



REV. JOHN RODGERS D.D.

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MEMOIRS

OF THE

REV. JOHN RODGERS, D. D.

LATE PASTOR OF THE WALL-STREET AND BRICK CHURCHES,  
IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK.

✓  
BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.

SURVIVING PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN WALL-STREET,

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**THERON RUDD**, Clerk of the District of New-York.

A

**SERMON**

**OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF**

**DOCTOR RODGERS.**

▲

# SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK,

MAY 12<sup>TH</sup>, 1811,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE

**REV. JOHN RODGERS, D. D.**

LATE SENIOR PASTOR OF THE WALL-STREET AND BRICK CHURCHES,  
NEW-YORK.



**BY SAMUEL MILLER, D. D.**

SURVIVING PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN WALL-STREET.

## A SERMON, &c.

2 KINGS ii. 12.

—*My Father, my Father! the chariot of Israel,  
and the horsemen thereof!*

**DEATH** is daily making conquests in our apostate world; but rarely, very rarely, does he make such a conquest, as that which, in the course of the last week, has clothed this Church in mourning. He has entered the sanctuary of God, and directed his arrow against a *Father in Israel*. The death of any man, is a solemn and instructive event: but when the eminent, the useful, and the honoured die; when the Ambassador of Jesus Christ, venerable in piety and in services, as well as in age, is taken away, we ought to be deeply and peculiarly affected. We may then, every one of us, exclaim, in the language of pious friendship before us—*My Father, my Father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!*



In this tender and impassioned language, did the young prophet *Elisha* lament the departure of *Elijah*, his father, guide, and friend. *Elijah* had long and faithfully served God and his generation. He was the most illustrious advocate of the cause of truth and righteousness then on earth: nay, almost the only one, who dared to appear openly and unreservedly in support of that cause, at a period of awful degeneracy and corruption. With signal valour and intrepidity, he had fought the battles of Jehovah against his enemies; and Jehovah had given him the victory. The time had now come when he was to be released from the labours and the sorrows of earth, and raised to his reward on high. And as his life and ministry had been attended with many extraordinary circumstances, so the manner of his conveyance to his eternal home was no less extraordinary. Like *Enoch*, he did not die, but was translated.

The account of his translation, though short and simple, is most interesting. The only earthly witness of the scene was *Elisha*, who was honoured with the last conversation, and the last sight of the ascending prophet. *Elisha* was warmly attached to *Elijah*, as an affectionate son to a

tender parent. He had received from his hand the sacred anointing to the prophetic office. For ten years and more they had been united in labours, as well as in love. But the time of their separation had arrived. The time had come in which *Elisha* must be left to serve alone. Anticipating the event, the young prophet resisted every proposal to leave his venerable colleague, steadfastly replying to every importunity of this nature, *As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.* Accordingly, from *Gilgal* to *Bethel*, from *Bethel* to *Jericho*, and from *Jericho* to *Jordan*, they went together. *And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My Father, my Father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof! And he saw him no more.*

This abrupt and vehement exclamation, in which *Elisha* gave vent to his feelings, we have chosen as more particularly the subject of our present consideration. The language of the exclamation is metaphorical. It is a metaphor



taken from the apparatus of war. Chariots and horsemen are expressive of that kind of military force which was then most in vogue. They were the strength and the defence of ancient nations. To this fact the Psalmist referred when he said, *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God\**. Considering *Elisha*, therefore, as, in these words, addressing his ascending colleague, it is as if he had said—O my Father! art THOU leaving us when we so much need thee? Alas! the STRENGTH, the DEFENCE, and the GLORY of *Israel* is taken away!

The doctrine of our text, then, is this—**GREAT AND GOOD MEN ARE THE STRENGTH AND GLORY OF A NATION: and, of course, WHEN THEY ARE TAKEN AWAY, WE HAVE REASON TO BEWAIL THEIR LOSS.**

**I. GREAT AND GOOD MEN ARE THE STRENGTH AND GLORY OF A NATION.**

By great and good men, I mean, not those whom the world calls great and good. Alas!

\* *Psalm* xx. 7.

these epithets are often bestowed on the vilest and most unworthy; on men who are the disgrace of their species, and the scourge of their generation. But I mean those who are really so, in the sight of God, and according to the language and spirit of his Word. Men of *wise and understanding hearts*; men of unfeigned piety, and devoted, upon evangelical principles, to the service of God and their fellow-men; men of an enlarged, noble, disinterested spirit, who have no greater joy than to *go about doing good, and glorifying their Father in heaven*. Such was *Enoch*, who *walked with God*, and had this best of all testimonies, *that he pleased God*\*. Such was *Noah*, a *just man and perfect in his generations, who also walked with God*†. Such was *Abraham*, the *father of the faithful, and the friend of God*. Such was *Moses*, the leader of the armies of *Israel*, and the benefactor of millions. Such was *David*, the *man after God's own heart*, who consecrated his great talents, his royal power, and his inexhaustible treasures, to the noblest of all purposes. Such was the apostle *Paul*, who, in the space of thirty years, probably did more to enlighten, reform, and bless

\* *Heb.* xi. 5.† *Gen.* vi. 9.

mankind, and to build up the church of God, than any individual that ever lived, before or since his time. And, finally, such was *Barnabas*, whose character is thus concisely and strongly drawn by an inspired penman—*He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith, and much people was added to the Lord\**. These were great and good men. Some of them had very great intellectual powers; but their most prominent excellence was of the moral kind. It was *this*, at which their God especially looked. It was *this*, which, more than any thing else, rendered them, at once, an honour and a blessing to the world.

And this kind of excellence, brethren, when weighed in the *balance of the sanctuary*, nay, when weighed in the balance of enlightened reason, will ever be found the most precious and important. It is not denied, indeed, that great talents, learning, and wealth, are highly important in their place; and that eminent piety, when joined with them, is more likely to attract attention, to command respect, and to extend its beneficial influence to a wider sphere, than when alone. Still it is certain, that *they*

\* *Acts xi. 24.*

have been by no means the most useful men, who have made the most noise, or enjoyed the most splendid reputation in the world; neither are those actions most deserving of praise, which have been most extensively celebrated by the voice of fame. But that piety, purity, benevolence, temperance, humility, and prayerfulness, which are little noticed, and speedily forgotten by the world; are not only held *in everlasting remembrance* before God; but are also the grand ornament and safeguard of that very world, which despises and forgets them. We may say, then, of faithful and exemplary christians, in general, and especially of faithful christian Ministers, that they are a blessing to any people. They are *the light of the world*; they prevent moral darkness from descending, and covering the nations. They are *the salt of the earth*; they preserve the social mass from corruption. They are the pillars of society; they keep the fabric from falling into total ruin. They are emphatically the **STRENGTH** and **GLORY** of a nation,

1. Great and good men contribute to the strength and glory of a nation by their **INSTRUCTIONS**. The importance of correct opinions in

morals and religion, is incalculable. Action is the result of principle; and principle can never be right, where opinions essentially wrong are admitted and cherished. On the contrary, where correct opinions prevail, and in proportion to the degree in which they prevail, they form one of the strongest barriers against total moral waste. They never fail to exert a secret, but most powerful influence, in favour of right practice. They restrain, where they do not sanctify. They tend to promote social order, and temporal happiness, even where they fall short of saving efficacy. Hence the man who contributes any thing, however small, toward the dissemination and reception of correct sentiments among a people, is a public benefactor. He renders a more essential service to his country than if he presented her with countless millions of silver and gold. He does more to promote the national defence, than the collector and supporter of fleets and armies. Which, I ask, were the greater benefactors of their respective nations, and of mankind,—*Luther, Calvin, and Cranmer*, who were employed by a gracious Providence to tear away the veil of ignorance and error which covered the world; or their great contemporaries in civil achievements, *Charles, Henry, and Francis*, who spent



all their days in sanguinary struggles for territory or power? Can we doubt, for a moment, what is the proper answer? The history of the latter is written in deeds of gloomy horror, or of "disastrous lustre;" in the destruction of individual happiness, or the corruption of public virtue: while that of the former is recorded in all the correctness of theological sentiment, in all the purity of private morals, and in all the richness of national blessing, which flowed, directly or indirectly, from the glorious reformation.

2. Great and good men are the strength and glory of a nation, by means of the lustre and efficacy of their **EXAMPLE**. This is a mode of contributing to the public welfare, in which all men may take a part. It has grown into a proverb, that example is a more powerful mean of making an impression on the minds of men, than precept. It is a method of addressing mankind which has this peculiar advantage, that it "is known and read of all men." Every man, however small his possessions, or however weak his talents, may set a bright example of holy living, and of heavenly mindedness. Every man may, by his very deportment, every hour, frown on vice and impiety, and encourage virtue and



godliness. And in proportion as he does this, he contributes to the public defence and honour. Often, very often, has the example even of servants, been made a rich blessing to those who employed them, and become the means of permanent benefit to families, and even to distant generations. But when a holy and edifying example is set by the eminent and exalted; by those, who, in consequence of their talents, or their station, possess an extensive and powerful influence in society; it is, in a corresponding degree, a public blessing. It is seen by a larger portion of the community; it is contemplated with greater respect; and it makes a deeper and more lasting impression. Such examples “raise the standard  
“of morals; they arrest the progress of degene-  
“racy; they diffuse a lustre over the path of life;  
“while their commemoration by the pens of his-  
“torians and poets, awakens in distant bosoms  
“the sparks of kindred excellence\*.”

3. The great and good contribute to the strength and glory of a nation by their **PRAYERS**. *The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man,* says the apostle *James, availeth much.* Not only

\* HALL's Sermon on *Modern Infidelity*. 12.

much to himself; but also much, as the reasoning of the apostle implies, to those around him. *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit\**. Thus the fervent supplications of “righteous Lot” obtained deliverance for Zoar, when the Lord visited Sodom, and the rest of the “cities of the plain,” with a dreadful overthrow†. Thus Moses, a man mighty in prayer, often prevailed with God for the salvation of Israel. For God said, that he would have destroyed them, had not Moses, his chosen, stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them‡. Thus, at the prayer of Samuel, the people of Israel were protected from the rage of their haughty and powerful enemies, the Philistines. For Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him; and as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder, on that day, upon the Philistines, and dis-

\* James v. 16, 17. † Gen. xix. 29—23. ‡ Psalm cvi. 23.

confited them, and they were smitten before Israel. And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel\*. When the Jews were in captivity, and the walls of Jerusalem broken down, Nehemiah wept, and fasted, and prayed to the God of heaven, that He would grant him favour before the king of Persia, and incline him to smile upon the good design of building the city and house of God. In answer to this prayer the Lord so inclined the king's heart, that Nehemiah has left it on record—*The king granted me according to the good hand of my God upon me*†. Again, when Sennacherib invaded Judah, and breathed out threatenings against her, and blasphemies against her God, and when he thought confidently to overwhelm her fenced cities; Hezekiah, the king, and Isaiah, the prophet, wept and prayed before the Lord in behalf of their beloved country; and the Lord hearkened and heard them, and, in a most wonderful manner, saved Jerusalem from the power of the haughty Assyrian‡. And, finally, it was when the disciples were *all with one accord, in prayer and supplication, in the city of Jerusalem*, that the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, was

\* 1 Samuel vii. 5—14. † Nehem. ii. 2—9. ‡ Isa. xxxvii.

sent down with power and great glory, on the church in that city, imparting a rich blessing, not only to what was then the *household of faith*, but ultimately to the surrounding nations\*.

These instances may suffice to show that the saints of God have a strong interest in the court of heaven ; that, by their prayers, they often prevail to avert, to mitigate, or to remove, judgments from a people ; and sometimes to obtain a reprieve even for those who are ripe for ruin, and devoted to destruction. For we cannot suppose, either that the character of the Most High is changed, or that prayer has lost its efficacy, since the date of the occurrences which have been recited. We cannot suppose that *the arm of Jehovah is shortened, that it cannot save, or that his ear is heavy that it cannot hear, or that the fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth* less than formerly. No, my brethren, God is still a God who hears, and answers prayer, and grants the requests of his people. The prayers of believers, when they fervently and unitedly besiege the throne of grace, are still mighty : mighty to avert judgments ; mighty to draw down bless-

\* *Acts* i, ii.

ings. In the strong and bold language of the Holy Spirit himself, *they have strength with God, and prevail\**. It was said by *Mary*, Queen of Scots, that infatuated victim of folly and crime, that she was more afraid of *John Knox's* prayers, than of an army of ten thousand men. She had more reason to be afraid of them. They were far more formidable to her unrighteous cause. And I have no doubt, that it is as great and precious a truth, at this day, as it ever was, that a praying people are, under God, the greatest security of a nation. I have no doubt that many an humble christian, in circumstances far less conspicuous than those of that great and good Reformer, perhaps altogether unnoticed by the world, has been enabled, by his prayers, silently, but most efficaciously, to draw down blessings on his family, on his neighbourhood, and on his nation.

4. Once more; the very PRESENCE of the wise and the good, in a city or nation, forms a defence, the value of which no human powers can estimate. Our Lord long ago taught us, that the *tares* are often spared, for the sake of the *wheat* growing beside them. In like manner,

\* *Gen.* xxxii. 28.



for the sake of the righteous, the world is preserved. And, for their sakes, blessings daily descend, to enlighten and cheer the abodes of men. Had there been *ten* righteous persons in *Sodom*, that depraved city had been spared for their sake. And though *Lot* himself appears to have been the only person there of this character; yet Jehovah declared that He could not do any thing against the city, till his servant *Lot* had made his escape from the unhallowed territory, and taken refuge in *Zoar*.

It is readily granted, that there are degrees of corruption and profligacy which, when a people have reached, they *must* and *will* be destroyed. With respect to a nation which has come to this awful moral crisis, it is said, by the Prophet, *Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness\**. Still it is manifest, from the whole tenour of his word, that God is slow to inflict heavy judgments upon a nation in which many of his people dwell; that he often spares it, spreads over it the protection of his Providence, and finally delivers it, for their sake;

\* *Ezekiel* xiv. 14.



and, of course, that the presence of his beloved children, speaking after the manner of men, is a better defence than *chariots and horsemen*:—a better defence than all the plans of *mere* politicians; than all the skill, courage, and activity of *mere* warriors.

In all the ways which have been mentioned, and in many more, the great and good are the strength and glory of a nation. Hence we find in a number of instances in the sacred history, that when persons of this character were taken away, the most deplorable consequences ensued. Thus, after the death of *Joshua*, and of the elders who outlived him, who had *seen all the great works of the Lord, which he did for Israel, the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Balaam, and forsook the Lord God of their fathers, and followed other gods, and bowed themselves down unto them; so that the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies\**. So it was with the good kings, *Hezekiah* and *Josiah*. While they

\* *Judges* ii. 6—15.

lived, their people were comparatively pure and happy; but, when they were taken away, error and corruption lifted their heads, and soon gained a most awful and destructive prevalence. Hence God said concerning *Judah*, in the days of the prophet *Ezekiel*; *I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me, for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath; their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God\**. Nor were facts of this kind by any means confined to ancient times. Very often, as the discerning have seen, in later periods, when great champions of truth and righteousness have been removed from the midst of a people, error, corruption, and misery, have broken in upon that people, and made it manifest that their defence, under God, was gone.

And is not such a result as reasonable in principle, as it is familiar and unquestionable in fact? If “the safety of nations is not to be sought in arts or in arms;” if the prevalence of industry, temperance, chastity, frugality, and patriotism,

\* *Ezekiel* xxii. 30, 31.

be of incalculable moment in promoting the order, the union, and the strength of a people; if religion be the great tamer of the passions, the great softener of human obduracy and brutality, the grand source of all those virtues which bind society together; and if a faithful God will never withdraw his covenant blessing from his children, wherever they dwell; then it is evident, that whenever any leading, exemplary, and influential servant of God is taken away from a people, so much of the safety and glory of that people is departed.

But if the foregoing facts and reasonings apply with force to civil society, and show the importance of great and good men to a people, in their national capacity; they apply with much greater force to the CHURCH, "the *Israel* of God." Here purity of principle, and holiness of practice, are not only important as *means* of good; but they form the *essence* of all real prosperity. A church is always strong in direct proportion to the number of sincere friends of truth and piety which she embraces in her bosom. When the number of these is diminished, her strength and glory are always in precisely the same proportion diminished. And when they are all removed, her true beauty and honour are no more.

Thus it appears that the great and the good are the strength and glory of any community. It follows,

**II. THAT WHEN THEY ARE TAKEN AWAY, WE HAVE REASON TO BEWAIL THEIR LOSS.**

We have reason to bewail their loss, not on their own account; but on the account of ourselves, the church, and the world. We have reason to mourn, not that they are liberated from the weakness and the pain, the sin and the suffering, of this apostate world, and gone to heaven. Not that their days of trial are ended, and that they have reached their eternal home, *where there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain; but fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore\**. In all these things, we have rather reason to rejoice. The departing saint may, with propriety, say to every mourning survivor, *If ye love me, ye will rejoice, because I go to my Father. Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children†*. But in all such cases we have reason to mourn that we

\* *Rev. xx. 4. Psa. xvi. 11.* † *John xiv. 28. Luke xxii. 38.*

have lost their presence, their instructions, their example, and their prayers. We have reason to lament, that a part of what formed the defence and the glory of the nation is taken away. Though *Aaron* lived to a great age, and, beyond all doubt, made a happy exchange at his death; yet, *when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for him thirty days, even all the house of Israel\**. The life of *Moses* was prolonged to one hundred and twenty years, and no believer in *Israel* doubted, for a moment, that his departure was a translation to a more holy and a more happy world. Yet *the children of Israel wept for Moses, in the plains of Moab, thirty days†*. In like manner, *Stephen*, the first martyr, though he died in holy triumph, seeing, before his departure, *the heavens opened, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God‡*; and though his brethren had the highest possible evidence that he had departed *to be with Christ, which was far better* than a residence on earth; yet *devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him§*. In all these cases, the mourning was not over the destiny of

\* *Numb.* xx. 29. † *Deut.* xxxiv. 8. ‡ *Acts* vii. 55—60.

§ *Acts* viii. 2.



the departed saint; for that was glorious and happy; but it was over the public bereavement and loss. It was the same consideration which led the Psalmist to cry out, under similar circumstances, *Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men\**.

We are not, however, so to mourn, for the departure of the great and the good, as to admit any feelings of *despair* for the cause of Christ. No, brethren; we may tremble for ourselves; but we may not tremble for the ark of God. It can never be lost; it can never be destroyed. We may, and ought to mourn, as over a public calamity, when the king of *Zion* appears to frown upon our nation, or upon any nation, by removing those distinguished men, who have formed an important part of its human defence. We may, and ought to mourn, when the stability or the purity of any particular portion of the church is threatened, by the death of those who have been its best ornaments, and its most worthy champions. Every Jew, who wished well to his nation, had reason to mourn, when the word of

\* *Psa.* xii. 1.



the Lord came by the Prophet, saying, *Behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem and from Judah the stay and the staff; the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; the mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, the prudent and the ancient, the honourable man and the counsellor; and I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them\**. But we may not mourn, as those who are afraid that the cause of God will fail. This is unbelief. The greatest and the best of men may be taken away; but *the Lord liveth, and blessed be our Rock!* Those who appear to be the props of society, may sink under the hand of time; but Jesus Christ, who *has the government on his shoulder, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever†*. Yes, my brethren, if those venerable lips, which are now sealed in death, were able to address you, it would be to say, “Fear not; *Zion is safe! Her King is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; He shall help her, and that right early‡*. *Elijah* and *Elisha* have left their stations, and gone to heaven. *Paul*, and *Apollos*, and *Cephas* are no more. But the Church lives and grows.

\* *Isa.* iii. 1—5. † *Heb.* xiii. 8. ‡ *Psalm* xlvi. 5.

“ Pastors and their flocks are passing away in quick succession ; but the cause of the Redeemer will endure for ever. It must and will triumph, to the glory of the eternal Godhead. *Sorrow not, therefore, as those which have no hope. Be not afraid ; only believe\*.*”

From the doctrine of our text, thus illustrated, we may infer—

1. That every individual, without exception, may, if he be so disposed, minister to the welfare and happiness of his country, and thus become a public blessing. All men, indeed, have not the same talents. To some are given ten ; to others five ; to others two ; to every man according to the sovereign will of God. But to all, without exception, there are given talents enough to be a public blessing, if there be an heart for the purpose. All men, it is granted, cannot be employed in the great affairs of state ; in organizing governments ; in framing laws ; or in conducting negociations. All cannot be employed in preaching the Gospel ; in *turning men from darkness to light, and from the kingdom of*

\* 1 *Thes.* iv. 13.    *Mark* v. 36.

*satan to God*; and in publicly and extensively building up the Redeemer's kingdom. But all may instruct, by their conversation; all may edify, by their example; all may confer a social benefit, by their prayers: and all may promote the happiness of those around them, by exercising the various virtues and graces which belong to their several relations in life. Every man who walks in this course, is a public blessing. He forms a part of the defence and the glory of the community to which he belongs. Why, then, O why, are we not *all* more zealous to bear this high character? Why are we so willing to crawl in the dust of indolence, and of selfishness, rather than aspire to the honour of being public benefactors? Let no man say, that he cannot aspire to such an honour. It is the disgrace and the sin of any man, whatever may be his talents, or whatever his circumstances, if the world is not the *better* and the *happier* for his having lived.

2. From the doctrine of our text we may infer, that the daily actions of our lives are of more importance than we are ready to imagine. The greater portion of mankind appear to think that the community have no interest in any other part of their conduct, than in some of

the more public and formal acts of their lives. When a magistrate discharges any official function; when a minister is called to any public duty; or when a common citizen attempts to exercise a civil right;—it is universally granted, that these acts have a bearing on society, as well as on the actors themselves; and therefore, that they ought to be performed with deliberation and care. But with respect to all the acts of individual and private duty, it seems to be supposed that no one but the agent himself is the better or the worse for them. This is not only a mistake, but a dangerous one. It is not extravagant to pronounce, that all we say, and all we do, has more or less influence on society, as well as on ourselves. Our fidelity, or the reverse, with regard to the most private and retired duty, carries with it a blessing, or a curse, as the case may be, and makes us the one or the other to the community in the bosom of which we live. How deliberate, how conscientious, and how prayerful, ought we then to be, not only in our public walks, but also in our most private ways; remembering, that in both we are acting for ourselves, for our country, and for the church of Christ!

3. From the representation given of this subject we may also infer, that when the wise and the good are taken away, it is incumbent upon us to honour them in their death, and affectionately to cherish their memory. It is granted that we cannot by any thing of this kind profit *them*. They are exalted to a world, where the honours and the praises of earth avail them nothing. But we owe it to ourselves. It is calculated to promote our own profit; to keep alive our gratitude to God, for raising up and forming such instruments; to impress more deeply upon our minds, the important declaration made by the Holy Spirit, that *righteousness exalteth a nation*; and to render us more diligent in following the example of those who have trode before us the path of usefulness and honour. *Remember*, says the apostle, *Remember those which have had the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation\**.

To this duty, God, in his adorable providence, now calls us. The departure of that aged and venerable servant of Christ, who, in the course of the last week, has been translated from the Church

\* *Heb. xiii. 7.*



on earth to the Church in heaven, is an event which must not be suffered to pass unnoticed, or unimproved. It is an event, brethren, which forms an epoch highly interesting to you and to me. Let us reflect on his character. Let us inquire how he served his generation. And while we adore the grace and the providence of God, who made him what he was; who gave him to us; and who continued him so long a public blessing, let us strive to follow him, as he followed Christ.

You will not expect me, at present, to enter into a detail of the life and character of your late excellent Pastor. Besides that it would be impossible to do justice to such an undertaking in the bounds of a single discourse, it is my purpose, with the leave of providence, to attempt this hereafter, in another and more extended form. In the mean time, let it suffice to give such a hasty and general outline of his history, talents, and services, as may prepare the way for some practical reflections on the termination of his labours\*.

\* Here followed a brief abstract of the history contained in the preceding part of this volume; which, for obvious reasons, it is thought proper to omit here.



With respect to the character and the success of his labours as your Pastor, I need not say much. Many present have known them much longer, and much better, than the speaker; and all, I trust, have so deep an impression of their value, as to render detail and the language of panegyric equally unnecessary. Suffice it to say, that, for near forty-six years, he laboured among you in the gospel; and that, from the period of his arrival, our church has been, almost uniformly, in a course of progressive enlargement. He laboured, not in that *sparing, niggardly* manner, which indicated an aim merely to maintain a respectable standing, and to satisfy public expectation; but with that earnest, persevering, unwearied diligence, *in season and out of season*, which evinced a heart glowing with love to his Master and his work; and which showed, that his object was to gain, not *your's*, but *you*:—not to attract your admiration; not to be called of men, *Rabbi, Rabbi*; but to promote, by every mean in his power, your temporal and eternal happiness.

Yes, brethren, for **YOU** he studied and preached. For **YOU** he watched and prayed. In deep

anxiety for **YOUR** welfare, he passed many a toilsome day, and many a sleepless night. To **YOUR** benefit he affectionately devoted all the vigour of his powers for near half a century : and the last audible prayer that he addressed to the throne of grace, the evening before his departure, was chiefly employed in imploring a blessing upon **YOU**. If ever a people were indebted to a faithful minister, you, my brethren, owe a large debt of gratitude to that apostolic man ! He has been, under God, your father, your guide, the healer of your divisions, your builder up, in the most dark and trying times. Nor is it less an honour to yourselves, than to the venerable deceased, that you have manifested a deep and grateful sense of his eminent services, by cherishing his declining years ; by granting him, without any deduction, his usual temporal support, when he was no longer able to labour for you ; and by affectionately honouring his memory.

In every station which he filled, and in every relation which he bore in life, he was exemplary, beloved, honoured, and useful. As a husband, a father, a master, a friend, and a member of civil society, seldom, very seldom, has any man

left a character more universally excellent and respectable. In every work of benevolence he was forward and active. Of almost all the associations for pious and charitable purposes in our city, he was a leading and zealous member. With all denominations of Christians, he delighted to cultivate a spirit of harmony and affection. And that he was, in return, pre-eminently respected by all denominations, we had a most pleasing testimony on that solemn day, on which we consigned his remains to *the house appointed for all living.*

But time would fail me to speak in detail, of the multiplied services which he performed; of the many important stations which he filled with honour; and of the uniformity, the dignity, the urbanity, and the prudence which he displayed in them all. In whatever point of light we contemplate his character, we behold something to admire, to venerate, and to love. In every walk of life we behold him acting under the influence of that apostolic maxim, *For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord, or whether we die,*

*we die unto the Lord ; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's\**.

But the ministry of the Gospel was his beloved employment ; and to discharge the duties of this sacred office with fidelity, zeal, and success, was his highest ambition. To this great work, all the powers of his mind, and all the stores of his information, were conscientiously devoted. Even when travelling abroad, amidst the convulsions of war, and when bound by no pastoral ties, he never omitted an opportunity of appearing in his ministerial character, and of preaching Christ crucified to all who were willing to hear. He went through the towns and villages of our country with apostolic zeal, proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom, and striving to win souls to Christ. His preaching was always of that evangelical, fervent, practical kind, which is best adapted, by the Divine blessing, to impress and to profit the souls of men. He was, emphatically, a champion of the cross ; *a burning and a shining light*. His labours every where commanded the respect and the affections of the pious. From *New-Hampshire* to *Georgia*, the af-

\* *Rom. xiv. 7, 8.*

fectionate remembrance, and the happy fruits of his ministrations are, in many places, still to be found.

Nor were his labours, as a minister of the gospel, confined to the pulpit. He taught *from house to house*. He was unwearied in instructing the ignorant, in comforting the afflicted, in praying with the sick and dying, and in promoting peace among all to whom his influence extended. Many of you, my brethren, can tell, from your own experience, with what tenderness he interested himself in your joys and sorrows; with what affection he hastened to your dwellings, when sickness or bereavement made them houses of mourning; and how remarkably he was the *pastor* as well as the *preacher*, to all under his care. One of the maxims upon which he acted, was, never to go into any company, and never to make even the shortest social visit, without leaving some testimony for God; without dropping something to extend the knowledge, and to recommend the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In these diversified and important labours, he persevered with extraordinary zeal and diligence, as long as he had strength to perform them. And



when he began to sink under the infirmities of age, his chief regret always appeared to be, not of a selfish kind; but that he no longer had strength, as formerly, to labour for his beloved Master. This he expressed so often and so strongly, that it was impossible not to believe it to be the sentiment of his inmost soul. It was his daily prayer that he *might not outlive his usefulness*. And who will venture to say that his prayer was not heard and granted? For although he outlived that *strength* which enabled him to take a part in the public ministrations of the sanctuary; yet he did not outlive his *holy example*. He did not outlive the most *affectionate concern*, and the most *fervent prayers*, for the welfare of his beloved people, and the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom.

The closing scene was such as might have been expected after such a life. It was serene and unclouded. Even when the powers of his mind failed him on every other subject, he manifested the most distinct apprehension, and the most unwavering firmness, of christian hope. The glory of Christ, the fulness and freeness of his salvation, and the blessedness of his eternal kingdom,—were his favourite topics of

discourse, as long as he was able to speak at all. And in speaking of them, he appeared to be elevated, at once, above bodily pain, and all worldly anxieties and fears. Blessed Religion! the solace of life! the sweetener of labour! the consolation of the afflicted! the antepast of heaven! Thrice blessed Religion! why, O why is it not more eagerly sought, and more largely and habitually enjoyed?

At length, worn out with age, and loaded with the best of all honours, the honour of having *served his generation by the will of God\**, in the 63d year of his ministry, and in the 84th of his age, he expired, in the arms of an affectionate family and people; and was translated, as we trust, according to the gracious promise, to *shine as a star in the firmament of glory for ever and ever.*

With respect to the obligations which I personally owe to the memory of our departed Father, this is not the place to recount or to acknowledge them in detail. Bound by the ties of early friendship, and of ministerial intercourse,

\* *Acts* xiii. 36.

with my honoured father\* according to the flesh, he kindly and tenderly took his son by the hand, and bestowed on him a degree of affection and confidence, truly parental, to the end of life. Yes, my brethren, in his death, I have lost a father, as well as yourselves! When I cast an eye backward for a few years, a thousand tender recollections crowd into my mind. The judicious counsels, and faithful support, with which he honoured me, when I came to you, an inexperienced youth; together with all the countless *official*, as well as *personal* benefits which I have received from him, in the course of seventeen years, can never be forgotten, while I have a heart to feel—But I forbear—To have been totally silent on this subject, would have been ungrateful.—To pursue it further, would be an unseasonable obtrusion of private feeling, on public duty.

\* The distance between the residence of Doctor *Rodgers*, and that of the writer's Father, both in the state of *Delaware*, was about 26 miles. And, though they belonged to different Presbyteries, and differed in opinion on some points of ecclesiastical order, they were united in affectionate friendship, and had much official intercourse, especially on sacramental occasions.

With the family and friends of the deceased, we affectionately sympathize. Under the circumstances in which his happy translation occurred, they have more reason to rejoice than to weep. Their consolations are as many and great as can attend the departure of an heir of glory. May the bright example, and the many prayers which he has left them as a legacy, be made a rich blessing to them, in time and eternity! And may they all be prepared, at length, to follow him to those mansions, in which he now rests from his labours!

But, while we cherish the memory of this excellent Man, there are various duties resulting from his departure, which it becomes survivors, and especially all of *us*, who were so closely united with him, to recollect, and to ponder in our hearts. To every class of those who were placed, by the providence of God, under his pastoral charge, this event speaks in language of the most impressive kind.

To such of you, my brethren, as remain unreconciled to God, and of course, strangers to the faith and the hope of his people, the death of

your aged pastor, is an event of the most solemn nature, and ought deeply to affect your hearts. He has gone to give in an account of his ministry; and in a little while you will follow him to the same bar, to give an account of the manner in which you have received his ministrations in the Lord. Yes, brethren, **HE** has done with his earthly labours; but be assured **YOU** have not done with them. The solemn account between God and you, for having enjoyed them, is yet to be settled. O brethren! if you remain strangers to the grace of the gospel, how will you bear to meet him *before the judgment seat of Christ*? How will you bear to behold his venerable form there standing as a witness against you? How will you bear to recollect his entreaties, his warnings, his exhortations, his prayers, in that great day of the Lord? Better, infinitely better for you, that you had never been born, than meet him in your present condition! Brethren! let the death of your pastor sink deep into your hearts! Let this solemn event be found the means of making that saving impression upon you, which his life and his labours failed of effecting. It is the last of those things concerning him for which you must give an account. God grant that you may give it *with joy, and not with grief*! God grant



that you may have grace given you to take refuge in the Saviour; and then you will meet Him, as well as his Servant, at last, *with joy unspeakable and full of glory!*

My AGED FRIENDS, who have not yet *come to Christ, that ye might have life*, what shall I say to you, on this solemn occasion? When I recollect how many years you have set under the droppings of the sanctuary; and how many warnings, as well as intreaties, you have received from the lips of that man of God, whose mortal remains you lately followed to the grave; and that all these have been hitherto in vain; I am almost ready to sink under discouragement, and to say, What benefit can be expected from any address or ministration of *mine*, when *such* means have failed? And, truly, were human strength the ground of hope, I might sit down in despair. But when I remember that it is *God who giveth the increase*; and that the feeblest means, by the power and grace of the King of Zion, may be rendered effectual; I am encouraged still to speak in his name, and to look up to Him for a blessing on what shall be said. Let me ask, then, my aged friends, how do you feel, now that he whom you have so long venerated as your Friend

and Minister is gone? How do you feel, when you remember that his long and faithful labours are finally closed; and that you must, according to the course of nature, very soon follow him to the eternal world, there to answer for the improvement you have made of them? Let me intreat you to *consider your ways*. The day is far spent: the shadows of the evening admonish you that there is but little time remaining. What you have to do must be done quickly, or it will be for ever too late! For what are you waiting? Alas! delay in the great concerns of eternity is, in any case, dangerous; but in YOU it is infatuation; it is death. Trifle not, I beseech you, a moment longer. Accept without delay that Saviour, whom your late pastor so often and so affectionately offered to you. And then, your setting sun, like his, will be serene and full of glory!

My YOUNG FRIENDS of this congregation! The departure of your aged Father addresses itself in very solemn language to you. He loved your parents. Over the dying pillows of many of them he wept and prayed; and their precious remains he followed to the silent grave\*. He

\* When Dr. *Rodgers* died, there was only *one* person remaining, who was a member in full communion with the church in *New-York*, when he took charge of it, in 1765.

baptised and he loved you: and deep and paternal was the solicitude which he manifested for your eternal welfare. Often he prayed for you in secret; and often, very often, have I heard him, in the solemn assembly, warning you to *flee from the wrath to come*; entreating you to *lay hold on eternal life*; and appealing to your consciences, and your hearts, whether you could bear to be separated from your parents; and, while they *lived and reigned with Christ for ever*, to be banished eternally from their society and their God? O, my beloved young friends! shall not these warnings and appeals now rise before you, and make an impression which they have never yet done? By and by you must all meet that venerable Ambassador, in an assembly infinitely more solemn than the present; infinitely more solemn than any that you can witness here below. I beseech, I conjure, I charge you, not to meet him without having first become reconciled to his God and Saviour; without having first secured an interest in that inheritance, of which he now knows more than ever the unspeakable value.

TO the SINCERE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST in this congregation, the *occasion* and the *subject* speak the most tender language. My brethren

in the Lord! many of you, under God, owe your awakening, and your introduction to the kingdom of Christ, to the beloved minister who has just left us; and many more have reason to bless his memory to all eternity for that instruction, comfort, and edification which he was made the means of imparting to your hearts. He is gone; gone *to his Father, and our Father, to his God, and our God.* But he has left you much to remember with the liveliest gratitude and joy. Cherish the memory of his virtues and graces, as well as of his labours; and strive to be followers of him, as he followed Christ. *Though dead, he yet speaketh.* Though his cold lips have ceased to proclaim the messages of grace, and his withered hand to point out the road to life; yet his example, his instructions, and his prayers, remain on record. Let us all study to profit by them while we live; and to let our profiting appear unto all. Let us *remember how we have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.*

My BRETHREN IN OFFICE in this church! the death of our aged pastor devolves upon US new duties, and new obligations. Let us lay them to heart with much seriousness; and en-

deavour, from this time forth, with greater zeal and fidelity than ever, to discharge them. Is our Head taken away? and are **WE**, now, to be considered as *the chariots and the horsemen* of this our *Israel*? How mighty our trust! how awfully responsible our station! how much prayer, watchfulness, and labour will be required of us! what care in feeding the sheep and the lambs of Christ! what prudence and firmness in government! what holy circumspection in our daily example!—I am left, with all my weakness, to serve alone.—Alone, I mean, as to any human partner in my pastoral labours. But the God of all grace will not, I trust, leave me alone, as to his Divine presence and aid, in the new and trying circumstances in which I am henceforth to be placed. Nor can I admit, for a moment, the apprehension, that **YOU** will withhold from me that kind indulgence, and those fervent prayers, which I shall so much and so constantly need. And, Oh, if the smallest portion of the mantle of the ascended prophet might fall on his feeble successor, how much reason should we have to rejoice, and anticipate a blessing!

For these purposes, let us all be unceasingly engaged at the throne of grace. The same God,



I trust, who has hitherto blessed and led us on, will continue to bless and guide us still. And, O ye children of God! look forward with joy to that world, where the followers of the Lamb shall be united in one body, under their glorious Head: where *Elijah* and *Elisha* shall sit down together: where Prophets and Apostles, Pastors and their redeemed people, shall meet, and never again separate. There may we all be prepared to meet our departed father, and to rejoice with him for ever! Amen!