

Hebrews. XI. 4

By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh

There is something in Death which has a tendency to excite seriousness, and awe in the minds of the living. With a peculiar solemnity, we behold ^{that} the countenance of a deceased fellow mortal. The last words; the dying testimony, of a fellow creature, is peculiarly impressive. We are apt to consider the opinions, and actions of mankind, after their decease, with peculiar deference. We are inclined to extol their virtues; and to cast a veil over their imperfections. Many circumstances which in the lifetime of those to whom they relate, excite no special notice, are after their death, considered highly important; and oftentimes are productive of great and lasting benefits. In this way those who are dead, yet speak.

Biography is generally read with emotion. The virtuous lives and happy deaths of those who have finished their course, and have gone before us into that eternal world to which we are all hastening, is highly interesting. Such narrations furnish admonition & instruction to all; and have a tendency to strengthen the faith, & hope, & comfort, of those who are pursuing the heavenly race. By the death of others, we are admonished of our own approaching dissolution; and by the holy lives, and peacefull deaths of Christians, we may discover the excellency of their religion, the blessed effects of their faith; and have opportunity of examining whether ourselves are building upon

that sure foundation, which God has laid in Zion for the hope of the guilty. If we have evidence that we possess like precious faith, how are we led to admire the grace of Him, who is its object; author; and finisher! and with ^{what} unspeakable delight, shall we anticipate its victory, and final end!!!

It was with a view to instruct, comfort, & animate the people of God, that the Apostle notices in the text, the nature & effects of Abel's faith; and thus represents him, who had been long dead, as actually speaking, to himself, and his contemporaries. No reason is perceived, for limiting this remark to Abel, to the exclusion of the other worthies mentioned by the Apostle, in this chapter. It appears to me, to be equally true of Enoch, ^{as recorded in the holy scriptures} & Noe, and Abraham, & Moses; and indeed of all others who have died in ^{the} faith. How forcibly does the author of our text ~~of a text~~ (altho' long since dead) speak to us in the history of his life, furnished in the sacred scriptures; How does he seem to say, Beware of blind zeal, & false confidence. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. We are all sinners. The divine law condemns all. It is only in the righteousness of Christ that we can be justified. It is only through the sanctifying operations of divine grace, that we can be made partakers of the heavenly inheritance. Faith is no fancy; it is powerfull in its operations on the mind; it kills, & makes alive. It causes those who possess it, to count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord; and inspires them ^{with} patience & fortitude to run the heavenly race, with a humble confidence of receiving an incorruptible crown, as a reward of rich, free, astonishing grace, &c.

I have thus introduced the text, with the design of calling your attention to a few important, & highly interesting ideas, connected with the sickness & death of the deceased; in attending to which, we may perceive, that, she who is dead, yet speaketh.

First. The shortness & uncertainty of the present life. The very furthest extent of human life is but a limited space. Our days are as "an handbreadth." But the deceased has not been permitted to number, but a part, of them: She was ^{indeed} preserved through those dangerous vicissitudes, incidental to our state of infancy. The tender bud, was secured from the chilling blasts. The flower had begun to bloom & expand. No constitutional difficulties were perceived. Nothing was discovered to excite suspicion that her life might not be as healthy & as long, as is usually allotted to the daughters of mortality. Until a few weeks ago, her prospects of pleasure & comfort in the present life were as flattering and as well founded as any of yours, my young friends who have witnessed her funeral & demerits. ^{But alas!} How short has been her stay! How unexpected her dissolution! Three months ago (probably) the thought had not occurred to her mind, that Death the destroyer, would prevent her gathering the fruits of the present season! Surely in this event we may perceive the uncertainty of life, and all its enjoyments. Yes, we may seem to hear the deceased saying, Be ye also ready; for at such an hour as ye think not, Death may lay his icy hand upon you!

Secondly. The subject under consideration presents to view the gloomy, melancholy, situation of those who are compelled to give up all hope of living, and yet have no evidence ^{of interest,} in a saviours love. This appears to have been the case of the deceased.

Thus have I endeavour'd to portray before you, her who is dead; proclaiming in the most forcible manner, the uncertainty of life; the importance of being in actual readiness to meet God; the melancholy state of those who are living without faith & hope in the Lord Jesus Christ; the importance of the right improvement of the means of grace; and, the blessed and happy consequences, of faith in our precious Redeemer. And now let me urge your solemn & immediate attention to her warning voice. Have you been living in the neglect of your eternal concerns? Let me beseech you to live so no longer. The aged must die. The young may, and do die. The happiness of your souls, your never dying souls are at stake. The present portion of time is all that you can be certain of. You know not what a day may bring forth. Endless joys, or everlasting woes depend on every breath. God is now in Christ reconciling sinners to himself. He now commands all men every where to repent. He is calling upon us in ways of judgment, & of mercy. The golden scepter of His grace is yet extended. In accents sweet, He is proclaiming, "Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation. Let the wicked forsake his way & the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon him. But if you continue to refuse his grace, & to neglect His great salvation; you must remain strangers to that heavenly peace, which faith and hope inspires. Death will overtake you unprepared. The poison of his sting will drink up all your spirits - and you will finally hear God saying to you in awful majesty

"Because I have called and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand and ye regarded it not; I also will laugh at your calamity & mock when your ^{fear} cometh. Depart from me, therefore ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." I do therefore in the name of my God, & in the words selected by ~~the~~ deceased, to be communicated to her absent brethren, beseech all those, who have heretofore neglected the salvation of their souls; and especially the youth in this assembly; "To seek the Lord whilst He may be found, and to call upon Him whilst He is near." The wonderfull display of divine grace manifested to the deceased in the application of pardoning mercy at the eleventh hour, liberating her troubled mind, removing the sting of death and causing her to rejoice in God her Saviour, should encourage sensible & heavy laden sinners to hope in the rich mercy, and all sufficient grace, of God the saviour. To draw near to His gracious throne with a humble confidence that He will hear their supplications; forgive their sins; and prepare them for every good work; and finally receive them into His heavenly kingdom. - It should ^{also} fill the minds of Christians with an admiring sense of the height & depth & breadth & length of that rich grace by which we are saved, should excite a carefull & constant enquiry "what we shall render to the Lord for all His great mercy." should animate us to run with patience & humble confidence the race which is set before us, anticipating with joy the pleasing prospect, of shortly uniting with the ransomed millions, in singing the song of Moses and the Lamb!

To her Parents & connexions, she who is dead yet speaks, and I trust in God will long continue to speak to your present comfort, & everlasting benefit. She seems to say, had your wishes prevailed, I should yet have been a child of mortality, & tabernacling with you, in houses of clay. But the irreversible decree had gone forth. My days were all numbered. Astonishing mercy & surprising grace - had provided for me a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Shed no more tears on my account, only those of surprised gratitude to God for his unspeakable mercy - He has heard your prayers - He has sought - He has found. He has regained His lost wandering-sheep. The angel of mercy has conducted Heaven resounds with the acclamations of the ransomed millions who hail me, to ^{the prodigal's} ~~my~~ prepared mansion. My well-strung, golden harp is already employed in chanting forth ^{with them} the praises of Him who loved me, and gave Himself for me. In my heavenly Father's house, there are many mansions. ^{But} I am not permitted to know by whom, they will be occupied. I have only learnt the Law of the house. You have it laid down in your Bibles. Those All those - ~~and none~~ ^{however} but those who are born again, have admission. No one has cause to despair, who is willing to be saved from his sins. The inhabitants of heaven, are a indeed, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people" and here, they cease not, to sing the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light. Therefore remember - Forget not my advice at parting, Seek the Lord, whilst He may be found; call upon Him whilst He is near. This do, and the God of mercy will be found of you, and will shortly bring you, to inherit these glorious mansions, where there are pleasures for ever more. Amen."