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# A SALVE FOR A SICK MAN

A DISCOURSE DETAILING THE NATURE, VARIATIONS, AND TYPES OF DEATH  
AS WELL AS THE APPROPRIATE WAY TO MEET DEATH

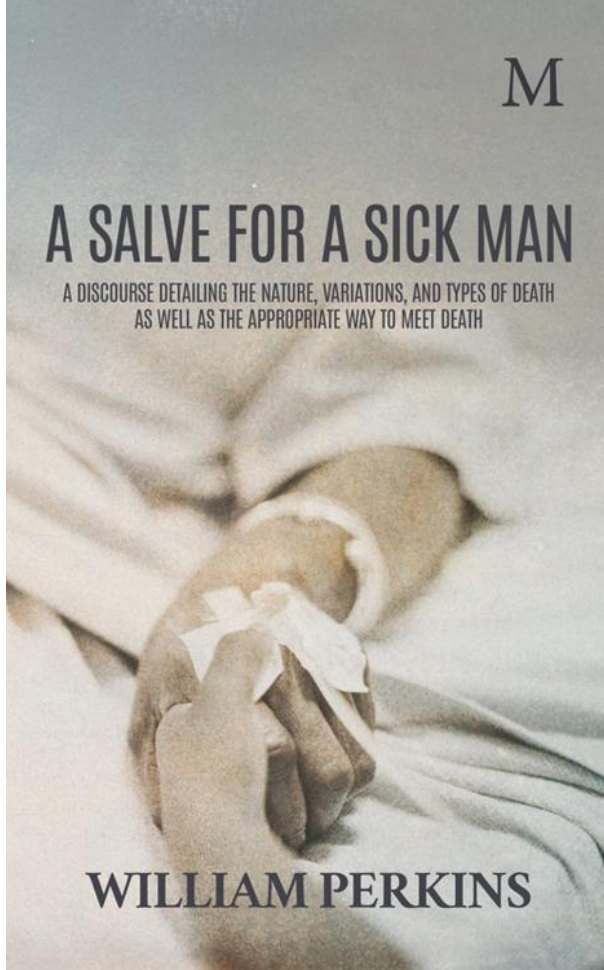
WILLIAM PERKINS

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# **A Salve for a Sick Man**

Or, a discourse detailing the nature, variations, and types of death; as well as the appropriate way to meet death

**by William Perkins**

It may also serve as spiritual guidance for:

1. Sailors embarking on sea voyages.
2. Soldiers preparing for battle.
3. Women about to give birth.

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## **Table of Contents**

[To the Esteemed and virtuous Lady](#)

[A Salve for a Sick Man](#)

[Final Thoughts](#)

## **To the Esteemed and virtuous Lady, Lady Lucy Countess of Bedford.**

The death of the righteous, that is, of every believer and repentant sinner, is an extraordinary blessing from God, bringing with it numerous noble advantages: a point I prove in this way. Firstly, God performs greater acts for His servants at the beginning and throughout their grace than they usually request or conceive, and because He has promised support and strength to them, He, in His marvellous wisdom, imposes this heavy burden of death on them, so they may experience the incredible power of His grace in their weakness. Secondly, judgement begins at God's house: the righteous face trials and temptations in life, and thus, they confront their deaths and hells in this world, so they may avoid the torments of hell and death when they die. Thirdly, when Lazarus died, Christ declared: He is not dead but asleep: consequently, the Christian can say, my grave is my bed, my death is my sleep: I do not die in death, but merely sleep. It is generally considered that death is the most terrifying of all things: but this is not the case for those who are in Christ, to whom many occurrences are far more severe and bitter than death. Fourthly, initially, death birthed sin, but in the righteous, through the virtue of Christ's death, it annihilates sin, as it is the culmination of mortification. Death is far from destructive for those in Christ, in fact, there is no better sanctuary for them against death: for immediately following the body's death comes the spirit's perfect liberation, and the body's resurrection. Finally, death serves as a means of a Christian man's perfection, as Christ exemplifies in His own words, saying, Behold, I will cast out devils, and will heal continuously today and tomorrow, and on the third day, I will be

perfected. This perfection in Christ's members is nothing but God's blessing, the author of peace, sanctifying them wholly, so their entire spirits, souls, and bodies may be kept blameless until the arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having often pondered the excellence of death, I saw fit to encapsulate the main points into this brief treatise: the safeguarding and contemplation of which I entrust to your Ladyship, requesting you to receive and peruse it at your convenience. If I am criticised for writing to you about death, even though nature dictates you are not close to death, Solomon will defend me, who advises that we must remember our Creator in our youth. Trusting in your favourable reception, I pray God blesses my modest effort to your comfort and salvation.

September 7, 1595.

Yours in the Lord, W. Perkins.

## **A Salve for a Sick Man**

The day of death is better than the day of birth. Ecclesiastes 7.3.

These words constitute a rule or principle, set down by Solomon for significant reasons. In the preceding chapters, he illuminates the vanity of all creatures under heaven, elaborating on the details extensively. People might, therefore, become discontented regarding their worldly status. Thus, Solomon, with remarkable wisdom, changes tact and begins to outline certain rules in this chapter for guidance and consolation, so that people might have something to

defend themselves against the trials and tribulations of life. The first rule is presented in the third verse: a good reputation is more valuable than costly perfume. In other words, a reputation earned and upheld by virtuous conduct is a special blessing from God. Amid the vanity of life, it offers greater joy and comfort to the human heart than even the most exquisite perfume can bring to the senses. However, someone hearing this first rule concerning a good reputation might object and argue that fame and a good reputation provide scant consolation, given that they are followed by death, the grim end of all people. Solomon addresses this objection with a second rule in the words at hand, stating that the day of death is better than the day of birth.

To fully understand the precise and appropriate interpretation of this rule, three points need to be considered. Firstly, what is meant by death in this context? Secondly, how can it be truthfully asserted that the day of death is better than the day of birth? And thirdly, in what way is it better?

For the first point, death is the loss of life as a punishment decreed by God and inflicted on humanity due to its sin. Firstly, it is a loss of life because the very essence of death is the absence or lack of the life that God bestowed upon humans at creation. I would add that death is a punishment to clarify its nature and character, and to highlight that it was ordained as an instrument of God's justice and judgement. Paul distinctly asserts that death is a punishment when he says that sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin. Furthermore, he says that death is the recompense, or wages, of sin. In any punishment, there are three agents: the one who ordains it, the one who procures it, and the one who carries it out. God is the ordainer of this punishment, having established it during

the era of human innocence, with the law "In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17).

However, one might argue against this, pointing out that the Lord says through the Prophet Ezekiel that He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and therefore He could not have ordained death. The reply to this can be made in various ways. Firstly, the Lord is not speaking to or about all people, but to His chosen people, the Jewish nation. Secondly, the words are not spoken absolutely, but comparatively, indicating that He prefers the repentance and conversion of a sinner over their death and destruction. Thirdly, the accurate meaning of the words suggests that God does not relish the death of a sinner, as it signifies the ruin and destruction of the creature. However, none of this prevents God, in a different context and consideration, from both willing and ordaining death as a fitting and deserved punishment, serving the execution of justice; in which God is as good as He is in His mercy.

Another possible objection is that if death were indeed ordained by God, then Adam should have been destroyed immediately upon his fall. The actual words are, "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die". The response to this is that statements in scripture are either legal or evangelical; the law and the gospel being two separate and distinct parts of God's word. This particular sentence is legal and should be understood with an exception taken from the Gospel or the covenant of grace made with Adam, and revealed to him after his fall. The exception is this: "You shall surely die when you eat of the forbidden fruit unless I provide a means of deliverance from death, namely the seed of the woman who will crush the serpent's head". Secondly, it can be answered that Adam and all his descendants died immediately after his fall, in that his body became mortal and his soul became subject to the law's curse. And God's decision not to

destroy Adam completely immediately, but to inflict upon him only the beginnings of the first and second death, was enacted with great wisdom so that, in His justice, He might pave the way for mercy, which could not have occurred if Adam had perished.

The executor of this punishment, the one who imposes and inflicts it on humankind, is indeed God Himself. As He attests to in the prophet Isaiah's writings, "I make peace and create evil." There are three types of evil: natural, moral, and material. Natural evil is the disruption of the order established by God in each creature at creation. Moral evil is the absence of righteousness and virtue that the law expects from humans; we call this sin. Material evil pertains to any substance or thing that, in itself, is a good creation of God. Still, due to man's fall, it harms human health and life, like hemlock and other poisons. Isaiah's statement should not be understood as referring to moral evils but rather to material or natural ones. Death belongs to the latter category, signifying the disruption or annihilation of the human nature created by God.

Death's instigator is man, not God, since man brought this punishment upon himself through his sin and disobedience. Therefore, the Lord states in Hosea, "O Israel, you have destroyed yourself, but your help is from me." Some might argue that humans were mortal even in their innocent state before the fall. However, although the structure and composition of the human body were inherently mortal due to its earthly elements, when we consider the grace and blessing God bestowed on the human body at creation, it was unchanging and immortal. It would have remained so if humans hadn't fallen into sin, making themselves mortal in every sense.

This explanation partially illuminates what death is. However, to clarify further, we must distinguish between the death of a human



and an animal. The death of an animal marks the complete and final annihilation of the creature, with its body returning to its primary matter and the life force, born from the body's temperament, dissolving into nothingness. In contrast, human death is different. Though the body temporarily returns to dust, it will rise again at the last judgement and become immortal. The human soul persists independently of the body and is also immortal. This raises the question: how can the soul experience the second death? The soul dies not because it is wholly obliterated but because it is as if it were non-existent, losing its righteousness and fellowship with God. This is truly the worst form of death, where the creature continues to exist yet is deprived of all comforting fellowship with God.

The reason for this distinction is that the human soul is a spiritual substance, whereas the animal soul is not a substance but a natural vigour or quality, reliant entirely on the body. On the other hand, the human soul, created from nothing and breathed into the body, exists both within and outside it.

Death takes two forms, just like life: bodily and spiritual. Bodily death is the separation of the soul from the body, much like bodily life is the combination of body and soul. This form of death is called the first, as it precedes the second in time. Spiritual death is the separation of the whole human being, both body and soul, from the gracious fellowship of God. The first of these is only the beginning of death, and the second is its fulfilment. As the soul gives life to the body, so does God give life to the soul. The lack of fellowship with Him brings nothing but endless and unspeakable terrors and agonies of death.

Furthermore, spiritual death has three distinct stages. The first occurs when a living person, in a temporal sense, is dead in their

sins. Paul speaks of this stage, saying, "She who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives." This is the condition of all humans by nature, who are children of wrath and dead in sins and trespasses. The second stage occurs at the end of this life, when the body is buried, and the soul descends to the place of torment. The third stage happens on the judgement day when the body and soul reunite and both go to the place of the damned, where they will be tormented forever.

Having established the nature, differences, and types of death, it is evident that the text at hand refers to bodily death, not spiritual death. The words convey this meaning: the time of bodily death, when the human body and soul are separated, is better than the time when one is born and brought into the world.

That covers the first point; now let's move to the second: how can what Solomon says be true - that the day of death is better than the day of birth? I don't raise this question to dispute the scriptures, which are the absolute truth, but to assure us of the verity of Solomon's claim, as several reasons could suggest otherwise. Thus, we should address the question. All the counterarguments can be categorized into six groups. The first comes from wise men's opinion who believe that the best thing is never to be born at all, and the next best is to die quickly. If it's best never to be born, then dying after being born must be the worst thing. There are two types of people: those who live and die in their sins without repentance and those who sincerely repent and believe in Christ. This statement can be truly said about the first type; as Christ said of Judas, "It would have been good for him if he had never been born." However, it's untrue for the second type. For those who repent and turn to God in this life, the best thing is to be born because their birth prepares them for happiness, and the next best thing is to die quickly because death

allows them to gain their happiness. This is why Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous, and why Solomon, in this context, ranks the day of death above the day of birth. He refers to a death that follows a godly life, or the death of the righteous.

The second objection is based on scripture. Death is the consequence of sin, according to Romans 6:23. It's seen as an enemy of Christ, in 1 Corinthians 15, and the punishment of the law. Therefore, it seems to suggest that through death, men receive their recompense for their sins: that the day of death is a dreadful day in which the enemy triumphs over us: that he who dies is cursed. Response: We must distinguish between different aspects of death: we must consider it in two ways; first, in its inherent nature: secondly, as it is transformed by Christ. Now death, in its inherent nature, is indeed the result of sin, an enemy of Christ, and of all his followers, and the punishment of the law, even the gateway to hell: yet in the second context, it is not. Because of the power of Christ's death, it ceases to be a scourge or punishment, and from being a curse it becomes a blessing, and to us it becomes a pathway between this life and eternal life, a small door through which we exit this world and enter heaven. And in this sense, Solomon's saying is most accurate. For on the day of birth, men are born and brought into this valley of sorrow, but afterward, when they depart from here with death transformed by the death of Christ, they enter into eternal joy and happiness with all of God's saints forever.

The third objection comes from the examples of the most revered men, who have made their prayers against death. Like our Saviour Christ, who prayed, Father, if it be your will, let this cup pass from me, yet not my will, but your will be done. David prayed, Return, O Lord, save my soul, save me for your mercies sake: for in death there is no remembrance of you: in the grave who will praise you? And

Hezekiah, when the Prophet Isaiah told him to prepare his house, and told him he would die, wept bitterly, and that in relation to death. By these worthy men's examples, even by the Son of God's example, it seems that the day of death is the most terrible and sorrowful of all days. Response: When our Saviour Christ prayed to his Father this way, he was in his agony, and then as our Redeemer, he stood in our place, to suffer all things we should have suffered for our sins: therefore, he prayed not simply against death, but against the accursed death on the cross, and he didn't fear death itself, the separation of body and soul, but the law's curse which came with death, namely, the unspeakable anger and indignation of God. The first death didn't trouble him, but the first and second combined did. About David, when he wrote the sixth Psalm, he was not just physically sick, but also wrestling with the greatest of all temptations, as he battled with his conscience over God's wrath, as indicated by the words of the text, where he says, Lord, rebuke me not in your wrath. And by this, we see that he prayed not simply against death, but against death at that moment when he was under that severe temptation; for at other times, he had no such fear of death, as he himself attests, saying, Though I should walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Therefore, he prayed against death only as it was associated with the apprehension of God's wrath. Lastly, Hezekiah prayed against death, not just because he wished to live and serve God in his kingdom, but for a more specific reason; because when the Prophet delivered the message of death, he had no heir, no one of his own body to succeed him in his kingdom. It might be asked, what right did Hezekiah have to pray against death for this reason? Response: His right was good; because God had made a particular promise to David and his descendants that as long as they feared God, and followed his commandments, they would not lack a successor to sit on the throne of the kingdom after them. Now, Hezekiah, at the time of the

Prophet's message, remembering God's promise, and how he had kept his part of the agreement, by walking before God with an upright heart, and doing what was pleasing in his sight; he prayed against death, not so much out of fear of it, but because he lacked an heir. God accepted this prayer and heard it, he extended his life by fifteen years, and two years later, gave him Manasseh.

The fourth objection is that those considered to be good men often meet miserable ends: some end their days in despair, some raving and blaspheming, some are strangely tormented: it might therefore seem that the day of death is the day of greatest sorrow and misery. To this I first answer generally, we should not judge a man's standing before God by outward circumstances, whether they are blessings or judgments, whether they happen in life or death. For (as Solomon says) all things happen alike to all: there is the same fate for the just and the wicked, for the good and the pure and the impure, for him who sacrifices and for him who does not: as is the good, so is the sinner, he who swears is like he who fears an oath. Secondly, I respond to the particulars that have been raised in this way: Firstly, regarding despair, it's true that not only the wicked and the unrestrained despair in death, but also repentant sinners, who often in their sickness, express that while they're still alive and lying in their beds, they feel as if they're already in hell, and experiencing the very agonies and torments of it. And despite this, I don't doubt that the child of God, who is most dear to him, can pass through the depths of despair to reach everlasting happiness. This is apparent from how God works in matters of our salvation. All of God's works are accomplished in and through their opposites. In creation, all things were made, not from something, but from nothing, completely against the course of nature. In redemption, God grants life not through life, but through death: and if we correctly consider Christ on the cross, we'll see our paradise outside of paradise in the midst of

hell. For from his own cursed death, he brings us life and eternal happiness. Similarly, in effective calling, when God pleases to convert and turn men to him, he does it through the preached Gospel, which logically should drive all men from God. For it's as contrary to human nature as fire is to water, and light to darkness: and yet despite this, even though it's against human nature, it prevails and turns him to God. Additionally, when God wants to send his own servants to heaven, he sends them the opposite way, through the gates of hell: and when he desires to make men depend on his favor and providence, he makes them experience his wrath and realize they are nothing in themselves, so that they might fully depend on him and be whatever they are in him. This point being well considered, it's clear that a child of God may pass to heaven through the depths of hell. The love of God is like a sea, into which when a man is cast, he neither feels the bottom nor sees the bank. I conclude, therefore, that despair, whether it arises from natural weakness or from consciousness of sin, even if it occurs around the time of death, cannot damage the salvation of those effectively called.

As for other strange events which happen at death, they are the results of illnesses. Ravings and blasphemies come from the disease of melancholy and of delirium, which often happen at the end of burning fevers, with the gall rising to the brain. The writhing of the lips, the twisting of the neck, the bending of the joints and the entire body, result from cramps and convulsions, which follow after severe evacuation. And as for some people who, when they're sick, are so strong that three or four men cannot restrain them without using bonds, this does not result from witchcraft, and possessions, as people commonly think, but from the cholera in the veins. And as for some people who, when they're dead, become as black as pitch (like Bonner was), it may be caused by a bruise, an abscess, the black jaundice, or by the decay of the liver: and it doesn't always indicate

some extraordinary judgment from God. Now, these and similar diseases with their symptoms and strange effects, although they may deprive a man of his health, and of the proper use of the parts of his body, and even of the use of reason, they cannot deprive his soul of eternal life. And all sins, brought about by violent diseases and proceeding from repentant sinners, are sins of weakness: for which, if they're aware of them, and regain the use of reason, they'll repent further; if not, they are forgiven and covered in the death of Christ. And we should not focus too much on the strangeness of any man's end, when we know the goodness of his life: because we should judge a man not by his death, but by his life. And if it's true that strange diseases, and the resulting strange behaviors in death, may befall the best man that there is: we must learn to reform our judgments of those who lie at the point of death. The common opinion is, that if a man dies peacefully and goes out like a lamb (which in some diseases, like consumptions and such, anyone can do) then he goes straight to heaven: but if the violence of the disease stirs up impatience and causes the person to behave frantically, then people usually say, there's a judgment of God serving to either expose a hypocrite, or to punish a wicked man. But the truth is otherwise; for indeed a man can die peacefully, like a lamb, and yet go to hell: and one dying in excessive torment and with strange body behaviors may go to heaven: and we are not to judge the condition of any man before God, either in life or death, by outward appearances.

The fourth objection is this: As a man draws nearer to death, the devil increases his efforts to tempt him. The more men are assaulted by Satan, the more dangerous and troublesome is their condition. Therefore, it may seem that the day of death is the worst of all. Answer: The condition of God's children on Earth is two-fold. Some are not tempted, while others are. Some, like Simeon who upon

seeing Christ, exclaimed, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace," foreshadowing a peaceful end to his days. Those who are tempted, though their situation is fraught with trouble, their salvation is no further away because of the intensity of the temptation. For God is then present with the comfort of His spirit. When we are at our weakest, He is strongest in us; for His manner is to demonstrate His power in our weakness. Thus, even in the moment of death, the devil suffers his greatest defeat when he anticipates his greatest victory.

The sixth objection is this: Violent and sudden death is a terrible curse, and of all misfortunes that befall man in this life, none are so horrifying. Therefore, it may seem that the day of sudden death is the most miserable. Answer: It's true that sudden death is a curse and a severe judgment of God, and therefore rightly feared by men in the world. However, considering all things, we should fear an unrepentant and wicked life more than sudden death. While it is evil, as death in its own nature is, we must not consider it entirely evil, because it isn't evil for all men nor in all respects. It is not evil for those who are in Christ, who are freed from the whole curse of the law. Therefore, the Holy Ghost says, "Blessed are they that die in the Lord: for they rest from their labors." This signifies that those who depart this life as members of Christ, enter into eternal happiness, regardless of the manner of their death, even if it be sudden. Sudden death is not entirely evil; it is not evil because it is sudden, but because it often catches men unprepared, rendering the day of death a dark day, like a swift plunge into the abyss of hell. However, if a man is ready and prepared to die, sudden death is, in essence, not death but a quick and smooth transition to eternal life.

Having answered these objections, it's clear that Solomon's saying is a profound truth, that the day of death is indeed better than the day



of birth. Now I move to the third point, considering the reasons that make the day of death surpass the day of man's birth. They all lead to this one point: that the birthday is an entry into all suffering and misery, while the day of death, associated with a godly and reformed life, is a gateway to eternal life. Eternal life has three stages: one in this life, when a man can truthfully say he no longer lives, but Christ lives in him. This can be said by all men who repent, believe, and are justified and sanctified, and have peace of conscience, along with other gifts of God's spirit, which serve as a promise of their salvation. The second stage is at the end of this life, when the body returns to the earth, and the soul is carried by angels into heaven. The third is at the end of the world, at the Last Judgement, when the body and soul reunite and together enter eternal bliss in heaven. Of these three stages, death itself, coupled with the fear of God, is the second, which also contains two noteworthy steps to life. The first is freedom from all misery that ends in death. While in this life, men are subject to many dangers by sea and land, as well as various pains and diseases. However, when death comes, all this ends. As long as men live in this world, they are, to some extent, under the yoke of original sin and its remnants, such as doubts about God's providence, unbelief, pride, ignorance, greed, ambition, envy, hatred, lust, and the like, which bear fruit unto death. Living under sin's control in this manner is the worst of all miseries. So, when Paul was tempted to sin by his corruption, he called the temptation the buffetings of Satan, as if a thorn were pricking and wounding his flesh, causing him deep pain. Again, in another place, wearied by his own corruptions, he complained that he was sold under sin and cried out, "O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" David said his eyes overflowed with tears when others sinned against God. How much more, then, was he grieved by the sins he himself committed in this life? And indeed, it's a living hell for a man with even a spark of grace to be tested, tormented, and tempted by the

innate corruptions and rebellions of his own heart. If a man were to devise a torment for those who fear God and seek to live a new life, he couldn't devise a greater one than this. For this reason, blessed is the day of death that brings with it freedom from all sin. For when we die, the corruption of nature is utterly abolished, and sanctification is completed. Lastly, it's a great misery that God's people are forced in this world to live among the wicked, as sheep are mixed with goats that batter them, spoil their pasture, and muddy their water. David cried out, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" When Elijah saw that Ahab and Jezebel had established idolatry in Israel and sought his life as well, he went off into the wilderness and longed to die. But this misery too ends on the day of death, as death serves as God's hand to separate His servants from all ungodly men in this most wretched world.

Furthermore, death brings this extraordinary benefit: it not only eliminates the miseries that are currently upon us, but also prevents those yet to come. As the Prophet Isaiah says, "The righteous perish, and no man lays it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." We see an example of this in Josiah. Because his heart was tender, and he humbled himself before the Lord when he heard what was spoken against his place, the Lord promised, "Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place." And Paul says that among the Corinthians, some were asleep, meaning dead, so that they might not be condemned with the world.

That's enough about freedom from misery, which is the first benefit that comes with death, and the first step to life. Now follows the second, which is, that death grants the soul access to the presence of

the eternal God, of Christ, and of all the angels and saints in heaven. The worthiness of this benefit makes the death of the righteous not death but a blessing to be desired by all. This made Paul say, "I desire to be dissolved." But what is the cause of this desire? The following words explain it: that by his dissolution he might be with Christ. When the Queen of Sheba saw all Solomon's wisdom, his palace, the food on his table, his officials' attendance, their clothing, etc., she said, "Happy are your men! Happy are these your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!" Much more, then, can we say that those are infinitely happier who stand not before an earthly king, but before the King of kings, the Lord of heaven and earth, and enjoy eternal pleasures at His right hand. Moses has been revered throughout the ages for the grace God showed him by letting him see His back. Oh, what happiness, then, to see the glory and majesty of God face to face, to enjoy eternal fellowship with God our Father, Christ our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our Comforter, and to live forever with the blessed saints and angels in heaven!

This now brings us to the third point, which is, in what ways death surpasses life. You may still have questions, you may argue that, regardless of whether in death human souls enter heaven, their bodies, despite being carefully cared for with food, drink, and clothing, having spent many nights sleeping on plush beds, must still lie in cold and detestable graves, and there be consumed by worms. The answer to that is, indeed, all of this is true, but it means nothing, if only we look at our graves in the correct way. We should not judge our graves by what we see with our physical eyes, but we should see them through the eyes of faith, and consider them as they are transformed by Christ's death and burial, who defeated death on the

cross, chased it to its home, and there stripped it of its power. As a result, Christ in his death has interred our death, and his burial has sweetened and perfumed our graves like a pleasing incense, changing them from foul and repugnant cabins into royal palaces, into beds of the sweetest and most blissful rest, far superior to down-filled beds.

Even if the body decays in the grave, is eaten by worms or fish in the sea, or burned to ashes, it will not be a cause for discomfort if we truly understand the foundation of all grace, namely our union with Christ. This union is spiritual, but also very real. It is not just our souls that are connected to the body or soul of Christ, but our entire person, both body and soul, is joined with the entirety of Christ. Once we are connected with Christ in this mortal life through the bond of the spirit, we will stay eternally linked with him: this union, once established, will never be undone. Therefore, even though the body is separated from the soul at death, neither the body nor the soul is separated from Christ. Even the body, as it decays in the grave, drowned in the sea, or reduced to ashes, remains connected with him, and is as truly a part of Christ then as before. This point must be remembered as the basis of all our comfort and accepted forever as truth. For the state of Christ in death is the same, or similar, to the condition of all his members. Christ, even though his body and soul were separated as far as heaven and the grave, was never disconnected from the divinity of the Son, both endured death in his person. So, even though our bodies and souls may be pulled apart by natural or violent death, neither of them, not even the body itself, will be disconnected from Christ. It may be argued that if the body is united with Christ then it should live and be revitalised in the grave. The answer to that is no: when a person's arm or leg is afflicted with paralysis, it receives little or no heat, life, sensation, or movement from the body: yet it still remains a part of the body, because its flesh and bone are still connected to the flesh and bone of

the body: in the same way, the body can remain a part of Christ, even though it may not receive sensation or movement or life from the soul or from the spirit of Christ for a while.

Moreover, it must be remembered that by virtue of this union, the dead body, be it decayed, burned, devoured, or however consumed, will rise to eternal glory on the day of judgement. In winter, trees are without fruit or leaves and, being battered by wind and weather, appear rotten to the eye; yet when spring returns, they once again sprout buds and blossoms, leaves and fruit: the reason is because the trunk, grains, and branches of the tree are all connected to the root, where the sap lies in winter and from where, by virtue of this connection, it flows to all parts of the tree in spring: Similarly, the bodies of humans also have their winter, during which they turn to dust, remaining so for thousands of years, yet on the day of judgement, by virtue of that mystical connection with Christ, divine and vivifying virtue will flow to all the bodies of the chosen, causing them to live again, and that to eternal life. But some may argue that the wicked also rise again. The answer is yes, they do, but not for the same reason, because they rise by the power of Christ as a judge to condemn them: whereas the righteous rise again by the virtue of Christ's resurrection, of which they are participants through the blessed and indissoluble union they have with Christ. And the bodies of the chosen, however much they may decay in the grave, are still in God's favour and within the covenant of grace: to which, because they have a claim even in death, they will not remain dead forever, but will rise to glory at the final judgement. Therefore, the decay of the body is insignificant, and the death of the body is not really death. And so, both in the Old and New Testaments, death is referred to as sleep, and the grave a bed, the like of which has never been seen; wherein one may rest, undisturbed by dreams or illusions, and from which one shall rise no longer subject to weakness or sickness,

but immediately be translated to eternal glory. Based on what has been said, it is clear that the death of the righteous is a step towards eternal happiness.

Now, considering our union with Christ is the foundation of all our joy and comfort in life and death, we must learn this single lesson in the fear of God: while we have time in this world, we must strive to unite with Christ so that we become part of his body and share in his flesh and blood. This idea is like a flask of wine that revives our souls when they faint. To assure ourselves that we are indeed joined to Christ, we must prove ourselves to be part of his mystical body through daily deeds of righteousness and true repentance. Once we are assured in our conscience of our unity with Christ, let death come when it may, even if it forcibly separates body and soul, they will both remain in the covenant; and by its power they will be reunited and ascend to eternal life. On the other hand, if people are outside the covenant and die without Christ, their souls go to hell, and their bodies rot for a while in the grave, but later they rise to eternal damnation. Therefore, I say it again and again, strive to ensure your conscience, by the Holy Spirit, affirms that you are living stones in God's temple, fruitful branches in the true vine. Then you shall experience that the throes of death bring a greater degree of happiness than anything you found in life, even when you are gasping for breath.

Having expounded the text, we now move to its applications, which are many. The first and foremost is this: In claiming that the day of death is preferable to the day of birth, Solomon makes it clear that there's a sure and straightforward way for a man to die well; he could not have stated that the day of death is better otherwise. By asserting this, he also shows that there's a fail-safe way for a man to have a blessed end. Therefore, let's now explore this way; the knowledge

and correct understanding of which must not be derived from the writings of men, but from the word of God, who holds the power of life and death in his hands.

To die well, according to God's word, requires two things: preparation before death, and a correct attitude and disposition during death.

Preparing for death is an act of a repentant sinner, who readies himself to die, a task very necessary and commanded by God. There are various scriptures that strictly instruct us to watch, pray, and prepare ourselves for the second coming of Christ to judgement. These same scriptures bind us to prepare for death, during which God judges us individually. Furthermore, the state in which death leaves a man is how the final judgement will find him, and how he will remain eternally: changes and conversions from evil to good can happen in this life, but after death, there is no change at all. Therefore, anyone desiring to end well cannot neglect preparation for death.

This preparation is two-fold: general and specific. General preparation is when a man prepares himself to die throughout his life, a duty most essential and must never be neglected. The reasons are as follows: Firstly, death, which is certain, is also highly uncertain. I say it is certain because no man can avoid death. And it is uncertain in three ways: in regard to time, because no man knows when he will die; in regard to place, as no man knows where he will die, whether in his bed or in the field, whether at sea or on land; thirdly, in respect to the manner of death; for no man knows whether he will die from a lingering or sudden, a violent or natural death. Hence, it follows that men should prepare themselves for death every day. Indeed, if we knew when, where, and how we were to die, it

would be a different story, but as we know none of these, it is crucial to be vigilant. A second reason serving to persuade us is this: The most dangerous thing in this world is to neglect all preparation. To clarify this point, I'll use an analogy: A man being pursued by a Unicorn falls into a pit and catches hold of a tree's arm. As he hangs there, looking downward, he sees two worms gnawing at the tree's root and as he looks upward, he sees a hive full of sweet honey. He climbs up to the hive, sits by it, and feeds on it. Meanwhile, while he sits there, the two worms sever the tree's root; and the tree, man and all, fall into the pit. Now, the Unicorn represents death, the fleeing man is each one of us, every living person. The pit over which he hangs is hell, the tree arm is life itself, the two worms are day and night, whose succession represents man's entire life. The honey hive is the pleasures, profits, and honours of this world, which men devote themselves to without considering their ends, until the tree's root, that is, this temporal life, is cut off: once that happens, they hurl themselves straight into the abyss of hell. From this, we can see why men should not delay their preparation until they fall ill, but should instead prepare every day for the day of death. Some might argue that it suffices to prepare and pray when they start to feel ill. To those, I would say they're deceiving themselves greatly; because that's the most unfit time to start preparing, as all the body's senses and powers are consumed by the disease's pain and discomfort. The sick person is busy interacting with the doctor, discussing his soul's health and matters of conscience with the minister, and with friends who come to visit. Therefore, some preparation must occur during health, when the entire person, with all his bodily and mental faculties, is free. Again, others believe that a man can repent whenever he wishes, even at the moment of death, and that such repentance is enough. This belief is false; it's not in a man's power to repent whenever he wills; he can do so when God wills. It is not in him that wills or runs, but in God who shows mercy. Christ says that



many will seek to enter heaven but will not be able. But why not? Because they seek when it's too late, namely, when the time of grace is over. Therefore, it is sheer folly for men to even dream that they can command repentance: it's only right that those who dismissed God in their life should be dismissed by God at their death, and that they should be forgotten by God in their illness, who forgot God in their health. Furthermore, this late repentance is rarely genuine. It's as sick as the person himself, usually fading and dying alongside him. Repentance should be voluntary (as all obedience to God should be), but repentance arising during illness is typically compelled by the fear of hell and other judgments of God. Even the most hardened hypocrite can be brought to their knees by adversities, afflictions, and illnesses, pretending to have faith, repentance, and every grace of God, as if they possessed them as fully as any true servant of God, while in fact, they lack them entirely. Hence, such repentance is usually counterfeit. For in true and honest repentance, men must renounce their sins; but in this, the sin renounces the man; who leaves all his evil ways only because he is forced to leave the world. Therefore, it is highly desirable that men repent and prepare themselves to die during their health, before the day of death or illness arrives. Finally, it is argued that one of the thieves repented on the cross. To them I would say, the thief was called just before the twelfth hour, when he was already dying. Therefore, his conversion was miraculous and extraordinary, and there was a special reason why Christ chose to call him then - to display the power of his suffering; so that all who witnessed one could also acknowledge the other. It's not wise for men to take an extraordinary example as a regular rule.

Therefore, with it being evident that a general preparation must be made, let's now examine how it should be accomplished. For the correct execution of it, five duties must be practiced throughout our

lives. The first is the contemplation of death during our lifetime, for a Christian's life is essentially a contemplation of death. A notable example of this is seen in Joseph of Arimathea, who prepared his grave in his garden during his lifetime: undoubtedly with the intention of reminding himself of death amidst his pleasures and delights. Even heathen philosophers who never knew Christ had profound contemplations of death, though they lacked the comfort of eternal life. As Christians, we who have known and believed in Christ must go beyond them in this regard, pondering things they never thought of - namely, the cause of death, which is our sin; and its remedy, Christ's cursed death - cursed because of the type of death and punishment placed upon him, but blessed for us. Thirdly, we should frequently consider the inevitability of death, which we do when we think of every current day as if it were our last, and view our going to bed as if we may never rise again, and rising as if we may never lie down again.

The contemplation of death is especially useful, yielding many benefits in a person's life. Firstly, it serves to humble us before God. We can see this in Abraham, who stated, "Look, I am but dust and ashes." Note here how the thought of his mortality led him to lower and humble himself before God: and thus, if we could view every day as our last, it would rid us of our vanity and cause us to, like Job, loathe ourselves in dust and ashes.

Secondly, contemplating death encourages repentance. When Jonah arrived in Nineveh and declared, "In forty days, Nineveh will be destroyed," the entire city repented in sackcloth and ashes. When Elijah delivered a prophecy of doom to Ahab, it caused him to humble himself to such an extent that the Lord said to Elijah, "Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before me?" Now, if the mere thought of death had such an impact on Ahab, who was a hypocrite,

how much more effective will it be in prompting true repentance in believers?

Thirdly, this contemplation helps foster contentment in every life situation we may encounter. Righteous Job, amidst his afflictions, comforted himself with the thought, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart." The regular reminder that we can take nothing with us when we die, not even a coffin or shroud, should be a compelling deterrent against insatiable greed and love for this world.

Thus, we see how contemplating death is an effective means of growing and promoting God's grace in the hearts of people. I commend this first duty to your Christian reflections, asking you to implement it in your lives; for its practice to take root, two things must be achieved. First, strive to eradicate the false and harmful belief that everyone naturally thinks highly of themselves: and although they may be on the brink of death, they convince themselves that they will not die yet. There is hardly anyone, regardless of age, who doesn't think that they will live at least one more year due to the corruption of their heart. Death spares no one: yet, as the Prophet Isaiah says, wicked people make a pact with death. This isn't an actual agreement, but rather a false belief that death won't come for them, even if the rest of the world is destroyed. The rich man in the parable serves as an example: after storing up wealth for many years, he told his soul, "Soul, you have many goods stored up for many years; eat, drink, and enjoy life," not realising that his life would be demanded of him that very night. Given that this natural corruption is in every heart, we must fight it daily and strive to prevent it from taking hold within us; if it prevails, we will be completely incapable of preparing for death. Instead, we should aspire to have the mindset and contemplation of St. Jerome, who

said, "Whether I am awake or asleep, whatever I do, I seem to hear the trumpet's call, 'Rise, you dead, and come to judgment.'"

The second thing we must practice to truly contemplate our mortality is prayer, asking God to allow us to continually remind ourselves of death. Thus, David prayed, "Lord, make me know my end and the measure of my days, let me know how long I have to live." And Moses prayed, "Lord, teach me to number my days so that I may apply my heart to wisdom." One might ask, "Why do people need to pray to God to help them number their days? Can't those who can measure the earth's globe, heaven's spheres, and the stars' quantities, their positions and distances from earth, simply count a few years and days?" The answer is no. Although we may generally speculate about our ends, unless the Spirit of God teaches us our duty, we will never fully grasp the presence and imminence of death. Therefore, let us pray, as David and Moses did, for God to enlighten our minds with knowledge and fill our hearts with grace so that we may rightly consider death, and regard each day and hour as if it were the day and hour of our death.

The second duty in this general preparation is that each of us must daily strive to weaken our own death. Please pay attention to this point. The Philistines knew from experience that Sampson was incredibly strong, so they sought to understand where his strength came from. When they discovered it was in his hair, they did not rest until it was cut off. Similarly, a time will come when we must grapple directly with ruthless and brutal death. Therefore, it is best to, while we have time, determine where the strength of death lies. Once known, we must promptly "cut off" death's strength, disarm it, and render it unable to defeat us.

We do not need to seek counsel from any Delilah to uncover this. For we have the word of God which plainly teaches us where the strength of death lies - in our sins. As Paul says, "The sting of death is sin." So, knowing that the power of every person's death lies in their own sins, we must dedicate our time and efforts to seek the removal and forgiveness of our sins.

Therefore, we must daily practice two duties. One is to humble ourselves for all our past sins, both acknowledging them and praying for their forgiveness. The other is to turn to God for the future, resolved to reform both heart and life according to God's word. These duties significantly diminish the power of death, transforming it from a mighty and bloody enemy into a friendly entity, one we can face with comfort and also overcome.

Therefore, I commend these duties to your Christian reflections and diligent practice, desiring that you spend your days henceforth in fulfilling them. If a person were to battle a mighty dragon or serpent, the best course would be to remove its sting, or the part of the body where its venom lies. Death itself is a serpent, dragon, or scorpion, and sin is the sting and poison by which it wounds and kills us. Therefore, without further delay, see that you remove its sting.

Practicing the aforementioned duties is an appropriate and worthy tool for this task. Have you been a person ignorant of God's will, a rejecter of his word and worship, a blasphemer of his name, a violator of his Sabbaths, disobedient to parents and authorities, a murderer, an adulterer, a slanderer, a greedy person, etc.? Reform these sins and all others like them, uproot them from your heart, and cast them off. Every sin within you is a sting of death, poised to wound your soul to eternal death. Therefore, let not a single sin

remain for which you have not humbled yourself and sincerely repented.

When death harms any man, it uses the weapons found in his own hand. It cannot hurt us in the slightest without the force of our own sins. Therefore, I repeat, bear this point in your hearts, and spend your strength, life, and health, so that before you die, you may abolish the strength of death. A man may hold a serpent in his bosom when the sting is removed, and we may allow death to grasp us, so long as it doesn't bring its venom and poison.

Because the aforementioned duties are extremely necessary, I will provide additional reasons to encourage them. Whatever a man would do when he is dying, the same he ought to do every day while he is living. Even the most notorious and wicked person will pray and ask others to pray for him when he is dying. He will promise to amend his life, vowing that if he could live, he would practice the good duties of faith, repentance, and reformation of life. Therefore, make it a point to do this every day. The saying is true, "He who would live when he is dead, must die while he is alive," namely, to his sins. Do you wish to live eternally? Appeal to heaven for your pardon, and ensure that in your lifetime you die to your sins.

Finally, even the wicked Balaam desired to die the death of the righteous, but alas, it served little purpose. He refused to live the life of the righteous. He was determined to persist in his old ways of sorcery and greed. The life of a righteous man involves humbling himself for his past sins and a careful reformation of life to come. Do you wish to die the death of the righteous? Then ensure that your life is that of the righteous. If you insist on living the life of the unrighteous, you must prepare to die the death of the unrighteous. Remember this, and do not satisfy yourselves with merely hearing

the word, but be doers of it. For you truly learn no more, regardless of your level of knowledge, than what you practice.

The third duty in our overall preparation is to embark upon the first stage of eternal life in this very life. As I've mentioned, there are three stages of eternal life, and the initial one commences in our present existence. If one wishes to revel in eternal joy indefinitely, they must start in this world by rising from the grave of their sins in which they're naturally entombed, and begin a new life. This idea echoes the sentiments from Revelation: whoever wishes to evade the second death must partake in the first resurrection. Paul tells the Colossians that in this life they have been freed from the tyranny of darkness and moved into Christ's kingdom. Christ tells the congregation of the Jews that the kingdom of heaven is among you. The first stage of life occurs when a person, in the words of Paul, can say: 'It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me'. In other words, through my sanctified conscience and experience, I discern that Christ, my saviour, guides and directs my thoughts, desires, and all my body and soul's faculties, in line with the divine guidance of his holy will. To be able to say this with honesty, we must possess three gifts and graces of God, which primarily constitute this first stage of life. The first is saving knowledge, by which we acknowledge with certainty that God, the father of Christ, is our father, Christ, his son, is our saviour, and the Holy Spirit, our comforter. The fact that this knowledge is a portion of eternal life is evident from Christ's words in John: 'This is eternal life', that is, the beginning and gateway to eternal life is to know you, the only God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent. The second grace is a peace of conscience that surpasses all understanding, and so Paul asserts that the kingdom of heaven is righteousness, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Spirit. The terror of a guilty conscience signifies the inception of death and ruin; therefore, peace of conscience derived from Christ's death signifies

life and joy. The third is the guidance of the spirit, whereby a man's heart and life align with God's word. As Paul states, those who are God's children are led by the spirit of Christ. Given that this is the case, if we aim to live eternally, we must start living this blessed and eternal life before we depart from this life; thus, we must be vigilant to correct two prevalent misconceptions. The first is that a man enters eternal life only upon his death and not before, which is a blatant falsehood. Our Saviour Christ said to Zacchaeus, 'Today salvation has come to this house', indicating that a man starts to be saved when God effectively calls him through his Gospel ministry. Hence, whoever wishes to be saved when they are dying or dead must initiate salvation while they are still alive. One's salvation must commence in this life if they hope to attain salvation beyond this life. 'Truly, truly', Christ declares, 'whoever hears my word and believes in him who sent me, possesses eternal life', specifically, in this current life. The second misconception is that no matter how a man lives, if he can merely lift his eyes and plea, 'Lord, have mercy on me' at his death, he is assured salvation. Behold, an absurd and naive notion that has misled many. It's just like a committed thief reasoning with himself, saying, 'I will while away my days in thieving and robbing, I have no fear of indictment or execution. For when I'm about to be hanged, if I merely implore the judge, I know I'll receive my pardon.' This is indeed a perilous and reckless course, and exactly the same is true for reckless men concerning their salvation. For a man might die with the words 'Lord, have mercy' on his lips, and yet perish eternally unless, in this life, he enters the first stage of eternal life. For not everyone who calls 'Lord, Lord' will enter heaven, but he who does the will of our heavenly father.

The fourth duty is to train ourselves in dying little by little as long as we inhabit this earth, before we face the actual end. Just like men assigned to a race practice beforehand to secure victory, we too



should begin dying while we're still alive so that we might die well in the end. But one might wonder, how is this accomplished? Paul provides us guidance through his own example when he states, 'By the joy I have in Christ, I die daily.' He died daily not just because he often faced death due to his calling, but also because in all his perils and tribulations, he conditioned himself to face death. When men utilise their afflictions correctly, be they bodily or mental, or both, and strive to bear them with utmost patience, humbling themselves under God's correction, then they begin to die well. And indeed, this is a splendid approach. Whoever wishes to overcome their gravest sins must start with minor sins; which, once reformed, will enable them to conquer their main sins more easily. Similarly, whoever wishes to bear the heaviest cross, namely, death itself, must first learn to bear smaller crosses, such as bodily ailments, mental distress, losses of goods, friends, and reputation, which can aptly be called little deaths and precursors to death itself. We must first familiarise ourselves with these little deaths before we can bear the grand finale of death. Moreover, the afflictions and calamities of this life serve as the forerunners of death, and we must first learn to welcome these messengers so that when death, the Lord himself, arrives, we can host him in a better manner. Bilney, the martyr, comprehended this point well. Before he was burned at the stake, he would frequently insert his finger into a candle's flame, not just to test his endurance but also to brace himself against greater torments in death. Thus, you see the fourth duty, which you must learn and remember, for we cannot bear the agonies of death effectively unless we are first well schooled and nurtured by various trials in this life.

The fifth and final duty is outlined by Solomon, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might." And observe the reason. For there is no work, device, knowledge, or wisdom in the grave where you're going. Similarly, Paul says, "Do good to all people while you

have time." Hence, if anyone can provide any good service to either the Church, the Commonwealth, or any individual, let them do it promptly and with all their power, lest death itself overtake them. Anyone who is diligent in spending their days this way shall end their life with considerable comfort and peace of conscience.

This covers general preparation. Now follows the particular, which is in the time of sickness. First, I will explain the doctrine of the Papists, and then the truth. According to the Papist order and practice, when a man is about to die, he is advised to do three things. First, to make sacramental confession, especially if it involves any mortal sin; secondly, to receive the Eucharist; thirdly, to request anointing – that is, the sacrament (as they call it) of extreme unction.

Sacramental confession, they describe as a recital or enumeration of all of a man's sins to a priest, so that he may receive absolution. However, several arguments may be raised against this type of confession. First of all, it has no authorization either by commandment or example in the entire word of God. They claim otherwise, and they attempt to justify it as follows: a person lying in any mortal sin, according to God's law, is obligated to do penance and seek reconciliation with God. After baptism, the necessary means to achieve reconciliation is the confession of all our sins to a priest because Christ has appointed priests to be judges on earth, with such a level of authority, that no one falling after baptism can be reconciled without their verdict and decision; and they cannot rightly judge, unless they know all a man's sins. Therefore, everyone who falls after baptism is obliged by God's word to reveal all their sins to the priest. Answer: It is incorrect to say that priests are judges, having the authority to examine and acknowledge men's sins, and jurisdiction by which they can effectively absolve and pardon or retain them. God's word has given no more to man than a ministry of

reconciliation, whereby in the name of God, and according to his word, he preaches, declares, and pronounces that God pardons or does not pardon his sins. Furthermore, pardon can genuinely be pronounced, and a correct judgment of any man's condition can be made, without a detailed list of all his sins. For a person who sincerely and genuinely repents of one or a few sins, repents of all. Secondly, this confession is contradicted by the practice of the Prophets and Apostles, who not only absolved particular individuals, but also entire Churches without demanding an auricular confession. When Nathan the Prophet rebuked David for his two great and terrible crimes, David, filled with remorse, said, "I have sinned," and Nathan, without further examination, declared to him in the name of God that his sins were forgiven. Thirdly, it cannot be proven by any reliable and sufficient proofs, that this confession was used in the Church of God until after five or six hundred years had passed. The confession used then was either public before the Church or the confession of a public fault to a private person in secret. Therefore, to pressure sick men to do it when they are at death's door is to impose more burdens on them than God ever intended.

And whereas they deem it necessary to receive the Eucharist in the time of sickness toward death, and that privately by the sick person alone, they have no authority for their practice and belief. There is no danger in the absence of the sacrament, but in its contempt, and the contempt itself is a sin which may be pardoned, if we repent. There is no reason to think that sick men should be deprived of the comfort of the Lord's supper, if they do not receive it in death, because the fruit and effectiveness of the Sacrament once received, is not limited to the time of receiving, but it extends to the entirety of man's life afterward. Furthermore, the Lord's supper is not a private act, but purely ecclesiastical: and therefore to be celebrated in the gathering and assembly of God's people; as our Saviour Christ instructs, when

he says, "Do this in remembrance of me," and Paul echoes, "When you come together." But it is argued that the Israelites ate the Passover lamb in their houses when they were in Egypt. Answer: The Israelites had then no liberty to make any public gathering for that end: and God commanded that the Passover Lamb should be eaten in all the houses of the Israelites at the same time: and that in effect was as much as if it had been public. Again, they reference a Canon of the Council of Nice, which decrees that men about to die, must receive the Eucharist, and not be deprived of the nourishment necessary for their journey. Answer: The Council made no decree concerning the administration of the Sacrament to all men that die, but to such only as fall away from the faith in persecution, or fell into any other notorious crime, and were excommunicated, and so remained until death: and either then or somewhat before showed their remorse for their offenses. The Canon was made for this end, that such persons might be assured that they were again accepted into the church, and by this means depart with more comfort. Thirdly it is objected, that in the primitive Church, part of the Eucharist was delivered by a boy to Serapion, an elderly man, lying sick in his bed. Answer: It was indeed the custom of the ancient Church from the very beginning, that the elements of bread and wine should be sent by some of the Deacons to the sick, who were absent from the assembly. And yet, even so, there is no footing for private communions. For the Eucharist was only sent when the rest of the church was openly participating; and those who were absent only due to sickness, and desired to partake of that blessed communion, were to be considered as present. Lastly, it is argued, that it was the custom of men and women in earlier times to carry part of the sacrament home to their houses, and to reserve it until the time of necessity, like the time of sickness, and such like. Answer: The reservation of the sacrament was a superstitious practice, even though it is ancient. For outside of the administration, that is, before

it begins, and after it ends, the sacrament ceases to be a sacrament, and the elements to be elements. As for the practice of those who used to shove the Eucharist into the mouths of those who were sick, it is not only superstitious but also quite absurd.

As for the anointing of the sick, that is, the anointing of the body, especially the organs or instruments of the senses, with the aim that the individual may attain the forgiveness of his sins, and find comfort against all the temptations of the devil at the hour of death, gain strength to bear the pains of sickness and the pangs of death more easily, and be restored to his physical health if it is beneficial for the salvation of his soul, it is nothing more than a delusion concocted by man, and it does not even have a hint of reason to justify it. The fifth chapter of James is frequently cited for this purpose, but the anointing mentioned there is not of the same nature as this greasy sacrament of the Papists. For the anointing of the body was a ceremony used by the Apostles and others when they exercised the miraculous gift of healing, which is now obsolete. Secondly, that anointing had a promise that the person anointed would recover his health: but this papal anointing has no such promise; because, for the most part, the individuals who are anointed in this manner subsequently die without recovery: whereas those who were anointed in the early Church always recovered. Thirdly, the ancient anointing served only to procure health, but this aims further to obtain the remission of sins and strength in temptation. Thus, having seen the doctrine of the Papists, I now turn to speak about the true and right way of making specific preparations before death, which comprises three kinds of duties: one concerning God, another concerning a man's own self, and the third concerning our neighbour. The first, concerning God, is to strive to be reconciled to him in Christ, even though we have been assured of his favour for a long time. All other duties must come in second place, and they are of no effect without

this. Now this reconciliation must be sought and is obtained by a renewal of our former faith and repentance: and they must be renewed in this manner.

As soon as a man begins to feel any type of sickness taking hold of his body, he must reflect on where it originates from: and after serious consideration, he will find that it does not come by chance or fate, but by the providence of God. This done, he must delve further and reflect on why the Lord would afflict his body with any sickness or disease. And he will find by God's word, that sickness usually and ordinarily arises from sin. Therefore, why should a living man be sorrowful? A man suffers because of his sin. It is indeed true, there can be other causes of bodily wants and sickness, other than sin; and although they are not known to us, they are known to the Lord. Hence, Christ, when he saw a certain blind man, and was asked what was the cause of the blindness, responded, neither has this man sinned nor his parents, but it is so that the works of God might be displayed in him. Yet, we, for our part, who are not guided by the secret, but by the revealed will of God, must make this interpretation of our sickness, that it is sent to us due to our sins. When Christ healed the man suffering from paralysis, he said, "Take heart, your sins are forgiven": and when he had healed the man at the pool of Bethesda, who had been sick for 38 years, he told him to sin no more lest a worse thing befall him: indicating to them both that their sickness came as a result of their sins. And so, every sick person should assure himself. Now, when we have proceeded thus far, and have, as it were, identified the true and actual cause of our sickness, we must perform three actions concerning our sins when we are sick. First, we must conduct a new examination of our hearts and lives, and say, as the Israelites said in affliction, "Let us examine and test our ways, and turn back to the Lord". Secondly, we must make a new confession to God of our new and specific sins, as God sends new

punishments and chastisements. When David felt the hand of God heavily upon him for his sins, so much so that his very bones and moisture were drying up within him, he confessed them to God, and subsequently obtained his pardon and was healed. The third thing is to make a new and more urgent prayer than ever before, with sighs and groans of the spirit, for the forgiveness of the same sins, and for reconciliation with God in Christ.

The exercise of these three duties constitutes the renewal of our faith and repentance, through which they are augmented, invigorated, and revitalised. And the more sickness prevails and takes hold of the body, the more we should be diligent to put them into practice: so that spiritual life might increase as temporal life decays. When King Hezekiah lay sick, as he thought, on his death-bed; he wept not only for some other causes but also for his sins, and at the same time, he prayed to God to throw them behind his back. David composed certain psalms when he was sick, or at least on the occasion of his sickness, such as, specifically, the 6th, the 32nd, the 38th, the 39th etc. and they are all psalms of repentance: in which we can see how in distress of the body and mind he renewed his faith and repentance, sincerely lamenting his sins and imploring the Lord for their pardon. Manasseh, one who fell from God and gave himself to many terrible sins, when he was taken captive and imprisoned in Babylon, "He prayed to the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to him: and God was entreated by him, and heard his prayer, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom, and then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God." Now, what Manasseh did in this tribulation, the same thing we must do in the time of our bodily sickness.

Here I have an opportunity to mention a notorious fault that is very common in this age, even among such as have long lived in the

bosom of the Church; and that is this: Nowadays, men are so far from renewing their faith and repentance, that when they lie sick and are drawing towards death, they must be catechised in the doctrine of faith and repentance, as if they had only recently been received into the Church. Anyone who, as opportunity is offered, visits the sick, will find that this is true, as I say. What a disgrace it is that when a man has spent his life and days in the church for the span of 20, 30, or 40 years, he should at the very end of it all, and not before, begin to inquire what faith and repentance are, and how his soul might be saved? This one sin indicates the great complacency of this age, and the great contempt for God and his word. Therefore, let all people from hereafter, for all time to come, be warned to beware of this extreme negligence in matters of salvation, and to use all good means beforehand, so that they may be able in sickness and at the time of death to put into practice the spiritual exercises of invocation and repentance.

Now if it so happens that the sick person cannot renew his own faith and repentance, he must seek the help of others. When the man who was sick with paralysis could not go to Christ himself, he got others to carry him in his bed; and when they could not get near because of the crowd, they removed the roof of the house, and let the bed down before Christ: in the same way, when sick people cannot alone perform the good duties to which they are obliged, they must seek help from their fellow members; who are partly by their counsel to lend a helping hand, and partly by their prayers to present them unto God, and to bring them into the presence of Christ.

Regarding help in this situation, several duties must be performed. Saint James outlines four, two of which pertain to the unwell person, and two to those assisting. The first responsibility of the sick person is to call for assistance: two details of which must be considered -



who should be summoned, and when. For the former, Saint James says, "Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the Church." By 'elders', he is not only referring to Apostles and all ministers of the Gospel, but also, as I understand it, older men imbued with the spirit of understanding and prayer, who also possess the ability to perform miracles and heal the unwell. In the early Church, this gift was so abundant amongst believers in Christ, that even soldiers could exorcise demons, and parents could perform miracles on their children. From this, we can deduce that while it is primarily the duty of the ministers of the word to visit and comfort the sick, it is not their duty exclusively: it also pertains to those who have knowledge of God's word, and the gift of prayer. "Encourage one another," says the Holy Ghost, "while it is called today." And again, "Warn those who are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded." In fairness, every Christian should comfort their sick brother. We must acknowledge the common mistake made by men and women when they visit their neighbours and friends; they cannot utter a word of guidance and solace, but waste time either in silence, staring, or speaking words of little or no value, expressing sorrow at the patient's condition and encouraging them to keep up their spirits, without specifying how or by what means. They predict the patient's recovery, assuring them that they will return to their normal life and high spirits as before, and that they will pray for them, even though their prayers are nothing more than the Apostles' Creed or the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer, recited without comprehension. This is the usual comfort that sick people receive from their neighbours, which stems either from ignorance of God's word, or the mistaken belief that this entire duty rests solely on the minister's shoulders.

The second detail is the timing at which the sick person should summon the elders to instruct and pray for them. It should be done

promptly, before any other help is sought. The physician should begin their work where the divine ends; it is completely backwards for the divine to start where the physician finishes. Until the soul is helped and the root cause of the illness - sin - is cured, physical medicine is ineffective. It is therefore concerning that in most places, the physician is the first to be called at the onset of illness, while the minister is only called when the patient is on the brink of death, and then often when the sick person is struggling for breath, as if today's ministers of the Gospel had the power to perform miracles.

The sick person's second duty is to confess their sins, as Saint James states, "Confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other." Some might argue this reintroduces the idea of Papist confession. However, confession of our sins, even to other people, has never been disputed: the only matter of debate is the method and sequence of confession. Therefore, we must distinguish between Papist confession and the confession Saint James speaks of. He only requires the confession of those sins weighing on a person's conscience during their illness: but Papist doctrine demands a complete list of all sins. Furthermore, Saint James suggests confession as appropriate and useful, while the Papists view it as essential for the absolution of sins. Thirdly, Saint James allows confession to be made to anyone, mutually from one person to another; while Papist confession is made exclusively to a priest. The second duty then is for the sick person, burdened in mind by the recollection and contemplation of past sins or by any form of temptation by the devil, to freely express their condition to those capable and willing to assist, so they may receive comfort and pass away in peace of conscience.

Now, let's move on to the duties of those assisting. The first is to pray over the sick person, meaning to pray with them and for them in

their presence, and to present their very being and their entire situation to God through prayer. The Prophet Elisha, the Apostle Paul, and our Saviour Christ adopted this form of prayer when they wished to miraculously restore physical life: and so, it seems entirely appropriate for us to do the same, in order to better arouse our affection in prayer, and our compassion for the sick when we are asking the Lord for the forgiveness of their sins and for the salvation of their souls.

The second duty of those who come to aid is to anoint the ill individual with oil. This anointing was an external ceremony used in conjunction with the gift of healing, which is now obsolete. Hence, I choose to not elaborate on it further.

Now, let's consider the responsibilities that the sick person must meet towards themselves. These obligations are two-pronged: one regards the soul and the other, the body. The duty related to the soul is that the individual must equip themselves against the excessive fear of impending death. This is logical, as no matter how much people naturally fear death throughout their lives, this fear tends to manifest most strongly during illness when death is near, often to such an extent that it may stun the senses of the sick person, and at times, lead to despair. Hence, it is essential to prepare ourselves to confront the fear of death.

There are two categories of preparation: practices and meditations. There are chiefly two practices. Firstly, the ill individual should not focus so much on death itself but the divine benefits that follow death. They should not dwell on the pain and suffering of death; rather, their thoughts and emotions should be set upon the blessed state that is attained after death. If one is crossing a vast and deep river, they should not look down at the water's flow; instead, to avoid

fear, they should place their feet firmly and cast their eyes towards the bank on the other side. Similarly, those nearing death should, in a way, gaze beyond death's waves, and fix their faith firmly on eternal life. The second practice is to view death through the lens of the Gospel, not the Law. This means we should consider death not as it is presented in the Law, focusing on its terrifying aspects, but as it is portrayed in the Gospel. Death in the Law is a curse leading to the pit of destruction; in the Gospel, it is the gateway to heaven. The Law paints death as death; the Gospel sees death not as death, but only as a sleep. This is because it refers to death as it has been transformed by the death of Christ; due to its power, death is effectively not death for God's servants. Considering death in this way can significantly help strengthen individuals against all excessive fears and anxieties that usually arise during sickness.

The meditations suitable for this purpose are countless. However, I will only touch on those that are the most significant and form the basis for the rest. There are four such meditations. The first stems from the special providence of God, namely that every person's death, particularly the death of every child of God, is not just foreseen, but also preordained by God. Indeed, the death each person deserves and brings upon themselves due to their sins is imposed upon them by God, who in this respect can be considered the cause of each person's death. As Hannah says, "The Lord kills and makes alive." The Church of Jerusalem confessed that nothing happened in the death of Christ that wasn't predestined and planned by God's foresight and eternal counsel. Thus, the death of every member of Christ is foreseen and ordained by God's special decree and providence. I further suggest that the specific details of death - the time, place, manner, onset of illness, duration, end, each fit during sickness, and the throes of death - are all outlined in God's counsel. As our Saviour Christ says, "The very hairs of our heads are

numbered," and, "a sparrow does not fall to the ground without our Heavenly Father's will." David eloquently states, "My bones were not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, and intricately woven in the lower parts of the earth. Your eyes saw me when I was unformed; all my days were written in Your book and ordained for me before one of them came to be." He prays to God to collect his tears in a bottle. If God has a bottle for His servants' tears, He undoubtedly has one for their blood too, and He surely respects and acknowledges their pains and sufferings, along with all the circumstances of sickness and death. Reflecting carefully on this single point can significantly help us to confront fear, mistrust, and impatience at the time of death, as a few examples will clearly show. "I remained silent and said nothing," says David, and then reveals the cause of his patience: "because you, Lord, did it." And Joseph tells his brothers, "Do not be afraid, for it was the Lord who sent me before you." Note how Joseph is armed against impatience, grief, and discontentment through consideration of God's providence. Similarly, we can be strengthened against all fears and sorrows by agreeing with David that "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." If we firmly believe that everything that happens to us in sickness and death occurs by God's providence, which turns everything to the benefit of those who love Him, then we will be greatly comforted.

The second meditation can be drawn from the wonderful promise that God has given regarding the death of the righteous: "Blessed are they that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them." The author of truth, who cannot lie, has spoken this. Therefore, if one thoroughly contemplates this, that death, accompanied by a reformed life, has the promise of blessedness attached to it, it alone will be enough to curb our emotional excesses and all irrational fear of death. This is especially true if we consider

what this blessedness comprises. In death, we are indeed expelled from our old homes, these clay houses and earthly bodies, where we have resided for a long time. But what's the outcome? Indeed, that by living and dying in Christ, we may receive a dwelling from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, which is unspeakable and immortal glory. If a poor man is commanded by a prince to shed his tattered and beggarly clothes and put on royal and expensive robes instead, his heart would greatly rejoice. So, how joyful must the news be to all repentant and sorrowful sinners when the King of heaven and earth approaches them in death and asks them to lay down their bodies like ragged, patched garments and prepare to don the princely robe of immortality? No words can fully express the excellency of this most blessed and happy state.

The third meditation concerns the state of all those who are in Christ, whether they are alive or dying. The person who dies with faith in Christ does not depart from Christ, but rather remains in Him, with both body and soul intimately linked to Christ according to the tenets of the covenant of grace. Even though after death, the body and soul are separated, neither of them are severed or disjoined from Christ. The bond that starts in this life remains eternally. So, though the soul departs from the body, and the body itself decomposes in the grave, both are still in Christ, both are in the covenant, both enjoy God's favour as before death, and both will be reunited; the body will be resurrected to eternal life through the power of the initial union. Indeed, if this union with Christ were to dissolve as the union of body and soul does, it might indeed be a cause of discomfort and fear. However, the enduring foundation and essence of our mystical union with Christ, both in terms of our bodies and souls, must certainly bring immense joy and comfort.

The fourth meditation is that God has promised His special, blessed, and comforting presence to His servants when they are sick or dying, or in any distress. God says, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you... when you walk through the fire, you will not be burnt, nor will the flame set you ablaze." God manifests His presence in three ways. Firstly, by moderating and reducing the pains and torments of sickness and death. As a result, for many, the sorrows and pangs of death are less severe and troubling than the afflictions and crosses they face in their lives. The second manifestation of God's presence is by an internal and indescribable comfort of the spirit. As Paul says, "We rejoice in tribulations... because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." Indeed, Paul, having received the sentence of death during a severe sickness, said his consolation was abundant through Christ, just as the sufferings of Christ had abounded in him. God Himself approaches the bed of the sick, visiting them personally, and provides refreshment for their souls. He supports them with His right hand and embraces them with His left. The third manifestation of God's presence is through the ministry of His angels, whom God has appointed as keepers and nurturers of His servants, safeguarding them from the devil and his angels. This is particularly true in sickness, when the holy angels are not only present with those who fear God but also ready to receive and transport their souls to heaven, as demonstrated in the case of Lazarus.

This concludes the first duty that a sick person must perform for themselves: they must arm and strengthen themselves against the fear of death as much as possible. Now, we move to the second duty concerning the body: every sick person must strive to preserve health and life until God takes it away completely. For as Paul says, "None of us live to ourselves, and no one dies to themselves. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord." This means we

cannot do as we please with our lives; we must leave their disposition to God, for we are to live and die for His glory. This temporary life is extremely precious, and as the common saying goes, life is very sweet. It is given to us so that we might use all available means to attain eternal life. We are not given life to indulge in our desires and vain pleasures but rather to transition from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of grace, from the bondage of sin into the glorious liberty of the children of God. In this regard, special care must be given to the preservation of life until God calls us home.

In preserving life, two things must be considered: the means, and the proper use of the means. The means here is good and healthy medicine. While many dismiss it as unprofitable and unnecessary, it should be valued as an ordinance and a blessing from God. This is evident from the Bible. When God decided to restore life to King Hezekiah, a lump of dried figs was applied to his boil as prescribed by the prophet, and he was healed. Although this cure was somewhat miraculous because of its rapidity, the bunch of figs was a natural remedy used to soften and mature flesh tumours or swellings. Similarly, the Good Samaritan was praised for binding the wounds of the injured man between Jerusalem and Jericho and pouring wine and oil into his wounds. This act was indeed a correct application of medicine: the wine was used to clean the wound and ease the internal pain, and the oil was used to soften the flesh and alleviate external pain. The prophet Isaiah seems to endorse this approach when he laments, "From the sole of the foot... they have not been bandaged or soothed with oil." Furthermore, God's commandment to not circumcise children before the eighth day aligns with a medical rule observed throughout history: that a child's life is uncertain until the first seven days have passed, a fact evidenced by David's child by Bathsheba, who died on the seventh day. Based on the same principle, pagan men did not name their children before the eighth



day. Thus, it is clear that the use of medicine is both lawful and commendable.

In addition, to apply medicine effectively for the preservation of health, it is crucial to choose physicians known for their learning, experience, good conscience, and religious beliefs. As in other professions, there are many malpractices in this field that can endanger people's lives and health. Some prescribe treatments based solely on urine inspection, without a deeper understanding of the patient's condition. However, learned practitioners agree that this method tends to harm more than help, even causing deaths. Urine analysis is highly deceptive. The urine of a person on the brink of death due to a severe fever may look just like that of a healthy person. Consequently, the same urine can signal both life and death, indicating diverse and even opposing diseases. A thin, pale urine signifies poor digestion in healthy people, but in those with a burning fever, it is a forewarning of delirium and a sure sign of impending death.

Furthermore, some physicians experiment with their concoctions on patients' bodies, hindering or deteriorating their hoped-for health. Some others administer no medicine or perform phlebotomy without the guidance of judicial astrology. If they always follow this course, they are bound to cause many deaths. For instance, if a robust man contracts pleurisy while the moon is in Leo, what should be done? Medical experts say he must be bled immediately, but astrological principles demand a wait until the moon moves to the sun's house. By that time, the abscess will have grown significantly due to the accumulation of humours and can neither be dissolved nor matured. This delay will lead to the patient's death from inflammation or lung failure due to lack of timely help. Also, if a man suffers from quinsy or synochus fever, with the moon in a harmful aspect with any

inauspicious planet (as astrologers put it), if bleeding is deferred until the moon is free from these aspects, the patient dies in the meantime. Thus, those who administer purgatives and perform bloodletting solely based on the positions of the stars are greatly mistaken. It's far more beneficial to consider the disease's cause, progression, symptoms, and critical points.

Given this, there is a good reason for sick people to be as discerning in choosing physicians for their health as they are in selecting lawyers for their worldly affairs and clergy for matters of conscience.

Moreover, all people must be warned not to use means without any valid justification. These include all types of charms or spells, regardless of their composition, symbols and figures on paper, wood, or wax; all amulets and ties worn around the neck or other parts of the body. The only exception is when these practices are based on good, rational reasoning, such as white peony worn around the neck to guard against epilepsy, and wolf dung tied to the body to protect against colic – not by any enchantment, but due to their inherent properties. Otherwise, all these practices are empty and superstitious because neither creation nor any directive in God's word gives them any power to cure a physical illness. For words can do nothing more than signify, and figures can do nothing more than represent. Yet, sadly, these unlawful and irrational means are more popular and sought after by the general public than proper medicine. However, it is of utmost importance that no one seeks out enchanters and sorcerers, who are essentially witches and wizards, despite commonly being referred to as clever or wise men and women. It would be better for someone to die from their illness than to seek a cure from such wicked individuals. For those who seek out spirit-workers and fortune tellers and are unfaithful to God, the Lord will turn his face away from them and exclude them from his people.

When Ahazia was ill, he sent a message to Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, to find out whether he would recover. As the messengers were on their way, the Prophet Elias met them and said, "Go back to the king who sent you and tell him, 'This is what the Lord says: Isn't there a God in Israel that you have to send to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore, you will not get down from the bed you have climbed onto, but will surely die.'" Therefore, such help is far from curing any pain or sickness; it only serves to exacerbate and reinforce them.

So much for the means of health, now let's talk about how to use these means. In this regard, three rules must be followed. First, the person intending to take medicine must not only prepare their body as advised by doctors, but also prepare their soul by humbling themselves before God in their sickness, acknowledging their sins, and earnestly praying to God for their forgiveness before consuming any medicine. It's evident that this order should be followed as illness arises from our sins, which must be rooted out first so that the disease may subsequently diminish. Hence, Asa, praised for many other things, is criticised by the Holy Spirit for not seeking the Lord, but the doctors, and putting his trust in them. Often, illnesses that could have been cured become incurable due to the patient's sins and lack of repentance. Therefore, the best way for those who seek relief is to humble themselves for all their sins and turn to God when He starts correcting them through illness.

The second rule is that when we have prepared ourselves and are about to use medicine, we must sanctify it by the word of God and prayer, just like we do our food and drink. We need to ensure, through God's word, that the prescribed medicines are lawful and good, and through prayer, we must ask the Lord to bless them in restoring health, if it aligns with His will.

The third rule is that we must understand the correct and intended purpose of medicine, so we don't deceive ourselves. Therefore, we should not think that medicine can prevent ageing or death itself. That is impossible, as God has decreed that all men shall die and be transformed. Life depends on a balance of natural heat and essential moisture, and when the latter is exhausted by the former, it cannot be restored by any art, and therefore, death inevitably follows. The true purpose of medicine is to prolong and extend a man's life to its natural end; that is when nature, having been maintained as long as possible, is completely exhausted. Although this lifespan cannot be extended by any human skill, it can easily be cut short by dietary indiscretion, alcohol abuse, and severe illnesses. Therefore, all such evils must be avoided so that the tiny flame of physical life may continue to burn until it naturally extinguishes. This period is the time of grace and salvation. While God could have eliminated us in His justice, He mercifully gives us this time to prepare ourselves for His kingdom. Once this time is spent, no matter how much wealth one would offer, it cannot be redeemed.

To conclude on the topic of medicine, I would like to highlight two specific responsibilities of the doctor himself. The first is to remind patients of their sins, especially in the absence of anyone else to do so. As a member of Christ, it's his duty to inform his patients that they must truly humble themselves and fervently pray to God for forgiveness of all their sins. This duty would be more commonly practiced if all doctors recognised that their lack of success often stems not from a deficiency in their skills or goodwill but from the patient's lack of repentance. The second responsibility is, when the doctor sees clear signs of impending death in a patient, not to leave without revealing this. Concealment is often unnecessary, and knowing the plain truth in such cases can be beneficial. When the patient is aware of their imminent end, it strips them of all earthly

confidence and makes them rely solely on God's mercy. When Hezekiah was ill, the prophet clearly told him, "Put your house in order: for you are going to die." The advantage we may gain from knowing that we have received the sentence of death is demonstrated by Paul when he says, "We received the sentence of death in ourselves so that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead."

Having explored the duties of the sick person to themselves, let's now examine the responsibilities he owes to his fellow beings, which are twofold. The first is the duty of reconciliation, which demands him to forgive everyone unconditionally and to seek forgiveness from all. In the Old Testament, when a man was to offer a bull or lamb as a sacrifice to God, he was required to leave his offering at the altar, and first reconcile with his brethren if they had any grievances against him. This act becomes even more crucial when we are on our deathbed, prepared to offer ourselves, our bodies and souls, as an acceptable sacrifice to God. But what if a person cannot reach out to those with whom he wishes to reconcile? Or what if they refuse to reconcile? When anyone seeks reconciliation during their sickness and fails to attain it, either due to the parties' absence or their unwillingness to relent, they have still eased their conscience, and God will accept their intention as the deed itself. For example, consider a man lying on his deathbed, estranged from someone overseas; he cannot possibly communicate with him, even if he desperately wishes to. How shall he ease his mind? Well, in such cases, the mere will and desire to reconcile is, in itself, reconciliation.

The second duty is that those who are leaders and overseers of others must ensure that their responsibilities, entrusted to them by God, are left in a good state after their death. This introduces three duties to

be discussed: the duties of the Magistrate, the Minister, and the Family Head. The Magistrate's duty before death is to strive, to the best of his ability, for the righteous and peaceful state of the town, city, or commonwealth. This is partly achieved by promoting the maintenance of sound religion and virtue, and partly by establishing the enforcement of civil justice and outward peace. Biblical examples of this practice include Moses, who, when he was 120 years old and unable to lead the people of Israel, called them before him and prepared for their welfare after his death. Firstly, he appointed Joshua in his stead to guide them to the Promised Land. Secondly, he instructed all the people to be valiant and courageous against their enemies and to obey God's commandments. Joshua follows the same course, and similarly, King David, when he was nearing death, placed his son Solomon on his throne, entrusting him with both the maintenance of religion and the enforcement of justice.

The duty of Ministers, when they are dying, is to ensure, as much as they can, the perpetuity of their Church's good state. Take the example of Peter: "I will," he says, "always endeavour, so that you may remember these things even after my departure." If this was well-observed, there wouldn't have been such an abundance of schisms, errors, and heresies, and the Church of God wouldn't have suffered such damage. However, because men have prioritised personal succession over rightful succession, which stands in the doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles, unfaithful teachers have taken over, and apostasy, of which Paul speaks, has spread across the Church.

Thirdly, family heads must arrange their households before they die, as the Prophet Isaiah said to Hezekiah. "Put your house in order: for you must die." Two things must be done to maintain good order in the family after death. The first concerns this life and involves the

disposal of lands and goods. For this to be well and wisely executed, if the Will is not made, it should be created during illness, with godly advice and counsel, following the practice of ancient and honourable men. Abraham, before his death, made his will and gave legacies, as did Isaac and Jacob, whose final will contains many valuable blessings and prophecies regarding the state of his children. And Christ, when he was on the cross, took care of his mother, especially commending her to his beloved disciple, John. Indeed, the act of making a will is of immense significance, as it prevents much animosity and contention within families, and it halts many legal disputes. It isn't always a matter of indifference, as many falsely think, avoiding making wills due to various reasons, such as the fear of revealing their wealth or wanting to hide their deteriorated estate, or because they believe they will die sooner once the will is made.

Even though making wills is often the province of a different profession, we can discuss as much as the Holy Spirit has conveyed in the scripture, which I will summarise in certain rules. The first rule is that the will must be made in accordance with natural law, God's written word, and the positive laws of the kingdom or country where a man is a citizen. The will of God must be the rule of man's will. Therefore, any will made against these is flawed. The second rule is that if goods are wrongly acquired, they must be returned, either through the will or some other means. It is common for avaricious men to entrust their souls to God when they die, but also to bequeath their unjustly obtained goods to their children and friends, which should be rightfully returned to those to whom they belong. If a man's conscience tells him his goods are wrongly acquired, but he doesn't know where or to whom to make restitution, he should return to the party he has wronged, if known. If the party is unknown or dead, he should restore to his executors, assigns, or next of kin. If there are none, he should not keep the unjustly

acquired goods but return them to God, meaning in the form of recompense, he should bestow them on the Church or commonwealth. The third rule is that heads of families should primarily distribute their goods among their own children and relatives. It is an error for any man to entirely and finally alienate his goods or lands from his blood and descendants, a concept that even natural law condemns. It is also wrong to give everything to the eldest child, neglecting the rest as if only the eldest were born to be gentlemen and the younger ones to carry the burden. In fairness, the eldest should receive more, because they are the eldest, and to maintain the family lineage and because there must always be some who are capable of serving the peace of the commonwealth or in times of war. Finally, no Will is valid until the testator is dead, because he can change or amend it as long as he is alive. Remember these rules, as they are recorded in the Scripture. The clarification of other points and circumstances belongs to the profession of law.

The second responsibility of the family head pertains to the souls of those under his rule: He is to ensure that they learn, believe, and follow the true religion, as described in the teachings of the Prophets and Apostles. God Himself praises Abraham for doing so: "I know Abraham," He says, "will instruct his sons and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just." As David lay dying, he gave Solomon a notable and solemn charge, the essence of which was to know and serve the God of his fathers. Having done so, he further entrusted Solomon to God through prayer, as reflected in Psalm 72. All governors should follow this practice. If they wisely distribute their possessions and give their descendants instructions concerning the worship of God, they will greatly honour God, in death as in life.



So far, we have discussed the two-fold preparation needed before death. Now let's move to the second part of dying well, namely, the disposition during death. This disposition is nothing more than a religious and holy conduct, especially towards God, when we are experiencing or near the pain of death. This conduct includes three key duties. The first is to die in or by faith. To die by faith is when a person, in the time of death, wholly relies on God's special love, grace, and mercy in Christ, as revealed in His Word. Even though no part of a man's life lacks just occasions for practicing faith, the most significant time is the throes of death, when friends, wealth, pleasures, outward senses, temporal life, and all earthly aids abandon us. True faith then makes us completely forsake ourselves, despair of comfort and salvation in regard to anything earthly, and with all the power and strength of our hearts, rest solely on God's pure mercy. This realisation led Luther to both think and say that people were best Christians in death. We have an example of this faith in David, who, when facing certain death, took comfort in the Lord his God. This comfort came from his faith, applying the merciful promises of God to his own soul.

True faith, however, isn't lifeless; it must be manifested through specific actions, the primary one being invocation, whereby prayer or thanksgiving is directed towards God. When death gripped Jacob's body, he raised himself, turned his face towards the head of the bed, leaned on the top of his staff due to weakness, and prayed to God, a remarkable fruit of his faith. In the midst of Job's affliction, his wife told him to bless God and die. Though these words are often translated as "Curse God and die," I believe the former interpretation is better. It seems unlikely that in such a pious family, anyone, let alone the matriarch, would give such ungodly advice, which even the wickedest person on earth, guided merely by natural light, would not give but rather abhor and condemn. Her counsel implies

acknowledging God's hand in affliction due to sins, confessing them to Him, asking for their pardon, and ending one's days. This advice is sound and should be followed by all, although its application, as Job rightly perceived, may be mixed with folly.

It may be argued that in the throes of death, men lose their senses and the ability to speak clearly, rendering them unable to pray. Yet, the sighs, sobs, and groans of a repentant and believing heart are as potent prayers before God as those articulated by the most eloquent voice. Prayer resides in the heart's affection; the voice is merely its external messenger. God doesn't regard speech but the heart. David says, "God hears the desire of the poor," and He will fulfil the desires of those who fear Him. Indeed, even their tears are powerful and resonating prayers in His ears.

Furthermore, faith can be demonstrated in one's final words, which for those who have genuinely served God, are often extraordinary, comforting, and full of grace. I'll share some notable examples for educational purposes and as models to follow.

Jacob's last words were prophetic, predicting blessings and curses on his children. Notably, he said, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes," and, "O Lord, I have waited for your salvation." Moses's last words were his remarkable song recorded in Deuteronomy chapter 32. David's final words were, "The spirit of the Lord spoke through me, and His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel spoke to me, saying, 'Rule over men,' etc." When Zacharias, the son of Jehoiada, was stoned, his last words were, "The Lord look upon it and require it."

The last words of our Saviour Christ, as he died on the cross, are incredibly noteworthy, filled with abundant spiritual grace:

1. To his Father, he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."
2. To the thief, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."
3. To his mother, "Woman, behold your son," and to John, "Behold your mother."
4. In his agony, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"
5. Expressing his desire for our salvation, "I thirst."
6. Upon accomplishing his mission, "It is finished."
7. As his body and soul were separating, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

Stephen's last words were:

1. "Look, I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."
2. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
3. "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

Polycarp said, "You are a truthful God, so in all things I praise, bless, and glorify you through the eternal and High Priest, Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, through whom, with whom, to you, and the Holy Spirit, be all glory now and forever."

Ignatius declared, "I do not care what kind of death I die. I am the Lord's bread and must be ground by the teeth of lions, so that I may be pure bread for Christ, who is the bread of life for me."

Ambrose said, "I have not lived among you as though I were ashamed to live, nor do I fear death, because we have a good Lord."

Augustine said:

1. "He is not a great man who thinks it a great deal that trees and stones fall and mortal men die."
2. "You are just, O Lord, and your judgement is righteous."

Bernard gave his brothers the following advice:

1. Anchor your faith and hope in the safe and secure harbour of God's mercy.
2. "I haven't left any notable examples of religion, but I do leave these three principles that I've followed as best I could in my journey:
3. I gave less heed to my own sense and reason than to those of others.
4. When I was hurt, I didn't seek revenge.
5. I tried not to offend anyone, and when I failed, I made amends."

When Zwingli was wounded in battle, he said, "What luck is this? Go on, they may kill my body, but they cannot harm my soul."

Oecolampadius advised:

1. Church ministers should maintain pure doctrine, display an honest and godly life, and remain constant and patient under persecution.
2. About himself: "I don't care if I'm accused of being a corrupter of the truth. I am going to face the judgment of Christ with a clear conscience, thanks to God's grace. It will be clear there that I have not led the Church astray."
3. To his children: "Love God the Father."

Luther said: "My heavenly Father, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and God of all comfort, I thank you for revealing your Son, Jesus Christ, to me. I have believed in Him, proclaimed Him, loved

Him, and praised Him. The Bishop of Rome and the entire company of the wicked persecute and revile Him. I pray, Lord Jesus Christ, receive my poor soul. My heavenly Father, though I must leave this life, and my body is to be laid to rest, I know for certain that I will remain with you forever, and no one can pull me out of your hands."

Hooper said, "O Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me and receive my soul."

Annas Burgius said, "Do not abandon me, Lord, lest I abandon you."

Melancthon said, "If it is God's will, I am willing to die, and I pray that He grants me a joyful departure."

Calvin said:

1. "I held my tongue because you, Lord, have done it."
2. "I mourned like a dove."
3. "Lord, you grind me to powder, but it suffices me because it is your hand."

Peter Martyr stated that his body was weak but his mind was well. He professed that he acknowledged no life or salvation but only in Christ, who was given by the Father to be the redeemer of mankind. After confirming this by the Scripture, he added, "This is my faith in which I will die: God will destroy those who teach otherwise."

These are just a few examples. The essence of what godly men say in death often includes some enlightened by a prophetic spirit predicting the future, as did the patriarchs Jacob and Joseph. Some demonstrate a remarkable memory of the past, stirring up holy affections and gratitude to God. Others, correctly assessing the imminent change from their present state to a better one, rejoice

greatly. They speak of the vanity of this life, the anticipation of the sorrows of death, the beginnings of eternal life, the comfort of the Holy Spirit they feel, and their departure unto Christ.

Question: What should we consider when someone fails to articulate profound words during their time of death and instead resorts to idle talk?

Answer: We need to consider the nature of the illness leading to death, whether it is more tolerable or severe. For violent sickness usually accompanies delirium, and unusual movements and gestures, which we must interpret kindly, considering we ourselves may find ourselves in a similar situation.

We've discussed the first duty: to die in faith. The second is to die in obedience; otherwise, our death won't be acceptable to God. It might seem that we're approaching God out of fear and obligation, like slaves to a master, rather than out of love, like children to a father. To die in obedience means to be ready and eager to leave this world whenever God calls, without grumbling or resisting, whenever and wherever God pleases. Whether we live or die, as Paul says, we don't do it for ourselves but for God. Therefore, it's our duty to be obedient to God in death as in life. Christ is our example in this respect, who in his agony prayed, "Father, let this cup pass from me," yet with submission, "not my will, but thy will be done", teaching us to surrender ourselves to God's will, even in the throes of death. When the prophet informed King Hezekiah of his impending death, he promptly turned to prayer without any hint of grumbling or resisting. We are commanded to present ourselves to God as free-will offerings, without any limitation of time, and therefore as much in death as in life. I conclude, then, that we must be as conscientious in

showing obedience to God in accepting death as we are in living our lives.

The third duty is to surrender our souls into God's hands, the most faithful guardian of all. This is the last duty of a Christian, as demonstrated by Christ on the cross, who in the throes of death, as his body and soul separated, said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," and so gave up the ghost. Stephen did the same when he was stoned to death, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit". And David, during his lifetime, when in danger of death, used the very words that Christ spoke.

Thus, we see what the duties are that we must perform in the throes of death to attain eternal life. Some people may think, "If all that's required is to die in faith and obedience and to surrender our souls into God's hands, we don't need much preparation beforehand, or to worry too much about how to die well. We have no doubt that when death comes, we will easily fulfil all these duties." To them I say: don't deceive yourself with any false conviction, thinking that the practice of the aforementioned duties is easy. Ordinarily, they cannot be performed in death without substantial preparation in life. Whoever wants to die in faith must first live by faith. There's but one example in the entire Bible of a man dying in faith who lived without faith: the thief on the cross. The servants of God who are gifted with a high degree of grace find it incredibly difficult to believe during times of affliction.

We've seen Job's faith waver during his afflictions. At first, he said, "Though the Lord kill me, yet will I trust in him," but later, with his faith obscured as if by a cloud, he claimed that God had become his enemy and had set him as a target. He expressed doubt and distrust on several occasions. So how can those who have never lived by faith

or practised belief rest upon God's mercy in the throes of death? Also, whoever wants to die in obedience must first live obediently. Those who have lived in disobedience cannot willingly and obediently appear before the judge when summoned by death, the sergeant of the Lord. They do indeed die, but out of necessity, submitting to the natural order as all creatures do.

Thirdly, whoever wants to surrender their soul into God's hands must be certain of two things: that God can, and will, receive their soul into heaven and preserve it until the Last Judgment. And only those who have the spirit of God to reassure their conscience that they are redeemed, justified, sanctified by Christ, and will be glorified can be sure of this. Whoever is not so persuaded cannot dare to surrender and present their soul to God. When David said, "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit," what gave him such boldness? It was nothing but the conviction of faith, as his next words suggest: "for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth." Therefore, it's clear that no one can perform these duties at the time of death unless they've practised them in life.

Given this, I reiterate my previous exhortation: I implore you to practise the duties of preparation in your life's journey, leading a life of faith and obedience, and entrusting yourselves to God's care time and again, and relying on His providence for all your deeds. Those who have done this have had the most fortunate and blessed ends. Enoch walked with God in faith, as one who was always in His presence, leading an upright and godly life, and the Lord took him so that he didn't experience death. What happened to Enoch will, in a way, happen to those who live in faith and obedience, for death won't be death to them, but a sleep, and not an enemy but a friend to body and soul.



On the contrary, let's consider the wretched and miserable ends of those who've wasted their lives in sin, without keeping faith or a clean conscience. The people of the old world were drowned in the flood; the debauched inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with fire from heaven; Dathan, Abiram, and Korah's followers were swallowed up by the earth, Korah himself apparently burnt with fire. Wicked Saul, Ahithophel, and Judas took their own lives. Herod was devoured by worms and died. Julian the Apostate, struck by an arrow on the battlefield, died, vomiting blood into the air and blaspheming Christ's name. Arius the heretic died on the toilet, literally expelling his intestines. This very age offers numerous similar examples.

Hoffmeister, a staunch Catholic, as he was on his way to the Council of Ratisbon to debate against the defenders of the Gospel, was suddenly struck down by God on his journey and died miserably, roaring and crying out. At the University of Louvain, a learned Catholic named Guarlacus fell ill. When he realised death was inevitable, he was consumed by a horrible anxiety and spiritual unrest. He cried out about his sinful life, expressing his fear of God's judgment, and in his desperate final words claimed that his sins were too great to be forgiven. He died in this state of despair. Jacobus Latromus of the same university, after making a fool of himself before the Emperor and being laughed at by almost the entire court, descended into open madness during a public lecture. His desperate and blasphemous rantings were so severe that the other theologians present had to carry him away raving and lock him in a room. From that moment until his last breath, he continually declared that he was damned and rejected by God, and that there was no hope of salvation for him because he knowingly and deliberately resisted the clear truth of God's word.

Crescentius, the Pope's legate and vice-regent at the Council of Trent, saw a gigantic black dog with flaming eyes and ears hanging low almost to the ground appear before him as he was working late into the night. Startled by the sight, he immediately fell ill and died, despite the best efforts of his physicians. Stephen Gardiner, when reminded of Peter's denial of his master by a certain bishop, retorted that he had denied with Peter, but never repented with Peter, and so he died, to quote Foxe, in an unrepentant and foul way. More examples could be added, but these should suffice.

To encourage us further in the practice of these duties, let's remind ourselves of the uncertainty of our existence. Even though we are alive now, who can assert with certainty that they will still be alive the next day or the next hour? No one has a guaranteed tenure of life. Pay attention to this: as death finds a man, so too shall the last judgment. Therefore, if death overtakes him unprepared, eternal damnation follows without recourse.

Consider a thief brought from prison to be arraigned before the judge or to the place of execution - he will lament his past transgressions and vow to reform his life, if only he might be released, no matter how notorious a thief he may be. We find ourselves in a similar position as felons or thieves, as we are daily summoned to God's judgement bar with no room to halt or stand in the way. Like a ship at sea that continues on its course day and night, whether the sailors are awake or asleep, we should all prepare ourselves and reform our lives ahead of time, so that we may meet a blessed end in death.

Ministers of the Gospel call us to fulfil this duty every day, but where can we find its consistent application and obedience in people's lives and actions? Regrettably, it is common to lend our ears for an hour to hear God's will, but it is rare to commit our hearts and hands to

fulfilling it. This lack of commitment stems from the unfortunate fact that we are all significant sinners, and every sinner, in biblical terms, is a fool. A major part of his foolishness is to care for worldly things while neglecting the kingdom of heaven, providing for the body and not the soul, planning and preparing for a life of wealth, honour, and comfort, but not taking the slightest effort to prepare for a good death.

Our Saviour Christ observed this folly in the rich man who took great care to expand his barns but had no care at all for his end or the salvation of his soul. An example of such a person was Achitophel, who the Scripture describes as an oracle of God for counsel, a man of great wisdom and foresight in matters of the commonwealth and his private worldly affairs. Despite this, he didn't have the common sense or reason to consider how he might die a righteous death and attain everlasting life. The Holy Spirit has pointed out this folly in him. The text states that when he saw his counsel was rejected, he saddled his donkey, rose, went home to his city, put his household in order, and hanged himself. The five foolish virgins contented themselves with the bright lamps of empty profession, never seeking the lasting oil of genuine, vibrant faith that could maintain and trim their lamps in life and death.

Let us cast off this destructive folly in the fear of God, first seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and living our lives in faith and obedience so that we may die accordingly.

This covers the first point of doctrine, that there is a definite way for a person to die well. Now let's move on to the second point. Solomon states that the day of death is better than the day of birth, teaching us further that those who truly believe themselves to be God's children

should not excessively fear death. I say 'excessively' because their fear should be partly present, but not wholly.

There are two reasons why we must fear death. Firstly, because death is the destruction of human nature in one's self and others. In this regard, Christ feared it without sin; we should not fear it any more than we fear illness, poverty, famine, or other physical and mental sorrows, which God wants us to acknowledge and not despise or disregard lightly. We should feel some pain because they are corrections and punishments for sin. God imposes pain and torment upon us so that we may fear and avoid them, and by avoiding them, we may also learn to avoid the cause of them, which is sin. Through the experience of pain, we come to recognize that God is a judge and an enemy of sin, exceedingly angry with it. The second reason to fear death is the loss of the Church or the Commonwealth. When we or others are deprived of those who could have been a help, support, and comfort to either of them, and whose death has caused some public or private loss.

However, we are not to fear death alone but also to rejoice in it for many reasons. Firstly, in death, we have an opportunity to demonstrate our submission and obedience to God when He calls us out of this world, as Christ said, "Father, not my will, but thy will be done." Secondly, death abolishes all sin, and we cease to offend God as we have done before. Thirdly, the dead body enters a better state than it ever was in life. Through death, it becomes insensible, freeing it from the miseries and calamities of life. It ceases to be an active or passive instrument of sin, whereas in life, it fulfills both roles. Fourthly, death grants the soul passage to rest, life, and celestial glory. In heaven, we shall see God as He truly is, have perfect knowledge of Him, and praise His name eternally, enjoying an uninterrupted eternal Sabbath. That is why Paul said, "I desire to be

dissolved and be with Christ, for that is best of all." Fifthly, God executes His judgments on the wicked and purges His Church through death. In all these respects, the righteous have cause not to fear and grieve but to rejoice in their own death and the death of others.

Thirdly, if the day of death is so excellent, indeed a day of happiness, then it is permissible to desire death, and men do not always sin by wishing for death. Paul said, "I desire to be dissolved," and again, "O miserable man, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" However, this desire must be tempered with certain considerations. Firstly, death should be desired to the extent that it frees us from the corruption of our nature. Secondly, it should be desired as a means to bring us into immediate fellowship with Christ and God in heaven. Thirdly, death may be lawfully desired in view of the troubles and miseries of this life, with two caveats in mind: first, the desire must not be excessive, and second, it must be accompanied by submission and subjection to God's good pleasure. If either of these conditions is lacking, the desire is faulty. Job, Jeremiah, and Jonah failed in this regard because they desired death out of impatience.

On the other hand, a person may also desire a continuation of life. Hezekiah prayed and wished to live when he received the news of impending death, so that he could continue to serve God. And Paul desired to live for the sake of the Philippians, that he might strengthen their faith, even though he personally saw death as an advantage.

Lastly, if death, accompanied by a reformation of life, is so blessed, then the death of an unbelieving and unrepentant sinner is utterly cursed and most horrifying. The reasons for this are as follows: Firstly, it is the destruction of their nature and the wages of their

sins. Secondly, in it, there is no comfort for the spirit, no alleviation of pain, and no good thing to counterbalance its miseries. Thirdly, and most fearfully of all, bodily death is the beginning of eternal death, despair, and infernal torment, without hope of deliverance. Therefore, as I began, so I conclude: take care to live well and die well.

FINIS.

## **Final Thoughts**

An addition, of things that came to my mind afterward.

The last struggle with the devil in the throes of death is often the most dangerous of all. For then he does not urge men to despair, knowing that it would incite them to resist him. Instead, he works to prevent them from resisting him when he attacks, aiming to extinguish hope. This is not the case in any other temptation, where faith or hope alone are attacked, whereas in this struggle, both faith and hope are assailed together. This must be considered, for when the devil's temptation is to not resist his temptation, it is the most deceitful of all. And it is easier to overcome the enemy who compels us to fight than the one who dissuades us from it.

The temptation experienced by Mr. John Knox at the time of his death is worth noting. He lay on his deathbed in silence for about four hours, often sighing, sobbing, and groaning greatly, so much so that those around him could discern that he was troubled by a severe temptation. When he was finally raised up in his bed, they asked him how he was and what was causing his frequent sighing. He answered

that in his life, he had endured many battles and conflicts with Satan, but now the roaring lion had attacked him most fiercely. He said that before, Satan had presented his sins before his eyes, often trying to drive him to despair, and often attempting to entangle him with the pleasures of the world. However, being overcome by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, he could not prevail. But now, Satan was assailing him in a different way. The cunning serpent sought to persuade him that he would merit eternal life through his faithfulness in his ministry. But blessed be God, who brought to his mind such Scriptures by which he could quench the fiery darts of the devil. These verses were: "What do you have that you did not receive?" and "By the grace of God, I am what I am," and "Not I, but the grace of God in me." And thus, being overcome, Satan departed.

When you are tempted by Satan and see no way to escape, simply close your eyes, say nothing, and commend your cause to God. This is a fundamental principle of Christian wisdom that we must follow in the hour of death.

If your flesh trembles and fears entering into another life, and if you doubt your salvation, if you yield to these things, you harm yourself. Therefore, close your eyes as before and say with Saint Stephen, "Lord Jesus, into your hands I commend my spirit," and surely Christ will come to you with all His angels and be your guide on the way. Luther.

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