the Sea becomes his Sepulcher.

How often does God surprize Sinners with an unexpected Summons to his awful Tribunal, when like the rich *Epicure* in the Gospel, they are pleas'd with the Goods they have laid up for many Years, and are flattering themselves with the expectation of a long and merry Life? but *in a moment they go down to the Dust*, and God requires their Souls of them in an Hour they thought not of.

The Lamp of Life is sometimes blown out with a sudden Blast, when there is Plenty of Oil to feed it. Some have their Days cut off in the midst, their Sun sets at Noon; while their Bones are moisten'd with Marrow, they sink down into the Grave with the Sins of their Youth cleaving to them, and charg'd upon them. How reasonable therefore is it that we be constantly prepar'd to die, since we must every one say with *Isaac*, *Behold, I know not the Day of my Death!* Therefore if we

²⁷ Luke 21, 35.

²⁸ 1 Sam. 15. 32.

²⁹ Ver. 33.

would not be surpriz'd at the Approaches of Death, or Christ's Appearance in the Clouds, when he shall come in flaming Fire, let us be *always ready*.

I come now to make some Improvement of what I have said. And,

1 . What I have spoken discovers to us both the Wisdom and the Mercy of God, in concealing from us the particular time of our Death, and the Day of our Lord's Appearing. It must be allow'd to be a great Mercy to fallen Creatures, that God hath hid from them future Events; for if we all knew the exact day of our Death, and the precise time that our Judg would come, either 'twould unfit us for social Duties and the Civil Concerns of Life, or else upon the prospect of its being very distant, would induce us to defer our Preparations, and give our selves a loose to Sin.

If all that die in the flourishing Bloom of Youth, knew a little before their Death, that upon such a Day they should pass from this World to the next; that they should finish Time, and enter upon Eternity; how would the innocent joys of Life be damp't, and their important Business retarded, and their Usefulness to the Community entirely obstructed? What Person would apply his Thoughts to *Learning* or *Trade*, that knew so soon as he was fitted for either, he should sink down into the Dull of Death? So that such a Knowledg of future Events would be destructive to Human Society, and instead of furthering the Happiness of reasonable Creatures, would prevent their common Usefulness.

Therefore God has in great kindness towards us conceal'd from us future Events: And I have often thought that the *Wisdom* and *Mercy* of God are as much display'd in hiding some things from us, as in revealing other things to us. Our days are determin'd, and the general measure of Human Life is laid down in Divine Revelation; but the precise time of our Death and the Day of Judgment is in great Wisdom and Goodness hid from us, God having reserv'd the Secrets of his Decrees in his own power, that so we might be *always ready*.

2. How much are they to blame who put the evil Day far from them, and exercise no serious Thoughts about being ready for Death and our Lord's second Coming? That this is so in fact, I need not prove; for our own Observation will furnish us with too many sad Instances of this nature.

Young People are ready to conclude, that of course they must live to be old, tho thousands younger than they fall at their Right Hand, and ten thousands at their Left.

Those that are old, think, that since they have continued so long, there will be the addition of some more Years to their Lives: and tho the Scripture assures us, that *our Life is but as a Vapour, which appeareth a little time, and then vanisheth away*; yet these People will persuade themselves that their own Lives shall be more durable and lasting, and promise themselves Years to come: but alas on a sudden the Lamp of Life goes out, and their unprepared Souls pass into *outer Darkness*.

Whence is it that Men are thus stupid, since they know not at what hour they may be called out of the World? I answer briefly, It springs from their Ignorance of God and of themselves: They are ignorant of God's *Holiness* and *Justice*, and seldom think of any other than the indulgent Attributes of *Mercy*, *Goodness* and *Patience*. *Because Sentence against an evil Work is not speedily executed, therefore the Hearts of the Children of Men are fully set in them to do evil*. It likewise springs from their Ignorance of themselves; they are not sensible of their lost Condition in the first *Adam*; they don't see their Guilt and Pollution in their destructive Consequences; they don't know the Worth of their Souls; therefore they neglect them, and are wholly taken up with the Gratifications of the Animal Nature.

Again, an inordinate Love to this World prevents Mens Preparation for another: Some are intent upon Business, while others spend all their time in Diversion; but both agree to neglect the most important Affair: They find time for every thing, but *the one thing needful*; and like *Archimedes* are drawing Designs in the Dust, till Death breaks their Designs, and reduces them to that from whence they were taken.

Again, some defer their Preparations, because Death is a melancholy and troublesom thing to think of; they imagine if they should familiarize the Thoughts of Death, it would damp all the Joys of Life, and infuse a Bitterness into their pleasant Cups. They think that Considerations about Death and Judgment are only proper for the Sick and the Aged, but very unsutable for such as are in Health, in the Greenness and Vivacity of Youth. Finally, the vain Opinion that some have of their own *Power and Free-will*, to repent and turn at what time they please, causes them to defer their getting ready for Eternity, till they arrive to the last Moments of their time.

Now all these vain Pleas would vanish, were People but sensible of their Guilt and Pollution, of their own Impotency, and the need they stood in of Jesus Christ; then the Thoughts of not knowing the Hour when Christ will come is a *Judg*, would be of weight to move them to fly to him presently as a *Saviour*.

3. How careful should those be, who think that they are ready for Death and Judgment, that they be truly so; 'tis a matter of the highest Concern, and if you mistake here, you are lost for ever. Therefore carefully look into the State of your Souls, and beg of God to search and try you; and if upon a strict Inquiry you can find, that you are justified by the Blood of Christ, and renewed by the Spirit of Christ, adore the Riches of God's distinguishing Grace.

But if any of you upon Enquiry find your selves *unready*, let me exhort you to get ready with all possible speed: For in such an Hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh. And that this Exhortation may have its due weight upon your Consciences, I would suggest to your serious Thoughts the following things.

(1.) Consider that no time is properly ours but the present; therefore 'tis highly reasonable it should be improved in getting our selves ready for Death and Judgment: All future time is as much out of our power, as that which is already past. Now since 'tis uncertain when we shall be called out of the World, 'tis a matter of the greatest moment, that we take care to be *always ready*. *Boast not thy self of to morrow, for thou knowest not what a Day may bring forth*. Some are forming Designs for many Years to come, tho they have not a Moment but the present one at their dispose. 'Tis only the present time that is ours, yet that is sliding away while I am speaking to you; and *that Moment* in which I pronounced the last Sentence, will never return again. We enjoy the precious Commodity of Time, Moment after Moment; God gives not two together, but takes away one when he gives another: how should we then value that we enjoy so little of at once? Therefore *let us redeem Time, and give all Diligence to be found of Christ in Peace, without Spot and Blame, in the Day of God*.

(2.) Consider that neither the Hour of Death, nor that of Christ's appearing, can tarry beyond the time fixed in the *Counsels of Heaven*, till we prepare our selves. Whether we are ready or no, we must away at the Divine Summons, and when that will be, we cannot tell. Christ will not delay his Coming to Judgment; but at the time appointed by the Father, *He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry*, whether thou art ready for his Coming or not; therefore be ye always ready.

(3.) Consider that at Death your State is determined for ever. As the Tree falls, so it lies; and as Death leaves you, Judgment will find you. If you die in a State of Sin, under the Wrath and Displeasure of God, you will abide so for ever. We can die but once, how does it then concern us to prepare for that which can be but once done, because an Error committed in that, cannot be amended after-wards? O Sirs! Think of it with seriousness, whenever these Souls dislodge from your Bodies, they'll be fixed in an unalterable State of Happiness or Misery. There is no refining Fire to purge you, if you go unprepared into the next World.

(4) Consider how great will be the Disadvantage, if you are surprized in an unprepared State. Thy Indisposition just before thy Death may be so great, that thou mayst be incapable of serious Reflection. Moreover, how wilt thou do to sustain acute Pains and amazing Terrors? To groan under the Burden of a weak dying Body, and feel the Convulsions of a wounded Spirit at the same time! To be so sick that you cannot live, and yet so guilty as to be afraid to die, this is a deplorable State indeed! Dr. *Jer. Taylor* tells us of a melancholy Person, who saw Hell in a Dream or Vision; whose Amazement thereupon was such, that he would have chosen ten times to die, rather than feel again so much of that Horror. And certainly something equal, if not exceeding this, does seize unprepared Sinners, when they are just entering into Eternity. Who can tell the thousandth part of that Torture, which poor Souls feel from a Sense of Divine Wrath, when the Horrors of a guilty Mind mix with the Pangs of Death? Again, thy Summons into the other World may be so sudden, that thou mayst have neither time to consider what is convenient to be done, nor time to do it in. O how sad will be the Condition of such who are called before they are ready for Christ's Appearing and Kingdom! Do you think you could do any thing to get ready to meet your Judg, if you saw him appearing in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory? If the Elements were melting with fervent Heat, and the Heavens shrivel'd up as a Scroll when 'tis rolled together; if the Mountains were removing, and the Earth shaking, and the Stars falling, and the World blazing and cracking about your Ears; what could you do amidst all that Noise and Terror? You would then be for hiding your selves in Dens and Rocks of the Earth, and call to the Mountains to fall on you and cover you, from him that sits on the Throne, and the Wrath of the Lamb.

(5.) Consider, that if you should defer Preparation to an indefinite *Hereafter*, you are not sure that God's Spirit will afford you any assistance, and without that thou canst neither repent or believe, for both are the Gifts of God. *By Grace you are sav'd thro Faith, and that not of your selves, 'tis the Gift of God, not of Works, lest any Man should boast.* Resist not the Spirit, lest he strive with you no more; *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then may you that are accustom'd to do evil, learn (of your selves) to do well.* I believe you that have had Experience of Divine things, and know what it is *to pass from Death to Life*, will readily own, that the Will of Man is derermin'd by the *special Grace of God*, when Christ is form'd in the Heart, and is become the Object of its Desire and Choice; and that mere Nature as corrupted can no more resist a pleasing and agreeable Temptation to Sin, than the faint Breath of a Man can stop the rapid streams of a mighty River.

(6.) Consider the Advantage of being always ready. Death in any dress will be no Terror to a prepar'd Soul; and tho the Cry should be at Midnight, *Come ye forth to meet him*, you'll be ready at that short warning with Gladness to enter in with the Bridegroom. 'Tis Mens being *unready* that makes them fear Death; but the Fears of Death abate, when we know that the Sting is remov'd, and the King of Terrors himself is embrac'd as a Friend by that Man that is compleatly ready to die: and indeed 'tis only such that can retain a firmness of Spirit under constant Pain and lingering Sickness, the Harbingers of Death.

To have all quiet and well within, while the Body languishes with Pain; to have strong Consolation and good Hope, as the Anchor of the Soul both sure and stedfast, just as we are lanching forth into the Ocean of Eternity: This, this is peculiar to those that are ready. And with what alacrity and pleasure can such Souls engage in all parts of Religious Worship here, who are *ready* for their remove, and fit to be join'd to the general Assembly above?

In such a posture of Soul was He, whose Death occasions this Discourse. I doubt not but he was *actually* as well as *habitually* ready; you know I mean your late Worthy Pastor Mr. *Hercules Collins*, concerning whom I have need to say the less, because his *Doctrine* you have heard, and his *Example* you have seen for so many Years: the former was agreeable to the Sentiments of the Reformed Churches in all Fundamental Articles of Faith, and the latter such as did *adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour*.

He began to be Religious early, and continu'd Faithful to the last. He was not shock'd by the Fury of Persecutors, tho he suffer'd Imprisonment for the Name of Christ.

He was one that had a solid Acquaintance with Divine Things, about which he always spoke with a becoming Seriousness and a due Relish; and I must say, I hardly ever knew a Man that did more constantly promote Religious Discourse (a Practice almost out of fashion:) he shewed an unwearied Endeavour to recover the decayed Power of Religion, for he lived what he preached, and it pleased God to succeed his Endeavours in the Gospel after a wonderful manner. Are there not here many that must call him Father, whom *he hath begotten thro the Gospel*? May it not be said of this Man and that Woman, they were born here!

If he had not some Mens Accuracy, yet it was made up by a constant Flame; for no Man could preach with a more affectionate Regard to the Salvation of Souls? And how well he discharged the other Branches of his *Pastoral Function*, this Church is a Witness, whom he has watched over and visited above five and twenty Years.

He had *Luther's* three Qualifications for a Gospel-Minister; he was much given to Meditation and Prayer, and hardly any Man was more greivously tempted of the Devil than your deceased Pastor: tho for many years Satan in a great measure was bruised under his Feet, and God had so cleared up his Love to his Soul, that he could say, *I know in whom I have believed, I know to whom I have committed my Soul, I know that my Redeemer liveth; and I know that when this earthly House of my Tabernacle is dissolved, I have a Building of God, a House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens*. His constant walk was in the *Fear of the Lord, and in the Comforts of the Holy Ghost*. He had a *full Assurance* of the Love of God for many Years; yet this did not make him careless and negligent in Duty, it did not lift him up above measure, but kept him at the foot of Christ.

How exemplary was his Submission under personal and relative Trials; his own Indispositions were frequent and great, *yet in Patience he possessed his Soul*, and was always learning from the Discipline of the Rod: and how well he carried it under the Affliction he had with a near Relation, you cannot but know. I confess I have thought him in that respect one of the best Examples that ever I knew; surely no Person could be more tender and sympathizing. In a word, he was faithful in every Relation, a Man of Truth and Integrity, one entirely devoted to the Service of the Temple, and zealously bent to promote the Interest of the Lord Redeemer. But alas! this useful Minister is silenced, and a few days Indisposition has given him a Remove from the Toils of the Pulpit, to the Triumphs of the Throne.

I confess I had not the Opportunity of conversing with him in his last Illness; but I am informed by those that were with him, that he retained an excellent Savour of Divine Things to the Day of his Death, and did discourse but the Morning before he died after a very moving manner, being greatly affected with those Words, *'They overcame by the Blood of the Lamb.* 'Tis true, he is fallen in Battel, but he died *more than a Conqueror; and having fought the good Fight, and finished his Course, and kept the Faith,* he quitted the Body, that he might receive an *unfading Crown of Glory.* But we are left behind unripe for Heaven, and God is teaching us by terrible things in Righteousness. And we shall discover great Stupidity, if we do not observe how God hath broken us with Breach upon Breach*: He hath remov'd both Younger and Elder Ministers. Therefore on this occasion suffer me to speak a few Words to three sorts of People, and I have done.

1. To surviving Ministers. I confess I am the unworthiest of your number; and considering my Age, and before whom I stand, my Words ought to be few. Yet the Sense I have upon my own Soul concerning the Methods of God's Providence towards us, inclines me to address my self to you, my Fathers, that were in Christ before me, and preach'd him before I knew him. Suffer a Son to put you in mind of doing the utmost you can for Christ while here; for you must shortly go, and what then shall we do to stem the Tide of Profaneness, and answer the Cavils of Scepticks against our Holy Religion? O pity, pity the rising Generation of Young Ministers: Pray for them, advise them, and do all you can to help them in their Work, before you leave them: Be an Example to them, that when you are gather'd to your Fathers, we may stand up and plead for your God and Ours. And you, my Brethren, that are younger, let me intreat you to apply your selves to close Study and constant Prayer, that you may shew your selves *Workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.*

2. To you, my Brethren of this Church, that have lost an Excellent Pastor. In the midst of your Tears look up to Heaven, and *pray to the Lord of the Harvest that he would send forth Labourers into his Harvest.* Remember the God you pray to can dispense the Spirit in what measures he pleases, and qualify whom he will for the Ministration of the Gospel. But let not that make you defective on your part; You must not expect that Preachers will drop down from heaven, or spring out of Earth; but due Care must be taken for the incouragement of humble men that have *real Gifts,* and let such be train'd up in *useful Learning,* that they may be able to defend the Truths they preach. Your Pastor's Mouth is stop'd, and cannot speak to you; but this I am sure was the Sense of his Mind. To close this Head, Labour *to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace:* And tho your Elder is dead, remember your Relation to the Church is not dissolv'd, but you are bound to keep your Places, and to do your utmost to promote the Happiness of this Congregation. The Church is in a state of Widowhood; and I hope you will not forget to sympathize with your Pastor's distressed Widow, to defend her Right, and support her to the last.³⁰

Be as speedy as you can in filling up the Place in the Church of Him that is gone: And *may you have a Pastor after God's own Heart.*

3. To you that were the constant Auditors of the deceas'd Minister. 'Tis to be fear'd that many of you have not improv'd so much as you ought to have done: You are Witnesses with what Zeal and Fervour, with what Constancy and Seriousness he us'd to warn and persuade you. Tho you have been deaf to his former Preaching, yet listen to the Voice of this Providence, lest you continue in your Slumber till you sleep the Sleep of Death.

* *This was the last Text that he preached on, it being on a Funeral Occasion.*

* *Mr. Dennis and Mr. Tho. Harrison both died in the Compass of six days in August last; and since the Preaching of the Sermon Mr. William Collins is deceased.*

30 *Sadly, Hercules Collins' wife Sarah died only a few months later on 6 April 1703. [Ed.]*

You cannot but see, unless you will close your Eyes, *that this World and the Fashion of it is passing away*. O what a Change will a few Months or Years make in this numerous Assembly! Yea, what a sad Change has little more than a Fortnight made in this Congregation! He that was so lately preaching in this Pulpit, is now wrapt in his Shroud, and confin'd to his Coffin; and the Lips that so often dispers'd Knowledg amongst you, are seal'd up till the Resurrection.

Here's the Body of your late Minister; but his Soul is enter'd *into the Joy of his Lord*. O that those of you that would not be persuaded by him living, might be wrought upon by his Death! for the he is dead, he yet speaketh; and what doth he say both to Ministers and People, but *Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh?*

This text was transcribed from image files generated from the Google Books version of John Piggott's book, *Eleven Sermons Preach'd Upon Special Occasions* (London: John Darby, 1714), 199-240 (<https://books.google.com.au/books?id=ARkHAAAQAAJ>). The original is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

Note: In the original text, there were a number of marginal references (mainly Scripture references). These have been rendered as footnotes in this text. The position of these footnotes were assigned by the transcriber and any inaccuracy in their positioning is his alone.

Acknowledgement: I would like to thank Dr Samuel Renihan of Trinity Reformed Baptist Church, La Mirada, California, USA (www.reformedbaptist.net) for his assistance in rendering the Greek present in the original text.

Transcription by Mr Mark Smith, A Reformed Baptist's Disk (www.vor.org/rbdisk), © 2019.