

A
S E R M O N

Occasioned by the DEATH of

Benjamin Seward, Esq;

Who departed this Life *March 30th,*

Having enter'd the

Forty-ninth Year of his Age.

Preached, *April 8th,* 1753.

By *JOHN GILL, D.D.*

L O N D O N :

Printed and Sold by G. KEITH at the *Bible
and Crown, Grace-church Street*; and J. RO-
BINSON, *Dock-head, Southwark.* 1753.

[Price Sixpence.]

P S A L. xxxvii. 37.

Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace.

THE occasion of my reading these words to you, at this time, is the decease of *Benjamin Seward, Esq;* late of *Bengworth* in *Worcestershire*. The last Lord's day, he worshipped in public with saints below, was in this place; just five weeks ago. It is at the request of his surviving relations that I preach on this solemn occasion: no passage of scripture being left by the deceased for this purpose, and none given me by his friends; but *this* being suggested to me by a relation; and no other more proper to the occasion, or more suitable to the character of the deceased, occurring to my mind; I determined to make use of it, and improve it in the best manner I can to your profit and edification.

with whom he shall live for ever : and there will be every thing that can come under the notion of peace and happiness ; there will be perfect health of body and soul, and length of days, for ever and ever ; no more pain, sickness, sorrow, and death ; there will be riches and honour ; riches of glory, an eternal weight of glory, a crown and throne of glory, an everlasting kingdom, prepar'd from the foundation of the world ; a paradise of pleasure, bliss, and joy, inconceivable and inexpressible. This is the end of the perfect and upright man.

Now if any man may be said to be *perfect* and *upright*, in the sense in which I have explained these characters, as I doubt not there are many, the person whose death has occasioned this discourse may be said to be the man ; and who was an ornament to the Dissenting interest in general, and to the *Baptist* denomination in particular, of which denomination he was.

I fear I shall not be able to do justice to the character of this worthy gentleman, for want of sufficient knowledge of him ; for tho' I have had the honour to be acquainted with him for some years past ; yet by reason of distance of habitation, and having but seldom an opportunity of conversation with him, I am not so well qualified to give him his true portrait, as a gentleman and a christian ;

istian ; however, what from my own observation, and the information of others, I'll give you the best account of him I can.

Mr. *Seward* was a gentleman of fine natural parts and good sense ; he had a peculiar sweetness of temper, scarce ever known to be ruffled, discomposed, fretful and impatient, upon any occasion ; which singular good nature, as it is commonly called, adorned with the grace of God, set him in a most amiable light, and caused him to shine in a most pleasing manner to all that knew him. He had the advantage of a liberal education, first begun in *Westminster* school, and then carried on in the University of *Cambridge* ; where, as I am informed, he took a degree, and was designed for service in the established church, in which he was brought up ; but this was frustrated by a call in Providence from thence to another employment in life.

When it pleased God effectually to call him by his grace, thro' consulting the sacred scriptures, and his own experience, as well as the writings of learned and godly men, he embraced and professed a set of principles, glorious in themselves, calculated to secure and increase spiritual peace and comfort, and to promote true and undefiled religion, and powerful godliness ; and upon the same plan he received the doctrine of adult baptism, and sub-

mitted to the ordinance of it, an ordinance greatly despised by men; in which he acted the self-denying part, as well as in joining himself in the communion of a small society of christians, of the *baptist* denomination, mean and despicable in the eyes of men; and this he publickly did before the whole world, as not being ashamed of Christ, his Gospel, ordinances and people; esteeming reproach for Christ's sake greater riches than all the treasures in *Egypt*.

Humility, that truly christian grace, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which so much adorns the believer, was eminently conspicuous in him; he was affable and courteous to the meanest person; would condescend to men of low estates, and submit to those that were inferiour to him, esteeming others better than himself; not elated either with the affluence of life he was possessed of, or with his natural or acquired abilities, or his spiritual gifts; knowing from whom he received them; and therefore would not glory as tho' he had received them not.

As he was blessed with plenty of this world's good things, and so capable of relieving the distressed; his ears were open to the cries and requests of the poor; his heart sympathized with them in their troubles; his hand was ready to distribute to their necessities; he was a chearful giver, and took

took delight in every opportunity to do good; which he did to all, without respect to parties, having an heart benevolent to all mankind; which gained him the universal esteem of all that had knowledge of him.

In his last illness he was calm and sedate, still and quiet, patient and perfectly submissive and resigned to the will of God; not at all reluctant to death, or in any fear of it; entirely dependent on Christ as his saviour, and wholly looking to him for eternal life and salvation. In a visit I paid him, upon asking him how his faith stood, he replied, "his only view was to Jesus, and his trust was in him, knowing there was no other way to life and happiness; but added, that believing in Christ was a thing sometimes not so clear and manifest;" to which I replied, "it might be known, for *to them that believe*, Christ *is precious*; and as he is precious to every one that believes, so to whomsoever he is precious, that man does believe, or has true faith in Christ." He observed, that this was an argument which he himself had made use of, to persuade some fearful christians that they did believe; and seemed greatly affected with it. I added, I hoped he would make use of the argument in his own favour. To a Reverend Minister¹ that afterwards visited him, he declared, that

¹ The Rev^d. Mr. Joseph Stennett, sen^r.

could he enjoy health and honour, and all the grandeur and good things of this world, they would be all nothing to him in comparison of a well-grounded hope of eternal glory and happiness. As he had no immediate apprehensions of death, till he was at once seized by it, nothing dropped from him concerning that,—the last words he was heard to utter in a broken and almost in-articulate manner, were, “*Dear Jesus,—*“*Come—Come.*” Thus, without any violent struggle of nature, or any shew of concern and uneasiness at death, this precious servant of Christ fell asleep in Jesus. The loss of him is great indeed! A loss to his surviving relative, to whom he was a most indulgent husband, a most delightful companion, and a sympathizing partner in her afflictions; may the Lord sanctify it to her, and support her under it! A loss to his dear children, to whom he was a tender and affectionate parent; who, by his bright example, hearty counsel, and wise directions and instructions, might have been of still greater advantage to them, had it pleased God to have continued him longer with them; may they tread in his steps, and copy after him! A loss to his poor neighbours and others, both in the church and in the world, to whom he was a chearful benefactor. A loss to the whole interest of Christ, of which he was an ornament and

sup-

support! He himself indeed is the gainer, and so is the church triumphant; which hereby has one more added to its shining number, which make that general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.

To conclude: Let it be enquired whether these characters of *perfect* and *upright* belong to you, that have been hearing this discourse: are you partakers of the true grace of God? Have you a genuine faith in Jesus Christ, a good hope thro' grace of salvation by him, and a sincere love unto him? Have you reason to believe that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to you, and you have interest in it, and are acceptable to God thro' it? Have you had clean hearts created, and right spirits renewed in you? And have you been enabled in any good measure to walk uprightly? And is it the desire of your souls, and the business of your lives to exercise a conscience void of offence towards God and men? Then, notwithstanding the imperfection that otherwise attends you, you are in a Gospel-sense perfect and upright; and which you should ascribe to the grace of God, and be thankful for it.

Have you considered the men that bear these characters as you should? When you behold them, do you find an affection for them, and does it create in you an esteem

of them? Are you desirous of, and in some measure helped to imitate them, in whatsoever is praise-worthy in them? Have you observed the end of their conversation, and the issue of their holy lives, which is peace? Then may you hope that this also will be your end; which cannot but be a desirable one. Even *Balaam* desired to *die the death of the righteous*, and wished his *last end might be like his*^m: Such who truly believe in Christ, and look to him for righteousness and life, shall receive *the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls*ⁿ.

^m Numb. xxiii. 10.

ⁿ 1 Pet. i. 9.

F I N I S.



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