

A

A M O N,

REACHED IN THE

P A R I S H C H U R C H

O F

St. P A U L's, D E P T F O R D,

On SUNDAY, the 7th of MAY, 1786,

ON THE LAMENTED OCCASION OF THE

D E A T H

O F

RICHARD CONYERS, LL.D.

Late RECTOR of that PARISH.

By JOHN NEWTON,

RECTOR OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH, LONDON.

M A T T. xxiv. 46.

BLESSED IS THAT SERVANT, WHOM HIS LORD, WHEN HE
COMETH, SHALL FIND SO DOING.

L O N D O N:

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T O T H E
C H U R C H W A R D E N S
A N D
P A R I S H I O N E R S
O F
St. P A U L ' s , D E P T F O R D ,

T H I S
S E R M O N

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

By the A U T H O R.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

THE following Sermon is not offered as an exact Copy of that which was preached upon the Occasion; but it is as much so, as Recollection, after a considerable Interval, could supply. Several Particulars are, probably, omitted, some may have been transposed, and, possibly, a few added; but the Substance of both is the same.

The Church-wardens of St. Paul's, Deptford, and many of the Parishioners who heard it, to whom the Memory of their late Minister is precious, having expressed a Desire of seeing it in Print; in Compliance with their Wishes, and from a Hope that the Perusal of it may, by the Blessing of God, be useful to others also, it is now published.

S E R M O N, &c.

I T H E S S. ii. 8.

So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

AN active undaunted zeal in the service of God, and a peculiar tenderness of affection towards his people, were happily and eminently combined in the character of St. Paul. The latter appears in none of his writings to greater advantage, than in this epistle, and particularly in this chapter. He had been made very useful to the Thessalonians, and was greatly beloved by them. Many of them had received the gospel which he preached, not * *in word only, but in power; and were effectually turned, by grace, from dead idols, to serve the living and the true God.* They likewise were very dear to him; and being now at a distance from them, he writes to confirm their faith and hope, to animate and direct their conduct. And he takes many occasions of reminding them, of the peculiar regard he had

* I Theff. i. 5, 9.

borne them from the first, and how near they still were to his heart: that his love for them, which had sweetened all his labours and sufferings when he was among them, made him still solicitous for their welfare, and enabled him to rejoice on their account, while he was suffering bonds and imprisonment at Rome.

The verse I have read, is one passage, out of many in the New Testament, where our translation does not fully come up to the spirit and beauty of the original. Not that it is unfaithful or faulty; it is chiefly owing to the difference of the languages. I believe we have no single word in the English tongue, to express the energy of the Greek term, which he uses in the beginning of the verse; and therefore our translators have employed two*. *Being affectionately desirous of you.* It denotes a desire connected with the finest and most tender feelings of the heart; not like the degrading selfish desire of the miser for gold, but such an emotion (according to his own beautiful illustration in the preceding verse) as that with which the nurse, the mother while a nurse, contemplates her own child. Being thus disposed towards you, † *we were willing*—but the Greek is more emphatical. We esteemed it our pleasure, our joy, the very height of our wishes, *to impart unto you the gospel of God*, to put you into our own place, to communicate to you, by the gospel, all that comfort and strength, and joyful hope, which we have received from it ourselves. Yea, further, to have imparted to you *our own souls also*; that is, to devote our whole

* μεταφορικῶς.

† εὐδοκίμην.

strength,

strength, time and study, to this very end, to spend and be spent for you, and to be ready to seal our testimony with our blood, if this were needful to your establishment, *because ye are dear unto us* *, exceedingly dear unto us. The same word is used (for the language of mortals will not afford a stronger) Matt. iii. 17. *This is my beloved Son.*

When I thought of preaching to you this day, and of mingling my tears with yours, the occasion suggested the choice I have made of a text; and the countenances of many of you, convince me that I have not made an improper choice. Another congregation might have been led, from what I have already said, to sympathize with the Thessalonians, in what they must have felt when they were deprived of such a minister and friend. But *your* minds are engaged by a sense of your own loss. You have reason. You acknowledge and feel, that if I wished (as I certainly did) to select a text, which might, while you heard it, strongly impress your minds with the idea of my dear friend, your late Pastor, and recal to your remembrance, his principles, actions, motives and aims, how he spoke, and how he lived among you, I could hardly have found a passage in the whole scripture, more directly suited to my purpose. I believe no minister in the present age, nor, perhaps, in any past age, since the apostles days, could have a better warrant than Dr. Conyers, to adopt these words of St. Paul, as expressive of his own spirit and character. He had a very tender affection for you: it was his earnest

* *αγαπητός.*

desire, and his great delight, to impart unto you the gospel of God, because you were dear to him: and it may be said of him, with peculiar propriety, that in this service of love, he imparted to you his own soul or life also. You have not forgotten, surely you never can forget, the very solemn and affecting manner, in which his ministry among you closed. Whether, while he was reading the apostle's farewell discourse *to the elders of the church of Ephesus**, which occurred in the second lesson for the day, he had a presage that you would see his face no more, we know not. Had he been certain of it, he could not have taken your consciences more earnestly to witness, that he was clear of your blood, and that he had not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God. However, the event proved, that you then saw and heard him for the last time. His strength and life were prolonged to finish his discourse, and to pronounce over you his parting blessing, which he had scarcely finished, before he was called home to his Master's joy. *Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh, shall find so doing* †.

In considering the grounds of the apostle's love to the Thessalonians, and the proofs which he gave of it, the subject will frequently lead me to bear a testimony to the grace of God, vouchsafed to your late minister, of whom we may truly say, he was a *follower of St. Paul, as Paul also was of Christ* ‡.

I. The first ground, the original cause of the apostle's love to the brethren, was the love of

* Acts xx. 18, 35.

† Luke xii. 43.

‡ 1 Cor. xi. 1.

Christ. His unwearied endeavours, in the midst of the hardships and dangers which awaited him in every place, to promote the happiness of mankind, made him appear to many who were unacquainted with the motives of his conduct, as though he were beside himself. The apology he offered was, the love of Christ *constraineth us* *. Till he knew the Lord, he acted very differently. While he was under the power of prejudice and ignorance, he verily thought that he ought to do many things against *the name of Jesus of Nazareth* †, and therefore breathed out threatenings and slaughter against his people. But Jesus, whom he persecuted, appeared to him in his way to Damascus, convinced him of his sin, vouchsafed him pardon, and commissioned him to preach the *faith which he had laboured to destroy* ‡. From that time, he esteemed himself a chief sinner §, and because much had been forgiven him, he loved much. He devoted his whole future life to proclaim the glory and grace of his Saviour, and to propose himself as a pattern of his long-suffering and mercy, to all around him, that they likewise might believe and be saved. He was conscious of his Saviour's just right to reign in every heart. And they who, by receiving the gospel which he preached, entered into his views, and loved the Lord whom he loved, instantly became dear to him for his Lord's sake, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor, bond or free. It is probable, that all who are convinced and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, having a clearer

* 2 Cor. v. 14. † Acts ix. 1. and xxvi. 9. ‡ Gal. i. 23.
§ 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.

knowledge of the nature, number, and aggravation of their own sins, than they can possibly have of those of any other person, account themselves among the chief of sinners, though many of them may have been preserved from gross enormities. I never heard that your minister was influenced, like Saul of Tarsus, by a bitter persecuting spirit; and I believe his behaviour was moral and exemplary from his youth. When he entered upon his ministry at his beloved Helmsley, in Yorkshire, he found the place ignorant and dissolute to a proverb. At this early period of life, he feared God, and he hated wickedness. With much zeal and diligence he attempted the reformation of his parish, which was of great extent, and divided into several hamlets. He preached frequently in them all. He encouraged his parishioners to come to his house. He distributed them into little companies, that he might instruct them with more convenience: he met them in rotation by appointment. In this manner, long before he fully understood that gospel of God, which of late years he so successfully imparted to you, I have been assured that he often preached or exhorted, publicly or more privately, twenty times in a week. These labours were not in vain: a great, visible, and almost universal reformation took place. About the time I am speaking of, a clergyman in his neighbourhood, made very honourable mention of Mr. Conyers, in a letter to the Society for promoting Christian knowledge, (which I have seen in print) as perhaps the most exemplary, indefatigable, and successful parochial minister in the kingdom: yet, in the midst of applause and apparent success, he

was

was far from being satisfied with himself. He did what he could: he did more than most others, but he felt there was something still wanting, though for a time he knew not what; but he was desirous to know: he studied the scriptures, and he prayed to the Father of lights. They who thus seek shall surely find. Important consequences often follow from a sudden involuntary turn of thought. One day, an expression of St. Paul's, *the unsearchable riches of Christ* *, engaged his attention. He had often read the passage, but never noticed the word *unsearchable* before. The gospel, in his view of it, had appeared plain, and within his comprehension; but the apostle spoke of it as containing something that was *unsearchable*. A conclusion therefore forced itself upon him, that the idea he had hitherto affixed to the word *gospel*, could not be the same with that of the apostle. From this beginning, he was soon led to perceive that his whole scheme was essentially defective. That his people, however outwardly reformed, were not converted. He now felt himself a sinner, and felt his need of faith in a Saviour, in a manner he had never done before. Thus he was brought, with the apostle, to account his former gain but loss: the unsearchable riches of Christ opened to his mind, he received power to believe, his perplexities were removed, and he rejoiced with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. He presently told his people, with that amiable simplicity which so strongly marked his character, that though he had endeavoured to shew them the way of salvation, he had misled

* Ephes. iii. 8.

them. That what both he and they had been building was not upon the right foundation. He, from that time, preached *Jesus Christ, and him crucified**, as the only ground of hope for sinners, and the only source from whence they could derive wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The Lord so blessed his word, that the greater part of the people, who were most attached to him, soon adopted his views, and many more were successively added to them. This change in his sentiments and manner of preaching, though it added efficacy to his moral instructions, and endeared him to his people at home, lost him much of that high estimation in which he had been held abroad. But he knew the gospel of God too well to be ashamed of it: whatever disgrace he suffered in such a cause, he could bear with patience. He loved his people, and was beloved by them; and their advance in comfort and holiness, made him ample compensation for the unkindness of those who knew not what they did. And thus, when the providence of God removed him hither, the constraining love of Christ, which had long been the great principle of his conduct, disposed him to love you, before he saw you; and he came among you, with an earnest desire to impart unto you, the gospel of God, and his own soul also, because from the moment that he accepted the charge over you, he was affectionately desirous of you.

The regard of the apostle to the Thessalonians was, undoubtedly, heightened in proportion as the Lord was pleased to give him seals to his ministry among them. And the like cause had the like

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. and i. 30.

effect here. The mutual affection that subsists between a faithful minister, and those to whom the Lord makes him useful, is of a peculiar kind, and not easily described. I trust he looked upon many of you with joy, as his *crown and glory in the day of Christ**; and you, I doubt not, looked on him with respect and gratitude, as the instrument of God in saving your souls, in calling you out of darkness into marvellous light. What were some of you doing, and whither were you going, when God sent you, by him, the word of salvation? And what a happy change have you since experienced? You were then *dead in trespasses and sins, without Christ, and therefore without hope, and without God in the world*†. But now you, who were sometime afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. Now being freed from the slavery of sin, *you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life*‡. You have now access to God, communion with him, an interest in his promises, and a good hope through grace, that though your minister be taken from you, he who by him *begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ*§. Let this thought moderate your grief. You will see the face of your minister no more here; but you will meet him again, ere long, before the throne of God and the lamb. Then all tears will be for ever wiped away.

Again, during the apostle's continuance with the Thessalonians, he and they had enjoyed precious seasons of worship together, and of mutual com-

* 1 Thess. ii. 19. † Ephes. ii. 1, 12, 13. ‡ Rom. vi. 22.
§ Phil. i. 6.

munion with God, in the ordinances of his appointment. *Wherever two or three are met in the Lord's name**, he is mindful of his promise, and does *manifest himself unto them, as he does not unto the world †*; and these tastes of his loving-kindness wonderfully soften, spiritualize, and enlarge their affections, and knit them closer and closer together in love. And though that power and unction from on high, which makes the ordinances of the gospel truly delightful, and an hour so employed preferable to a *thousand ‡* of the world's hours, does not altogether depend upon the gifts, or even upon the grace of the minister; yet it is, doubtless, a singular and high privilege to be under the care of a wise and tender shepherd, of one who, in the school of experience, has acquired the *tongue of the learned §*, who knows how to adapt himself to the occasions of the people, to give every one their proper portion, to obviate their doubts, relieve their fears, point out their dangers, and to speak a word in season to them that are weary. Be thankful that you were long favoured with such an able minister of the New Testament. As a public preacher, he may, perhaps, have left some equals behind him. But he had, at Deptford, as formerly at Helmsley, stated seasons when he expounded the scriptures to a smaller auditory in his house, or within his own premises. He supposed that on these occasions few persons were present, but those who either possessed the peace of the gospel, or were sincerely seeking it. The simplicity and meekness of wis-

* Matt. xviii. 20.

† John xiv. 22.

‡ Psal. lxxxiv. 10.

§ Isa. l. 4.

dom, with which, as a father among his children, he exhorted, comforted, and instructed these his more select hearers, seemed peculiar to himself. In this branch of his ministerial office, I always thought him unequalled and inimitable. How often have many of you had reason to say, at such seasons, *Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us, and while he opened to us the scriptures* * ? And the great attention with which he was heard, and the proofs he saw that his labours were not in vain, rendered him still more affectionately desirous towards you.

For, lastly, as one great reason why the apostle loved the Thessalonians was, that they were not only hearers but doers of the word ; and he could speak of them with pleasure, and propose them to others as *examples* †, of the efficacy and tendency of the gospel which he preached ; so I trust, yea, I know, that some of you were exceedingly dear to your late minister on this account also. He could say of you and to you, *now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord* ‡. He had *no greater joy than to see his children walk in the truth* §, and demonstrate by their conduct, that the gospel which they professed, was a doctrine according to godliness. Those of you who gave him this pleasure, may, now he is gone, praise God for the grace which enabled you to administer to the comfort, of one who so tenderly watched over your souls. He was proportionably affected with pungent grief, when any whom he loved, acted unsuitably to their profession, though they, perhaps, seldom knew what their unfaithfulness cost him. In his preaching

* Luke xxiv. 32. † 1 Thess. i. 8, 9. ‡ 1 Thess. iii. 8.

§ 3 John 4.

he bore a strenuous and faithful testimony against every evil, not only against gross sins, but against every deviation, whether in temper or practice, from the spirit and rule of the gospel; but there was something in his natural disposition, which made it difficult for him to expostulate plainly and strongly in private. In private, he could not easily reprove. But he could mourn, he could wear out the day without pleasure, and the night without rest, in bemoaning those who had neither compassion for him, nor for themselves. I can affirm this of him, from instances which have come to my own knowledge: perhaps some person present may think, Surely the preacher has heard of me, and means to point me out to the notice of the congregation. No, it is your own conscience points you out, I know you not. But is it so, indeed, that you broke your minister's rest, and added to his troubles, by your miscarriages? You do well to weep: may God give you *repentance not to be repented of* *. Will not his lamented and sudden death, recal to your remembrance, how earnestly he warned you, and pleaded with you, while he was living; and rouse you from that dangerous security into which you have been seduced by the deceitfulness of sin?

II. I have, in a great measure, anticipated what I purposed to mention under a second head—the proofs which he gave, that the affection he professed for his people, was cordial and sincere. But the subject is not exhausted: St. Paul evidenced his love to the Thessalonians, by imparting to them the gospel of God, and by his unwearied

* 2 Cor. vii. 10.

zeal and diligence in their service, in defiance of the difficulties and obstacles, which always attended his labours. By the strong expression, that he was ready to impart unto them his own soul also, he intimates both the energy of his address, and his fixed determination to venture every consequence in their service.

In another place, the apostle speaking of the doctrine which he preached, says, *according to my gospel* *. It was not a point of speculation with him, he possessed it. He had experienced the power of it, it was the spring of his conduct, the source of his comfort; and was therefore, properly, *his own*. Here he styles it the gospel of God, perhaps, to distinguish it from a pretended gospel, such as the Galatians received from false teachers, which he calls *another gospel* †, and which was, indeed, not the gospel. The true gospel is of God. It is *the glorious gospel of the blessed God* ‡. From whence we infer its certainty, authority, and importance. It is worthy of all acceptance: it is able to make us *wise unto salvation* §, if cordially embraced; and to neglect it, is to refuse life, to chuse death, to resolve to be miserable, and to affront the wisdom and goodness of God. When Paul preached this gospel at Thessalonica, it awakened the spirit of envy, opposition and clamour, in many who believed not; but they who received it, experienced it to be the power of God, to the salvation of their souls.

This gospel your late minister preached among you, and, I trust, effectually imparted to many of you, as an instrument of the Holy Spirit. He

* Rom. ii. 16.

† Gal. i. 6, 7.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 11.

§ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

owed all his success, and *you* derive all the light and comfort you obtained under his instruction, to the doctrine which he delivered. It cannot with reason be expected, that God will afford the seal of his blessing to any scheme of doctrine but his own truth. A preacher may be of a good character in civil life, and diligent in his office; and he may have some success in suppressing outward wickedness, though he does not preach the gospel of God; but he will not reach the heart of his people, wean them from their secret sins, and win them to the love and practice of universal holiness, unless he preaches St. Paul's gospel. I hope this congregation has been better taught, than to receive every thing indiscriminately for truth, because it is spoken from a pulpit. You have the scriptures in your hands, and by this standard you are warranted, yea, commanded to *try the spirits**, because many false prophets and pretended teachers are abroad in the world: however, I will take the liberty to remind you of some plain and sure marks, by which you will be able to distinguish a faithful minister of the true gospel.

He will preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and propose him as the only foundation of a sinner's hope, the only object of faith, the way, the truth, and the life. He will endeavour to convince you of your need of mercy, and then direct your thoughts to the atonement which Christ made for sin, by his bloody death upon the cross. He will give you no encouragement to think you can do any thing well pleasing to God, till you yourselves are first made acceptable in the Beloved; nor until his

* 1 John iv. 1.

love is the motive of your obedience, and your dependance is fixed upon the promised communications of strength and grace from his fulness.

By a manifestation of the truth, he will commend himself to your *consciences in the sight of God**. He will not amuse you with the discussion of some curious point, in which you have little immediate interest, or some cold general commonplace subject. Many sermons, ingenious in their kind, may be compared to a letter put into the Post-office without a direction. It is addressed to nobody, it is owned by nobody; and if a hundred people were to read it, not one of them would think himself concerned in the contents. But the word of the gospel, when faithfully dispensed, *searches the heart* †, and tries the reins. You will wonder that the preacher, who perhaps is a stranger to you, can so exactly suit himself to your case. He will sometimes bring to your remembrance what you have done or said, or even what you have only thought, and which, possibly, you had forgotten. So that if you are going on in your sins, or are veiled under a cloke of hypocrisy, you will be ready to start, and think he is about to expose you publicly. Or if you are a mourner in Zion, distressed with fear and temptation, beset with trouble, and know not which way to turn, that tongue of the learned, which he has acquired in the school of experience, will frequently lead him, while speaking from his own feelings, to meet you with a word in season, so exactly suited to your case, that if you had told him the state of your mind, and every parti-

* 2 Cor. iv. 2.

† Heb. iv. 12,

cular of your situation, beforehand, he could not have described them better. Such is the correspondence between the word of God, and the heart of man; and such is the similarity of the workings of the human heart in similar circumstances, that the preacher, who is enlightened by the scripture and by the Holy Spirit, while he does little more than relate the exercises of his own mind, appears to many of his hearers to express their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, better than they could have expressed them to him. Thus it is that *the secrets of the heart are made manifest** by the preaching of the gospel. All other preaching, compared with this, is lifeless, distant, and unaffecting, little more than declamation; but the words of a *scribe* †, well instructed in the mysteries of the kingdom of God, come home to our own business and bosoms, and constrain many to say, with the woman of Samaria, *Come and see a man, which told me all things that ever I did* ‡.

A true servant of God in the gospel may likewise be known, at least in the place where he resides, or stately labours, by a certain mixed kind of character, which he will receive from public report. The general tenor of his conduct will be such, that the feeble attempts of slander to vilify him, will be gradually suppressed, and they who would speak evil of him, be put to shame and to silence, by his good *conversation in Christ* §. But though his behaviour be unimpeachable and exemplary, his principles will be misunderstood

* 1 Cor. xiv. 25. † Matt. xiii. 52. ‡ John iv. 29.
§ 1 Pet. iii. 16.

and misrepresented; and by different persons, (sometimes by the same persons) very different and inconsistent things will be laid to his charge. He will often be deemed rigid, precise, uncharitable, enjoining a strictness in life, and manners to the extreme; so that to adopt his views, and to follow his rules, a person must bid farewell to comfort, and almost renounce society; while, in the same day, and almost in the same breath, he will be represented as preaching doctrines, which, if generally received, would be unfavourable to good morals, and promote licentiousness. For the natural heart has a dislike, equally, to the grace, and to the holiness of the gospel. Salvation, by faith in the blood of Jesus, is thought too easy, and affording too much encouragement to the unworthy; and the simple grateful obedience, which characterises those who seek salvation in this way, and in no other, is thought too strict and scrupulous, and carrying of things a great deal too far. They who are of the world, who speak to the world, and whom the world is willing to hear, give no offence, and therefore no clamour is excited against them; but a faithful minister will not be exposed to the *wo** denounced against those of whom all men speak favourably. His infirmities and mistakes (for he is not perfect) will be eagerly noticed and exaggerated; and if no just fault can be found, he must at least expect to be spoken of as an enthusiast, or branded by some name, to which ignorance and prejudice have affixed a contumelious sense.

Such a one was your late minister. Like the apostle, he laboured to impart to his hearers the

* Luke vi. 26.

object of God: like him, he was unmoved by the opposition of those who knew not what they did, and ready to endure all things for *the elect's* sakes, *that they might be saved**. He loved you, and was willing to impart to you his own soul also. His spirit was willing, he did much, and wished he could have done more.

It was, indeed, a surprize to many, who were not intimately acquainted with him, that he did no more. And it may be thought by some persons, that as by his countenance, he seemed to enjoy a tolerable share of health; his public services were hardly answerable to the zeal of a man, who was ready to pour out his very life for the good of souls. He preached but once a week in his parish church; and no arguments, persuasions, or entreaties, could prevail on him to enter any pulpit but his own. Even when he has been expressly nominated by his diocesan to preach in another church, he has declined the service, and disappointed crowded auditories who wished to hear him. The benefits of his singular abilities were, therefore, confined to his own congregations. And it was with the greatest difficulty, and but seldom, that his most intimate friends could engage him, to lead in family worship, where he has been occasionally present. I have frequently mentioned to him my concern, that the sphere of his usefulness should be so much limited; and he lamented it himself, but his hindrance was constitutional and invincible. He had a continual hurry and flutter upon his spirits; the effects of which were unaccountable to those

* 2 Tim. ii. 10.

who knew not the cause. Taken in different views, he might be considered as very happy, or very uncomfortable at the same instant. In the most important sense, he was a happy man. He had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, enjoyed much of the light of his countenance, and had no perplexing doubts respecting either his acceptance in the Beloved, or his perseverance in grace. Yet, through the agitation of his spirits, he spent his days, and almost every hour, in trepidation and alarm. The slightest incidents were sufficient to fill him with fears, which, though he knew to be groundless, he could not overcome. But upon no occasions did he suffer more from these painful feelings, than when he had public preaching in prospect. When he met his people at home, he usually found pleasure and liberty, unless he observed some new faces. But the sight of a stranger, especially if he knew or suspected him to be a minister, would sometimes distress him greatly, and almost disable him from speaking. It may seem very extraordinary, that a man of the first abilities as a preacher, highly respected, and honoured with eminent usefulness, should be intimidated by the presence of those who were much his inferiors. But such was his burden, which neither reflection nor resolution could remove. What he often suffered before he ascended this pulpit, and when he looked round upon a large congregation, and knew not how many such persons as he was afraid of might be among them, gave him a right to say, in a singular sense, that in imparting the gospel of God to you, he imparted his own soul also. Perhaps there have been martyrs, who ap-
 proached

preached the rack or the stake, with less distressing tentations, than he has frequently felt, when about to enter upon his otherwise delightful work. Yet, because you were the people of his immediate charge, and dear to him, he seldom declined your service on the forenoon of the Lord's day, if he was well. But this, I believe, was the reason, that at other times, instead of preaching in the church, he confined himself to a place, where few, comparatively, could attend him. I do not know, that while he lived at Deptford, he ever preached publicly in this neighbourhood, excepting once, when he accepted an appointment to preach at the archdeacon's visitation at Dartford. But he kept his intention a secret in his own breast; and did not mention it to his nearest friends, lest a multitude should be drawn to hear him. And he told me himself, that from the hour he stood engaged, which was several weeks before the time, he could scarcely think of any thing else; and that when the day arrived, his spirits were so greatly agitated, that for some minutes after he was in the pulpit, he was deprived of his eye-sight. But the Lord whom he served, supported him; and he was, upon the whole, carried comfortably through the service.

If we speak of death as the moment of separation between soul and body, he was not afraid of it; for he knew whom he believed, and that to depart and be with his Lord, was *πολλω μαλλον κρεισσον**, unspeakably preferable to any thing that could be enjoyed in the present life. But though not afraid of *death*, he was often afraid of *dying*.

* Phil. i. 23.

His apprehensions of the possible forerunners and concomitants of a dying hour, frequently made a painful impression upon his spirits. Upon this account, they who loved him, have reason to be reconciled to the suddenness of his removal. His was an honourable dismissal indeed! The messenger that called him home, found him actually and actively employed in his Master's service, with his *loins girded up* *, and his lamp burning. It was, likewise, a gracious condescension to his infirmity, and saved him from an experience of any of those conflicts, which he could seldom think of, without anxiety, and a degree of anguish.

Upon the whole, I may say, of Dr. Conyers, without just fear of contradiction, *he was a burning and a shining light* †. Many of you rejoiced in his light: and now the man who cared for your soul, who was the minister of God to you for good, is taken from you, your sorrow is proportionable. Yet if you truly entered into his views, you are not destitute. The Saviour whom he preached, and in whom you have believed, is still with you. The stream, at which you have often drank, and found refreshment, is dried up; but the fountain of living waters, from whence it was derived, is always full, and always flowing. Whoever dies, Jesus lives; the residue of the Spirit is with him, and he is at no loss for means to communicate his blessings to those who wait upon him: yea, under his management, even losses prove gains, and apparent hindrances work to the help and furtherance of faith. Be

* Luke xii. 35.

† John v. 35.

thankful that you were so long favoured with such a minister; and rejoice, that though you can see him no more in this world, you shall meet him again in the world of light. In the mean time (need I say) respect and honour his memory; and the most effectual manner by which you can shew your regard to him, will be, by walking as he walked, and maintaining a *conversation** becoming the gospel, which he so affectionately and faithfully imparted to you.

But there are, I fear, amongst you, those who accounted the joyful sound of the gospel, which he proclaimed, a burden; have been wearied by his earnest endeavours to pluck you as brands from the burning, and have often wished to be freed from his importunity. Now you have your wishes. Your faithful monitor is removed. He will alarm your consciences, he will offend your pride no more. But if, after slighting his labours of love, while he lived, you remain likewise unaffected by his death, you are much more to be pitied, than those who lament his removal. Alas! when numbers, in different and distant places, who never saw you, are concerned for you, will you not yet be concerned for yourselves! Tremble, lest you should have cause to say, *the harvest is past, the summer is ended, but we are not saved* †! You have had your opportunity, a day of grace, in which the things pertaining to your peace have been set before you. The Lord forbid that the following words should be applicable to you:

* Phil. i. 27.

† Jer. viii. 20.

*but now they are hiddden from your eyes * ? The Saviour, whom you have too long slighted, is now once more preached to you. He is still upon a throne of grace, able and willing to save to the uttermost, all who come unto God by him. But hereafter he will appear on a throne of judgment, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel †.*

* Luke xix. 42.

† 2 Theff. i. 8.

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