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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ALEXANDRIA, AUGUST 27, 1820,

ON THE OCCASION OF THE DEATH OF

THE REV. JAMES MUIR, D. D.

ITS LATE PASTOR.



BY THE REV. ELIAS HARRISON,
His successor.



1 SAMUEL XIV. 1.

And Samuel died: and all the Israelites were gathered together and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah.

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DISCOURSE.

1 SAMUEL xxv. 1.

And Samuel died: and all the Israelites were gathered together and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah.

IN these few words, my brethren, announcing the exit of an eminent servant of the Most High, we are presented with the last recorded notice of a dying race. Ushered into the world, with the principles of corruption intimately interwoven with every fibre of the constitution, they flit about upon the busy theatre of life, for a little season; act the parts to which they had been destined in the councils of eternity; and then,—the curtain drops—the scene closes—the victims of dissolution are consigned to the oblivion of the tomb. The last report by which their names are known to succeeding generations, engraven upon their sepulchral monuments, or recorded upon the faithful page of history, is the one now before us. “They died, and were buried.” The sound conveyed by its announcement is solemn, mournful, and not unfrequently terrific. We listen to it, as the knell of the grave; and are affected by its influence, as the harbinger of wo.

Nature tells us that we must die; and observation confirms the mournful truth, by the repulsive vestiges of its surrounding desolation. To be beyond its reach, we must be armed with the energies of immortality; to welcome its embrace, we must feel what the apostle felt, when he declared, that “*death is swallowed up in victory.*” Its shriek is heard in the gorgeous palaces of the mightiest monarchs; it bursts upon the ear from the lone cottages of the sons of indigence. It withers the laurels which successive triumphs have gathered around the brow of the victorious chief; it silences the song by which he had been hailed as the bulwark of his nation. His desolating career is not to be arrested even by the hallowed sanctuaries of

the living God. He seals up the lips of those, who, as watchmen upon the walls of Zion, have long proclaimed the messages of everlasting life; he freezes with his icy touch the prophet and the priest who have long ministered before the altar.

Samuel, the person designated in the text, had been sanctified for the important office, which he was destined to sustain, even from his mother's womb. Israel had long been verging to the polluted practices, and senseless worship, of the surrounding heathen. Darkness was beginning to cover the whole land. Eli, the last of its judges, was fast ripening for the grave; and the few remaining Israelites, indeed, might not without reason have been trembling for the ark of God. In the midst of this night of gathering blackness, Samuel, a star of superior magnitude, and of resplendent lustre, was ushered in, to glitter upon the surrounding gloom. In the space of a few years, the land was again enlightened. Idolatry, with all its heaven-insulting rites, was banished from the nation; the pure worship of the God of Israel was gradually restored; and a man after God's own heart was anointed to sway the sceptre of his chosen people. Here ends the luminous career of this eminent servant of the Most High; for after this we are told, in the language of the text, that *Samuel died; and all the Israelites, sensible of the loss which they had sustained, and deeply affected at the mournful providence, assembled themselves together and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah.*

The single position, my brethren, which we intend to deduce from these words, is this:

That when men, eminently good, are removed from any society by the stroke of death, there is just cause for mourning and lamentation.

By good men, however, we do not wish to be understood as speaking of those who are often dignified with that denomination by the world; who are hailed in the plaudits of the great, and celebrated in the songs of the ignorant and the thoughtless. Not those whose proud march to the summit of worldly elevation has been decked with the trophies, the bloody trophies of victorious conflict; and attended in its career by the penetrating groans of the desolated widow; and followed at

a distance by the deep-toned execrations of a mournful group, whom their ruthless cruelty has doomed to the sighs of perpetual orphanage. Not those who have been trumpeted by the unthinking rabble, as the nation's bulwark, and the nation's glory, by the murderous laurels and encrimsoned splendours, with which they have encircled the crumbling throne of some sanguinary earthly despot. These may be considered as *good* and great, in the estimation of those who know not God, and who have no other rule of calculation but what has been derived from the carnal wisdom and belittling policy of the world. But when *we* speak of good men, *we* wish to be considered as directed in our decision by the unerring standard of the word of God; as referring to those whose pathway has been gilded by the mild and unattractive glories of practical godliness; whose lives have been worn away, as was that of their divine Master, in the dignified and benevolent employment of *going about and doing good*; who, like the sun pursuing his silent majestic course along the cloudless canopy above, are incessantly diffusing their light, and heat, and radiance; and animation, over the whole moral system; whose only rule of action is the *end* of their existence, and whose only object, aside from this, is the general good of the whole family of man.

These, my brethren, are good men, according to the gospel meaning of that phrase; and in the judgment of the Great Searcher of all hearts, they are the only good. Their deeds of benevolence, and acts of piety, and exercise of humility and meekness and faith, and all the other graces which adorn the christian character, shall not only be embalmed in the recollection of those whom they have left behind them when their corruptible bodies shall have been wasted into dust by the putrefaction of the grave; but they *shall be had in everlasting remembrance, even before God*. They shall not only live in the memories of the *just* during the few years of *their* transient residence in this *vale of tears*; but they shall glitter with the brilliancy of *stars in the firmament for ever and ever*—long beyond that period when the names of the mighty shall rot, and when the kingdoms which they have desolated by the iron rod of despotic power, shall be lost amidst the ruins of the final conflagra-

tion. Such was Abraham, and Moses, and Joshua, and Samuel, and a long line of Old and New Testament worthies, whose course has been finished with joy, and who are now participating the blessedness of their everlasting rest. And such, we believe, was the character of him, over whose grave, like the Israelites of old, in the house of the *seer* at Ramah, we are now assembled to drop the tear of affliction and affectionate remembrance.

When such persons as these, my brethren, are taken away from the church and the world, by the stroke of death, there is, we believe, much greater cause for mourning and lamentation than is generally imagined. It was not without reason that Israel of ancient days were beheld so frequently pouring their plaintive cries, and dropping their tears of undissembled sorrow over the *faded forms* of their departed patriarchs and prophets and godly rulers. And in the prospect of that moral desolation, which was frequently the result of such afflicting providences, their inspired bard might well have cried out in the tones of desponding grief, "*Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.*" There is cause for weeping—not because another heir of glory has past the period of his youthful probation, if I may so speak, and been put in possession of that inheritance of bliss in reversion for him upon the happy shores of the heavenly Canaan—not because the pains, and toils, and sufferings, and conflicts, of his earthly pilgrimage have been succeeded by the everlasting tranquillity, the cloudless vision, and boundless fruition of his Redeemer and his God—not because the soul, purified from defilement and liberated from the clogs of corruption, has winged its flight to those blissful regions, *where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain...where all tears shall be wiped from every eye, and where redeeming grace shall be the subject of every song.*—It is, my brethren, because the *salt of the earth* has been removed, and because a light has been extinguished in Zion. Good men, and especially those who have long stood in the commanding attitude of champions for the gospel, besides operating with a secret successful efficacy in preserving the social mass from putrefaction, may be considered as *beacons*, by the light of which,

an erring world may be directed in the path of duty. They are *epistles, known and read of all men*; and however imperceptible their influence may be to the undiscerning, they certainly do have an influence, and in many instances a widely extended influence, both in the dissemination of correct opinions and on the purity and permanency of public morals. They impart instruction to the world around them, both by precept and example. They teach the hateful and deformity of sin by exhibiting in their lives the attractive beauties of holiness. They provoke others to love and to good works. In their presence, the profane swearer, who actually *spills* the very name of God from his blasphemous lips, is awed to silence; the sneering infidel, wrapped up in the mantle of his assumed complacency, feels himself a sinner; the insulting tongue of the impious scoffer seems to be affected for a passing moment with the paralysis of death; the beastly sensualist, conscious of his own littleness, and afraid of the light by which his insignificance is proclaimed to others, shrinks back into the more comfortable shades of his own obscurity. And perhaps it would not be too much to say that the presence of such men preserves society from total ruin. Would ten such men as righteous Lot have saved an awfully polluted Sodom from the blazing torch of heaven's vengeance? Could not the flames, already hovering for their destructive purpose, have permission to descend, until himself and family had been hurried away, by their kind conductor, beyond the reach of that devouring element? And may we not suppose, that in the same way the righteous are *still* the defence of cities and communities? Suppositions, indeed, upon such a question as this, are useless; because God has intimated to us, in language the most unequivocal, that it is for their sakes he forbears to destroy the world.

When such, then, are taken away, we mourn...not for them, who have broken loose from a body of corruption, and been translated to those regions where they shall eternally possess the rapid energies and imperishable nature of celestial spirit—not for the selfish reason, because our loss has enriched them with unspeakable and everlasting gain.—These things ought

rather to constitute a subject for gratitude and rejoicing. But we mourn for ourselves—for the loss of moral worth—for the support of public morals—for the restraints of unsanctified affections—for the defence, under God, of human society. And this loss is often greater than we are willing to imagine. Could the intercession of Moses stay the uplifted arm of divine vengeance, and turn away the *flaming sword* of justice from a murmuring, an ungrateful, and an infatuated host, while in the wilderness of Sinai? Could the instructions, and the example, and the prayers of such a man as Samuel, bring back to a sense of duty a people long characterised by the appellation of “stiff-necked and rebellious,” and thus preserve them for a season longer from the threatened judgments of the insulted Majesty of heaven? Could the example of such a monarch as young Josiah, restrain the licentiousness, and reform the morals of an awfully corrupt nation? Was it principally on his account, that the thunders of Omnipotence, which had already begun to roll in the distant heavens, announcing the scourge of desolation to that once highly favoured people, were made to sleep in still longer silence? Could the prayer of Hezekiah avert from Jerusalem that tempest of indignation which was just ready to burst upon it with overwhelming fury, through the instrumentality of the Assyrian monarch, whose embattled legions were panting for their prey, and in anticipation already revelling in the fruits of their spoils? Could it call down a messenger from the skies, to blast by his pestilential touch, in the short space of a few hours, more than one hundred and fourscore thousand of that but yesterday insulting and triumphant army?

To give utterance to the voice of sorrow for the removal of such persons as these, was only, under another form, lamenting the loss of the most precious and distinguished blessings. It was indulging the tear of afflicted sensibility at the recollection of departed mercies—of streams of comfort, *now* frozen at their fountain—of national glory, *now* obscured by a night of darkness—of the strength of Israel, *now* converted into weakness—of the bulwarks of Zion, *now* prostrated in the dust—of the temple of the living God, soon to be converted into the gloom of solitude. It was mourning the loss of *that* which had long

operated as a moveless barrier against the impetuous tide of licentious indulgence....of moral desolation....of ruinous damning idolatry.

And can it be supposed that the righteous have ceased to be a blessing in the world? that their example and instructions can no longer exert an influence in favour of correct sentiments—of upright principles—of public virtue, and of godly practice? that their fervent prayers have been divested of their efficacy at the courts of heaven, in averting the storms of merited indignation, and in calling down blessings upon the heads of those who are apparently ripening for destruction? The supposition, my brethren, is contradicted by the immutability of Omnipotence. Men may change, and their purposes may become as variable as the different vicissitudes of their own passing existence; but Omnipotence can never change. With Him *there is no variableness nor shadow of turning*. That he is a prayer-hearing God, is his memorial throughout all generations. And is he a *man* that he should lie, or the *son of man* that he should repent? Has he said, and shall he not do it? Has he spoken, and shall his word return unto him void? As well might we expect that the soft breezes of the morning should rock from their solid bases the ponderous masses of the everlasting hills. *His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, neither is his arm shortened that it cannot save.*

When we assert, therefore, that eminently good men are a public blessing, and that their loss ought to be lamented as a public calamity, we consider ourselves as doing nothing more than asserting a truth which has been believed and acted upon in all ages of the world.

The infidel may laugh at the idea, the witling may sneer, and the ungodly worldling may ridicule; but the sneer of obloquy and the smile of contempt can never change the nature of stubborn facts. Let the righteous once be swept from the earth, and where, under God, would be its defence—where would be its light—where would be its glory? *Darkness would again cover the land, and gross darkness the minds of the people.* The barriers of social order would in a great measure be broken down—the flood-gates of wickedness would every where

be unhinged—the restraints of unsanctified and unruly passions would be rent in sunder—the ties of social endearment would be unloosed—moral excellence would be banished from the world.—Take them away, and the altars of devils might again be seen smoking with the blood of immolated human victims—the hatchet of death would again be uplifted by the arm of ruthless ferocity against the unprotected heads of the innocent—the banner of the Prince of Darkness would again *wave* triumphantly over the desolated temples of the living God—the millennial sun, the streams of whose glory are just beginning to be visible in the distant horizon, would soon be eclipsed by the repulsive gloom of everlasting midnight.—Take them away, and you would dry up the balmy streams of divine consolation—you would tear away the supporting prop of the afflicted—you would convert the pillow of death, into a pillow of thorns—you would fill up the grave, now brightening with the beams of heaven, with the shuddering blackness of impenetrable darkness—you would make all beyond it, one wide, illimitable field of uncertainty and doubt.

Are any disposed to question the *truth* of this statement? Let them tell us what it was that for a time made ancient Israel heathen—ancient Greece, in spite of its blaze of science, a nation of idolators—ancient Rome a brothel—and ancient Carthage a charnel-house of death? Let them tell us what it was that has made Babylon, once *the glory of kingdoms, and the beauty of the Chaldee's excellency, a dwelling place for dragons, an astonishment and a hissing among the nations*—ancient Ninevah an unknown desolation—and ancient Tyre a ledge of rocks, only fitted to dry the nets of a few obscure fishermen? What has been the cause of that moral waste, that widely extended gloom, which now reigns triumphant over those Asiatic regions once blest with the labours of Apostles—once celebrated for the multitude and purity of their churches—once smoking with the blood of whole hetacombs of christian heroes, martyred for the faith of Christ? Alas! my brethren; there was an utter dereliction of godly men. As the faithful failed, their *golden candlesticks* were removed out of their places; and, as an almost invariable consequence, what was

once a theatre for the most noble efforts of piety and benevolence, has now become a solitude—a scene of almost universal desolation. Other causes, it is admitted, may have combined their influence in the production of these sad effects, upon which the eye can never rest without awakening in the bosom the throbbing sensations of melancholy dejection. But if the *cities of the plain* would have been preserved by the presence of ten such men as Lot, and if Israel had never been carried away captive and finally lost but in consequence of their entire forgetfulness of God; we have a right to *infer*, at any rate, and we believe the inference resistless, that the statement which we have made has been grounded on the moveless basis of everlasting truth.

Here, then, my beloved friends and brethren, we are presented with the reason why in solemn convocation we are this morning assembled in the house of God. It is to mourn the loss of one whose lips spoke *wisdom*, and whose dictates were enforced by the almost resistless influence of a holy and godly conversation; one whose life was a practical comment upon the excellency of that faith once delivered to the saints. In the adorable providence of God, whose power none can resist, and whose purposes none can counteract, an event has taken place, which, besides calling forth the tear of undissembled sorrow, has shrouded *this church* in the sad appendages of the house of death. He who had long ministered at its altar—who had broken the *bread of life*, and announced the messages of heaven to an affectionate people, is now sleeping in the dust. His mortal remains we have deposited in the grave, where they must repose in peace, until aroused from their slumbers, and reunited to their beatified spirit, by the loud blast of the *trump of God*. The event is solemn, mournful, and afflictive; and one which ought not to pass without affectionate notice, or without proper improvement. When the Great Head of the church is taking away to himself those who have long been stationed as watchmen, to *blow the trumpet in Zion, and to sound the alarm in his holy mountain*; it becomes those who are left behind, not indeed to tremble for the *ark of God*—because this is resting upon a rock, and protected from danger by the

impregnable bulwarks which have been raised around it by the strong arm of Omnipotence—but to look to themselves; to inquire in solemn earnest whether they are prepared to follow; and to fill up the little remaining space of their existence by striving to walk after their godly example.

While, therefore, we adore, without murmuring, the afflictive stroke which has bereaved this congregation of a faithful and affectionate pastor; while we mingle our condoling sympathies with the distressed though comforted family which it has deprived of a tender husband, and an endearing parent; and while we mourn the loss which society in general has sustained,—let us endeavour, for a few moments, to employ our reflections upon his life, character and death.

Early in life (the precise period is not known), and under the preaching of his father, whose memory is still precious in the church, his mind became seriously impressed with the importance of eternal things. And such was the nature of this impression, that he could find no peace, until, as he expressed it himself but a few days before his death, *he had fled for refuge to the ark of the everlasting covenant.* From that moment, his attention, which had hitherto been directed to the pursuits of the law, was now fixed upon the sacred office of an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. After the usual course of classical and philosophical studies, in the university of Edinburgh, where, if rightly recollected, he received his first degree, and after seven years more, exclusively devoted to the subjects of theology and those connected with it, he was licensed by the presbytery of Cupar, in Scotland, as a probationer to preach the gospel. The first scene of his labours was in his native country, in a chapel erected by the munificence of lady Glenorchie, in whose family he resided for a time as a private tutor. How long he remained in this situation, or with what success his preaching was attended; we have no documents on which to ground an opinion. It is supposed, however, by his family, to have been about two years. After this, he removed to London, where, as the instructor of an academy and an assistant of his relation, the Rev. Dr. Hunter, he passed the three last years of his life in Europe.

Owing to the then declining state of his health, he was induced, at the suggestions of his friends and physician, to try a voyage to the island of Bermuda. And as it was supposed that his labours might there be of service to the cause of evangelical truth, and to the advancement of his Redeemer's kingdom; the presbytery to which he belonged, perfectly satisfied with his qualifications, solemnly ordained him, (in the same manner that Timothy was—1 Tim. iv. 14.) by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, to the work of an evangelist. In this island, he remained as the principal of an academy, and as the pastor of a congregation (which is still flourishing) for the space of nearly eight years. And it was while on a transient visit to *his* friend and *his father's* friend, the Rev. Dr. Witherspoon, president of Princeton college, that he connected himself with a presbytery in the United States—that of New-Brunswick, in the state of New-Jersey. And finally, when already embarked, with his family, with a design to return to Europe, an overruling providence so ordered it that the vessel was driven back in distress, and he induced to change his direction for the United States. After his arrival in New-York, he preached for several months in that city, in company with the Rev. Jedediah Morse, as a candidate for the collegiate church, then under the pastoral care of the late venerable Dr. Rogers. But as division was likely to ensue, in consequence of the peculiar attachment of a portion of the congregation to each of the candidates, and as it was the desire of *both* to preserve a spirit of peace and unanimity among the members of Christ's body, both declined at last being considered any longer as candidates; and the subject of our narrative, in the spring of the year 1789, having received a call, removed, with his family, to the pastoral care of that congregation, in the church of which we are now assembled to mourn his departed worth.

Such, my brethren, is a brief outline of his history, antecedently to the period when he became your pastor. During the long space of thirty-one years and three months, his labours have been devoted almost *exclusively* to the benefit of that people whom he always loved to his latest hour, and over whom

God in his providence had made him an overseer. What has been the character of his preaching, and what the success attending it, there are many present who are much better able to judge than his unworthy successor, who is now addressing you. That he *has not laboured in vain, and spent his strength for naught*, is a truth, we believe, which has been tested in the experience of many who are now rejoicing with him in bliss, and glittering in the splendours of a happy immortality. And we trust there are many more, still remaining, who shall at last be made to sparkle as gems in that crown of glory which will encircle his brow for ever and ever. His preaching was not of that cast which was calculated to amuse the ear and delight the fancy—not a mere pompous harangue, made up in many instances of words and phrases, without having attached to them any definite meaning. Feeling the importance of exhibiting before his people the *solid* truths of his Bible—that Bible which he studied, perhaps, more than any other minister now living, and which he had almost committed to memory, he *generally* made it a practice in a considerable part of his discourse to adopt the *pure language* of the Bible. It is indeed possible, as some had suggested, that he might have carried this to excess. But when it is recollected that the Bible is our text-book—that it is the source of all evangelical truth, and the very basis upon which we build all our systems—it will readily be admitted, that this extreme is much the safest side upon which to err, and that the majority of ministers are in the habit of running at a much greater distance upon the opposite extreme.

In the prosecution of his ministerial duties, his labours were unwearied. Knowing the eternal value of the souls which God had committed to his charge, and the solemn account which he must at last render, of the manner in which he had discharged his stewardship, he was *instant, in season, and out of season*. He could scarcely, indeed, be deterred from continuing his labours, even when declining health admonished him that he was fast ripening for the grave. And the last sermon that he ever preached, was evidently intended, as a valedictory address, to a life, and a world, with both of which he consi-

dered himself as nearly done. That his people might be made partakers, with him, of that *salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory*, he studied, and watched, and preached, and prayed. Yes, my brethren, that *you* might be given him, as *seals of his ministry, and as crowns of his rejoicing*, many an anxious day has he worn away in toil; and many a night has he spent, in unslumbering, restless solicitude. The vail of midnight has found him engaged in the same arduous, though to him delightful work; and the breezes of morning have often wafted to a throne of grace his importunate cries that his labours might not be in vain. And this solicitude for the welfare of his flock, which had induced him to spend the vigour of his life in their service, was neither lost, nor diminished, even amidst the excruciating pangs of a dying bed. Never shall the speaker forget that awfully affecting moment, when like the venerable patriarch of old, bestowing his benediction, and announcing his last farewell, to a weeping family grouped around his *emaciated form*—never shall he forget, that when this mournful solemnity was concluded, he had still a blessing in reserve for *you and me*. Yes, he commended us to his *own* covenant-keeping God, and to the word of his grace, even when trembling upon the very verge of the grave. And could his voice, now hushed in death, be yet heard in this assembly, methinks the burden of his exhortation would be this: “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children.” “Be ye also ready; for the son of man cometh in a day, and in an hour, when ye know not.”

But it is not to his *profession* merely that we are to look; nor to the purity of those principles, which it was his endeavours to disseminate in his preaching. Both of these were strongly supported and beautifully illustrated by a consistent walk and godly conversation. He seemed, indeed, to make it his continual *study* to impart instruction, as well by *example* as by precept. And I know of no man living whose outward deportment was better calculated to do this than his was. *Denying himself all ungodliness and worldly lusts*, his life was a constant exhibition of meekness, and humility, and purity, and benevolence, and forbearance. His charity was of that descrip-

tion, which, bursting through the barriers of sectarian bigotry and prejudice, seemed to embrace in its expansive bosom the whole family of man. His mind could never retain a *grudge*. He bore cheerfully with the infirmities of his friends, and never did he repose his head upon his pillow without imploring the blessing of heaven upon his enemies (if such he had). As a husband, he was kind and attentive; as a parent, faithful and affectionate; as a master, indulgent; as a friend, firm and unwavering; as a member of civil society, universally respected and beloved; and as a minister at the altar, such as became the gospel which he preached. In him, the *poor* always found an *advocate*; the *afflicted*, a comforter; and the *helpless stranger*, a willing friend.

Such, my brethren, was the life and general character of your departed minister; and according to the tenour of his life, so, as might have been expected, was the manner of his death. Tranquil and serene, he saw himself wasting away by the ravages of an incurable disease—marked the gradual advances of the *king of terrors*, now divested of his sting—and at last welcomed his cold embrace as the harbinger of everlasting peace. Not a murmur ever dropped from his quivering lips—not a frown ever ruffled his benignant brow—and not a cloud of apprehension ever intervened to obscure the brilliancy of his eternal prospects. Repeatedly did he declare, but a few hours before his death, that though *racked with the most terrible pain of body, his mind was reposing in perfect peace*; and almost in the very last *struggle*, that “*he was happy—but it is all grace; free, sovereign grace.*” While, therefore, we lament his loss, we may still be comforted with the assurance that he is now “*high in glory and the climes of bliss,*” mingling his *hosannahs* with those of the redeemed around the throne. We mourn; but not as those whose sorrow is unalleviated by the balmy influence of hope.

But whatever else we do, let us not neglect to improve the afflictive event, upon which we have now been meditating. The purposes of heaven have been fulfilled. Your minister has gone to his appointed rest. The solemn *scrutiny* of the manner in which he has discharged his stewardship is already

past. The awards of eternity have commenced ; and in a little season, you and I must pass the same bourn, from whence no traveller returns. The silence of the grave, around which we are now seated, methinks is broken by a warning voice from the departed dead. Its sound is the *knell* of the tomb. It calls for the attention of parents and of children : it addresses itself to the consciences of the aged and the young : it demands the consideration of masters and of servants. It is the voice of your once beloved and affectionate pastor, charging you, in the language of *sepulchral* entreaty, to *be also ready...* to be prepared, like him, for the awful stroke of death...and not to compel him to bear testimony against you in the tremendous day of "dread *decision*." O, could this warning be felt in all its eternal importance, not a soul in this large assembly would be unaffected—not a bosom but what would throb with the pulses of anxiety—not an eye but what would glisten with the tear of apprehension. In the transition of a few more days or years, and we who are now occupying these seats, in this hallowed temple, must all be mouldering beneath the cold clods of the valley. Every endearing relation in life must be sundered—every worldly prospect blasted—and every hope, except that which has been built upon the rock Christ Jesus, must be lost amidst the ruins of that desolating hour. O, then, let us never rest until, like him whom we mourn, we have the blessed assurance that our peace has been made with God ; that we have been adopted into his family, and had a title given us to that *inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*. Then indeed may we meet the stroke of death without alarm. Then, like an exulting apostle, we may exclaim, *O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?* AMEN.



ADDRESS,

DELIVERED AT THE INTERMENT OF THE REV. DR. MUIR.

Never, my beloved brethren and friends, have I been called to address you upon an occasion so interesting, so solemn, or so mournfully affecting, as the one which has brought us this afternoon within the walls of God's earthly sanc-

tuary ; and never did I feel so deeply or so sensibly my utter inability to perform the sad and painful duty which it has devolved upon me.

Death has *always* something connected with it to enlist the feelings, to arrest the attention, and to produce a deep and awful impression upon the mind. It tells us, that *we too* must die. It announces the melancholy truth, that man is born to see corruption. It hurries us onward to a period, in no distant reversion, when these frail and dying bodies, now vigorous with health, then stiffened in the frosts of death, shall be consigned to the house appointed for all living ; when a mournful group shall be standing around the breaking margin of the grave, and paying to us the last tribute of affection and respect. It *forces us to believe*, what we are ever ready to consider as the inevitable portion of almost every individual but ourselves : "*Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.*"

But *how much more deep*, and how much *more solemn*, must *that impression* be, when called to witness such a scene as that which is now before us. Death has at last extended its ravages into the very sanctuary of the living God. After taking away one and another and another of the flock, the Great Shepherd of Israel has at last seen fit, in his righteous determination, to remove the pastor also. He who has long ministered in this place, in holy things—who has long gone in and out before us, and broken unto us the bread of life—and who has long proclaimed from this *sacred desk*, the resuscitating messages of the everlasting gospel, is now stretched out before us, locked in the cold embrace of death. Those lips, which but a short time since were animated with the words of eternal wisdom, which spoke *salvation* to the beloved people of his charge, and which poured the balm of heavenly consolation into the sin-afflicted bosom ; those lips are now sealed up to us in everlasting silence.

No more shall this hallowed temple re-echo with his inviting voice—no more shall his afflicted family be cheered in the house of their earthly pilgrimage by his enlivening and supporting presence—no more shall his bereaved flock be instructed by his counsel, or influenced by his pious and godly example. His work is now done. The offices to which he had been destined in the councils of eternal wisdom have been fulfilled ; the toils and labours of his wearisome pilgrimage are brought to a close ; and we, his family, his people and his friends, are now assembled around the grave, to drop a tear to his memory, and bestow the last sad tribute of respect to his lifeless remains.

But, my brethren, shall our mouths be filled with murmurings, and our hearts with bitterness, at this mournful and distressing stroke of providence ? Shall the loss of him, in whose society we have often taken sweet counsel—upon whose instructions we have long been fed, and with whose example we have long been blest—shall this induce us to hang up our harps in silent sadness upon the willows, and mourn with tears of unavailing sorrow ? Is there no circumstance to relieve the gloominess of the picture, and to awaken in the bosom the tranquillizing sensations of resignation and submission ? Blessed be God, though we do mourn, we do not sorrow like those who are destitute of hope. Upon the holy hill of Zion above, beaming with light, and enveloped in glory to which no mortal eye can ever approach and live,—there, we have full reason to believe he is now mingling his songs with the countless multitudes of the redeemed, and bathing his weary soul in a sea of everlasting rest. "*Blessed*

are the dead, who die in the Lord: yea saith the spirit, from henceforth; for they do rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." And such, we doubt not, was the death of him, whose lifeless remains we are now about to deposit in the silent tomb.

Those precious gospel truths and gospel hopes, which he had long been preaching, and which he had laboured to impart in their efficacious and supporting power to others, he found sufficient to preserve his soul in the most perfect peace; and that too when racked and tortured with pain of body to such a degree as can scarcely be expressed. The pangs of death could not ravish it from him. His mind had taken strong hold upon the everlasting covenant. He knew that his "Redeemer lived; and that though after his skin, worms should destroy his frail and corruptible body, yet that in his flesh (purified and refined from all the dregs of matter), he should see God;" whom he should see for himself, and not another, though his reins were consuming within him. And as a consequence of this assurance, not a whisper of complaint was ever heard to drop from his lips—not a frown of dissatisfaction was ever seen to ruffle his benignant brow. With the smile of heaven playing upon his pallid countenance, often would he welcome his approaching friends, and dissipate their gloom by the cheerful ease which seemed to mingle itself with all his affectionate communications. The same happy equanimity of mind which possessed him while living, and which was perhaps his distinguishing characteristic, continued with him to the very last moments of his existence.

He is now at rest. His labours are ended: his trials have ceased: his conflicts are past; and his hopes are realized in that blissful region, where "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest; where there shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain; where the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed him, and lead him to living fountains of water." O Death, then, where is thy sting? O Grave, why is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who has given him the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

While, therefore, we mingle our affectionate, condoling sympathies with the afflicted family—while we comfort them with the assurance, that what may be a momentary loss to them, must be unspeakable and everlasting gain to him—and while we point them for still greater consolation to the balm of Gilead and the glorious physician—him who has promised to be the widow's God and the orphan's father,—let us not neglect to make a suitable and proper improvement of the mournful and bereaving dispensation. My beloved brethren, *people of his charge, and mine*, your departed minister, though dead, is yet addressing you. There comes up to you a voice from the awful stillness of the grave. It speaks to you in the solemn language of eternity. It tells you, in the dreadful knell of death, to "be also ready; for you know not the day or the hour when the son of man shall come." It warns you, by a timely repentance, and a godly conversation, to prepare to meet him—to meet him in such a state as that he will not be compelled to bear testimony against them in the great and tremendous day of final retribution. Oh! could his departed spirit be permitted to leave the shining ranks above, among whom he has but just as it were entered—could it be permitted for a few moments to hover over this solemn assembly, methinks the burden of his exhortation to his bereaved flock and to his friends

would be, "Prepare to meet your God in judgment." Profit by the instructions which I have long been giving you—arouse from the deadly slumbers of sin, and fly, O fly to that *ark of safety*, which I have found my only refuge.

In a little season, my brethren, and the same mournful offices of respect must be paid to you. In a little season, and these bodies, now pampered with ease and vigorous as the morning, must become cold and chilling as the stormy blasts of winter. Every earthly object must recede from view; every tender and endearing ligament of life must be rent in sunder; every worldly expectation must be blasted. And oh! without the hope, the realizing hope, which supported the spirit of your departed minister, what must be your feelings when the curtain drops—when the scene closes, and when the grave shall possess its victim!

In the name, then, of the Everlasting God, I charge you to remember the end of your once affectionate pastor's conversation; to profit by the instructive lessons which you have heard from those lips, now sealed in everlasting silence; to imitate his pious and godly example; and to be followers of him, who through faith and patience is now an inheritor of the promises. From the borders of his opening grave, I warn you to fly from the wrath to come, and with him to lay hold on everlasting life. AMEN.

S. J. G.

