

The Faithful Minister of Christ Crowned.

by John Gill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a faithful life, finishing one's course, and keeping the faith, as a means of receiving the crown of righteousness in heaven.

Scripture: 2 Timothy 4:6

Topics: "Faithfulness in Ministry", "Hope of Eternal Life"

Description

John Gill reflects on the life and ministry of Mr. William Anderson, a faithful minister of the gospel, who faced trials and tribulations yet remained steadfast in his faith. He draws from 2 Timothy 4:6-7, emphasizing the importance of fighting the good fight, finishing the course, and keeping the faith, which leads to the promise of a crown of righteousness from the Lord. Gill encourages the congregation to remember that this crown is not just for the apostle Paul but for all who love Christ's appearing. He highlights the joy and comfort found in the assurance of eternal life and the hope of being united with Christ. The sermon serves as a reminder to remain faithful in our own spiritual journeys, looking forward to the rewards that await us.

Transcript

The

FAITHFUL MINISTER OF CHRIST CROWNED.

Occasioned by the Death of Mr. William Anderson, Baptist Minister.

Preached September 20, 1767.

2 TIMOTHY 4:6, 7

I have fought a (or the) good fight, I have finished my (the) course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not unto me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

These words are read unto you on account of the death of Mr. William Anderson, late minister of the gospel. It was the latter of these two verses the deceased took notice of on his death-bed, and repeated with a singular appropriation to himself, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, etc. for which reason it is judged a proper subject of a funeral discourse. I have read both verses, because

there is a close connection between them, and they depend one on another; and the sense of the one cannot be understood so fully and clearly without the other; and the beauty of the passage would otherwise be greatly lost.

The apostle, in the preceding part of the chapter, gives a strict charge to Timothy, in a very solemn manner, before God and his son Jesus Christ, whom he describes as judge of quick and dead: the charge is, to perform diligently the several parts of his ministerial office, the particulars of which you may read at your leisure; and to urge him the more strongly to attend to this charge, he suggests to him, that it was delivered by him as a dying man; and that this was the last time he might expect to have any charge, counsel, directions, and instructions from him; for, says he, I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; phrases very significant, and very expressive of his death: the former of them represents his death as a sacrifice, I am ready to be offered, or to be poured forth as a libation or drink-offering; not by way of sacrifice, to make atonement for sin, either his own or others, this he knew was made by the sacrifice of Christ; but by way of martyrdom, as a victim to the cause of truth, for the sake of the gospel, and the confirmation of it: and if laying down his life would be of any service to the interest of Christ and his people, he was ready to do it with all cheerfulness and pleasure; as he elsewhere says (Philip. 2:17), yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.

The latter phrase, the time of my departure is at hand; is an expression of death in a very familiar manner; a way of speaking used by our Lord, and by our apostle in another place (John 13:1; Philp. 1:23); signifying, that death is not the annihilation of men, there is a state of existence after it; it is only a departing elsewhere: it is indeed a dissolution of the union between soul and body, an analysis, as the word in the text is, or a resolution of the body into its original principles; a departure out of one world into another; a removing, as it were, from one house to another, from an earthly house of this tabernacle, to an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; for which there is a time fixed, beyond which life cannot pass: and this the apostle, with respect to himself, knew was at hand; and which he might conclude, either from his years, or rather from the state and situation in which he was, being in bonds for the gospel, and having been brought before Nero a second time; and perhaps the sentence of death was passed upon him by that Emperor, and the dead warrant was come for his execution, or at least he soon expected it; or he might know his death was near, by an impulse upon his mind, and a particular Rev. from God; and in the cheerful view of it he expresses the words first read. In which may be observed, I. A pleasing reflection on his past conduct, or on what through the grace of God he had been enabled to do. First, He had fought a good fight.

Secondly, Had finished his course.

Thirdly Had kept the faith.

II. A delightful and comfortable prospect, and the firm belief he had of future happiness; which happiness is,

First, Expressed by a crown, by a crown of righteousness, by a crown laid up, and that in particular for him.

Secondly, Of which happiness he was assured, that it would be given him; and by whom, the Lord, the righteous Judge; and in what manner, by way of gift; and at what time, at that day. And, Thirdly, For the encouragement of common saints and believers in Christ to expect the same, he adds, and not unto me

only, but unto all them also that love his appearing; the appearing of Christ. The apostle looked backward to what was past, and forward to what was to come.

Here is, I. A pleasing reflection on his past conduct, or on what through the grace of God he had been enabled to perform; this he could not do before, but now he could: a minister of Christ, whilst he is fighting with enemies, running his race, and discharging his trust, cannot stop, and is not at leisure to make such a reflection, nor can he with propriety do it; but when all is over, when the battle is fought, and the victory got, when the race is ended, and he is come to the goal, is in fight of the prize, and just stretching out his hand to receive the crown; and when he has faithfully discharged his trust, and is delivering it up; then he can, and not till then, with pleasure express himself in the following manner the apostle does.

First, That he had fought a good fight; or rather, the good fight, as in 1 Timothy 6:12, or the fight, that good fight;[1] for the article is doubled, which makes it the more emphatical. The present state of life is a state of warfare, in which every man is engaged: is there not a warfare to man on earth? as the words may be rendered, Job 7:1, there is; especially for a Christian man, whose warfare is as good as accomplished, as it most certainly will be; and more especially for a minister of the gospel, who is in peculiar circumstances, and is directed by peculiar means to war a good warfare, for which he has weapons peculiarly fitted and adapted: the weapons of our warfare, of us ministers, are not carnal, but mighty through God (1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Cor. 10:4), to answer particular purposes; for the demolition of Satan's kingdom, and the spread and enlargement of the kingdom of Christ: every Christian is a soldier; all the Lord's people are volunteers in Christ's service; thy people shall be willing, or volunteers, in the day of thy power, or in the day of thine army (Ps. 110:3), when that is collected together and mustered; but a minister of the gospel is particularly called to endure, and he ought to endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:3).

Ministers of the word are meant by the valiant men of Israel; who guard the bed of Solomon, the church, and are well accoutered for that service; having their loins girt with the girdle of truth; their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; and every man his sword on his thigh (Song of Solomon 3:7, 8); the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: and being thus armed, their business is to fight the battles of the Lord; to play the men for their God, and the cities of their God; for Christ, and for his interest: and, as they have enemies in common with other Christians, and by whom they are more especially assaulted, they fight with them. 1.

With the corruptions of their own hearts, those fleshly lusts which war against the soul; striving against sin (Heb. 12:4), or acting the part of an antagonist with it, even indwelling sin: and the great apostle Paul, though so holy a man, was not exempt from this combat. He found a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind (Rom. 7:23): he found himself under a necessity of keeping under his body, the body of sin, and not to make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts of it; but to keep a strict eye and hand over it, and to use a kind of severe discipline with it, lest whilst he preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away (1 Cor. 9:27): but now the conflict was over; and he, being on the shores of eternity, saw those spiritual enemies, the Egyptians who had distressed him, all slain and dead, and found himself a triumphant conqueror over them. 2.

With Satan, and his principalities and powers. None of the saints in this life are free from Satan's temptations; nay, generally speaking, the most eminent, fruitful, and useful of them, are most furiously assaulted by him. Joseph was a fruitful bough by a well; and the archers shot at him, and sorely grieved him, though his bow abode in strength (Gen. 49:22-24). At those who are the most eminent for grace and usefulness, he lets fly his fiery darts thick and fast: the apostle Paul did not escape his buffetings; a thorn

in the flesh, a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him (2 Cor. 12:7); he had many combats with him: we wrestle, I and other ministers, as well as the rest of saints, against principalities, against powers (Eph. 6:12), even the powers of darkness, Satan and his angels; and minister shave their peculiar temptations, with which they are assaulted by him; many are the difficulties, obstructions and impediments, he throws in their way; our apostle was not clear of them: we would have come to you, says he, writing to the Thessalonians (even I Paul) once and again, but Satan hindered us (1 Thess. 2:18); but now the battle with him was over, and Satan was bruised under his feet. 3.

With the world, the reproaches and persecutions of it, and a great fight of afflictions in it: and particularly ministers have to do with false teachers in it, who resist the truth, as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses. Some think such as these were the beasts at Ephesus the apostle fought with; men, comparable to beasts, wolves in sheep's clothing, which entered the flock, and did damage to it by their pernicious doctrines; with whom the apostle had disputes in the school of Tyrannus, whilst he resided in those parts; though I see no reason to depart from the literal sense of the words: yet however it is certain, the apostle met with such men of corrupt minds, more or less, wherever he came; to whom he gave place, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with the churches; but now his contests and sharp disputes with them were at an end.

This fight is called a good fight, and elsewhere the good fight of faith: the fight of faith, because faith, as a doctrine, is what is fought for; the Philippians are exhorted by the apostle to stand fast in one spirit, striving together, with him and with one another, for the faith of the gospel (Philp. 1:27); and, as Jude's phrase is, contend earnestly, even to an agony, for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3); and faith, as a grace, is the weapon saints fight with, especially with Satan, whom resist, stedfast in the faith (1 Pet. 5:9); and it is called a good fight, because it is in a good cause, the cause of God and truth; fought under a good captain, Christ, the captain of our salvation; under the banner of him, the Lord of hosts; and with good weapons the whole armor of God, armor of proof, than which none is better, and which always issues well, it ends in victory.

It is said of Camillus, that he fought many and good fights;[2] that is, many famous battles; but none so famous as this, fought by our apostle and others; in which the Christian combatants are always conquerors, and more than conquerors, through Christ, who has loved them. Secondly, The apostle with pleasure observes, that he finished his course; which is what he had wished for, and cared not what he met with, so that he could but finish it with joy (Acts 20:24); and now it was done: by which may be meant, either the course of his life, of his days; the time of his departure was near; he was just going the way of all the earth, as Joshua expresses it; his age was departed, as Hezekiah says; his days were extinct, and the grave was ready for him, as Job thought was his case; his last sands were now dropping: or else his Christian race, called a course, in allusion to the Grecian games, in which men ran races, and to which the apostle frequently alludes, particularly in 1 Corinthians 9:24, etc. and in Philippians 3:13, 14, know ye not that they which run in a race, run all -- so run, that ye may obtain: the stadium, or race-plot, which reaches from the place of starting to the goal, in which the Christian racer runs, is this world; what answers to the white line between the two terms, within which the racers were to run, and according to which they steered their course, that they might not go in and out, but move straight forward, is Christ; and who is the mark that is always to be kept in sight; and the prize run for, is the high calling of God in Christ, or the heavenly glory: or rather, by his course may be meant the course of his ministry; thus John's ministry is called his course, which he fulfilled; and so the apostle calls his, that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus (Acts 13:25; 20:24), and now it was just finishing; he was

come to the end of his line, to Rome, where he was to bear his last testimony for Christ (Acts 23:11): all these three may be taken into the sense of the passage, the course of his life, his Christian race, and the course of his ministry; for they were all finished together.

Thirdly, The apostle observes, with like pleasure, that he had kept the faith: meaning, not the grace of faith; for though that is an abiding grace, and cannot be lost; is much more precious than gold, because that may perish, but this cannot; yet it is not in any man's own keeping; it is preserved and supported by Christ, through his powerful mediation and intercession; who, as he prayed for Peter, so he prays for all his ministers, and all his saints, that their faith fail not; he is the author, and he is the finisher of it (Luke 22:32; Heb. 12:2): nor is a profession of faith meant; for though believers ought, and they are encouraged to hold fast the profession of their faith, from the priesthood of Christ, and the promises of God; yet this is what formal professors may do, and the foolish virgins did; they took their lamps of profession, and trimmed them too, so that they looked bright and splendid as to outward show; and they held and kept them likewise until the coming of the bridegroom: rather the doctrine of faith is intended, the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to the trust of the apostle; a sacred depositum lodged in his hands, which he was careful to keep, and had kept; what he exhorted Titus and Timothy to do, he had done himself, namely, to hold fast the faithful word; to hold fast the form of sound words, and keep the good thing committed to them (Titus 1:9; 2 Tim. 1:13, 14); this he had done, and had not suffered the gospel to be wrenched out of his hands, neither through the force of furious persecutors, nor through the art and sophistry of false teachers: unless it can be thought his fidelity is meant; God, when he put him into the ministry, counted him faithful, having made him so; and through the grace of God, he maintained his integrity, kept his fidelity; which appeared in declaring the whole counsel of God, and in keeping back nothing that was profitable to the saints; and he continued faithful unto death; and now, henceforth loipon, it remained, and nothing else remained for him to do, but to receive the crown of life and righteousness.

Which brings me to consider, II. The delightful and comfortable prospect, and firm belief the apostle had of his future happiness; which, First, Is described by a crown, by a crown of righteousness, by a crown laid up, and that for him in particular. It is described by a crown; either, (1) In allusion to royal crowns, such as are wore by kings and princes; and that partly for the glory of it, nothing being more glorious, more grand, and more august than a crown: and this is called a crown of glory, or a glorious crown; and indeed it excels all others in glory: crowns of gold are weighty things, but do not endure always; but the heavenly happiness is an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17): this will consist of a glory put upon the saints; upon their bodies, which, though sown in dishonor, will be raised in glory, and fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ; and upon their souls, which will be possessed of perfect knowledge, purity and holiness: and of a glory that will be revealed in them, and that will be revealed to them, and beheld by them, even the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ; with whom they will appear in glory, and be forever with him to behold his glory.

And partly the heavenly happiness may be described by such a crown as suitable to the character of saints, who are made kings, as well as priests unto God by Christ; and who shall reign as such on earth, and that for the space of a thousand years, and then reign with him forever in heaven (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6; 22:5). Nor are they mere titular kings; they have not only the title of kings, but they have a kingdom, a kingdom of grace now, which cannot be moved, and which lies in righteousness, peace, and joy in the holy Ghost: and they are heirs of another kingdom; the kingdom of glory, prepared for them from the foundation of the world; and though they were in their nature-state beggars upon the dunghill, they are raised from thence to inherit the throne of glory; and thrones will be placed for them to fit upon; yea, every

overcomer will sit down with Christ on his throne: and so likewise crowns are prepared for them; thus the four and twenty elders, the representatives of gospel-churches, and the members of them, are said to have on their heads crowns of gold (Rev. 4:4).

Or rather, (2) The future happiness is described by a crown, in allusion to crowns given to conquerors in the Grecian exercises; one of which was running of races, as well as fighting, wrestling, etc. to which the apostle manifestly alludes in 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25. Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all; but one receiveth the prize: so run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible.

The apostle justly observes, that in those races men strove for mastery; and indeed for that only, for victory; merely for the honor and glory of being conquerors: as for the crowns that were given them, they were nothing worth, being only garlands made of the branches or leaves of laurel, or of olive, or of pines, and sometimes of parsley-leaves, things of no intrinsic value; nor was it for the sake of those they ran, but for the honor annexed to them, of being crowned with them.

But the crown which the Christian racer, being a conqueror, obtains, is of real worth and value; sometimes expressed by the true riches, real and substantial; by an house, not made with hands; by an inheritance of the saints in light; by a city which has foundations; and by a kingdom and glory. The crown run for in the Grecian games was a corruptible one: the Corinthians knew full well what the apostle meant by a corruptible crown; for the Isthmian races were ran in their neighborhood, and the presidents and judges^[3] were of their city; and they must be sensible of the propriety of this epithet corruptible, since the crowns given to the conquerors in those races, were made of nothing but parsley;^[4] some say, dried: hence we read of persons being ornamented and honored with Corinthian parsley,^[5] or parsley-crowns; whereas the heavenly happiness is an incorruptible crown: so when it is spoken of as an inheritance, it is said to be an incorruptible one (1 Pet. 1:4); it cannot be corrupted itself; it lies where moth and rust corrupt not: nor can it be enjoyed by corrupt persons; corruption cannot inherit incorruption; in order to enjoy it, the dead will be raised incorruptible, and this corruptible must put on incorruption (1 Cor. 15:50, 52, 53), and be clear of every corruption, natural and sinful.

Again, the crown the racers in the above exercises ran for, was a withering and fading one, as even those made of green and living parsley used in the Nemean exercises were;^[6] but the crown of eternal glory and happiness, is a crown of glory that fadeth not away; an amaranthine crown, as the word is,^[7] alluding to such crowns as were made of the herb amaranthus, which is immarcessible, and never fades, as its name imports;^[8] and of which crowns were made in the winter-season: so when this happiness is signified by an inheritance, it is called an inheritance that fadeth not away; it is durable and lasting, yea, everlasting; and therefore expressed by everlasting habitations; by an house eternal; by an eternal inheritance; and by the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ: and for the same reason it is sometimes called the crown of life (Jam. 1:12; Rev. 2:10), because it is a crown for life, as all crowns are not, even for an eternal life; yea, is eternal life itself, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. 2.

The happiness the apostle had a view of, and faith in, is further described as a crown of righteousness; still alluding to the crowns given to conquerors in the Grecian exercises, such as were obtained in a lawful manner, and legally adjudged to them; for, as the apostle says elsewhere, alluding to the same custom, if a man strive for masteries, who shall have the honor of being declared the conqueror, yet is he not crowned, except he drive lawfully (2 Tim. 2:5); if he used any illicit methods to obtain the prize, when

detected, even after the prize was declared for him, he was disgraced, and the true and right conqueror, even though he might be dead, had the crown adjudged to him;[9] such strict justice was observed in those exercises; hence the crowns thus distributed were called *qemiplektoi*,[10] "crowns wreathed or platted by justice:" in allusion to which, the apostle calls the heavenly happiness a crown of righteousness; it is what the saint comes at in a legal manner, what he has a just right unto; it is a kingdom his heavenly Father has bequeathed unto him; it is an inheritance he is born heir apparent to, and for which he has a meetness through the grace of God; and his title to it lies in the righteousness of Christ: no unrighteous man can inherit this crown and kingdom; and he must have a better righteousness than his own, or he will never be put into the possession of it; wherefore our apostle desired to be found in Christ, not having on his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ (Philp. 3:9); by which being justified, such become heirs of eternal life, are entitled to it, and shall most surely possess it.

Moreover, though this crown is not given for the fidelity and integrity of those that fight and run, and keep the faith; yet it is the consequence thereof, and follows thereon, according to the divine promise, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life (Rev. 2:10). Besides, this epithet of righteousness, may express the state and condition of the happy crowned ones; that it is a state of purity, holiness and righteousness; a state in which none but righteousness dwells, or righteous persons, who are made righteousness itself in the Lord; and so is called the crown of righteousness, just as it is the hope of righteousness (Gal. 5:5); that is, a state of righteousness which is hoped and waited for. 3.

This happiness is further described as laid up; laid up in the covenant of grace, which is ordered in all things, and sure; where all grace and all spiritual blessings are secured for the saints, and their glory also; it cannot be said how great that goodness is, which is there laid up for them: this crown is also laid up in the hands of Christ the mediator; in whose hands the saints themselves are, and are safe; and where all fullness of grace is treasured up for them, and their life of glory is hid and preserved: it is also laid up in heaven, and is the same with the hope laid up in heaven (Col. 1:5), that is, the heavenly glory hoped for; and the inheritance reserved in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4): things that are laid up, are hid and out of sight; the glories of another world are invisible; they are things that are not seen and hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? (2 Cor. 4:18; Rom. 8:24, 25), and they are also safe.

Crowns are generally laid up in places of great strength and safety; the crown of England is secured in the tower of London; though as strong a place, and as well guarded as that is, the crown was near being stolen and carried off in the last age: but the crown of life and glory is laid up where thieves do not break through, nor steal (Matthew 6:20), and this crown is laid up for particular persons; for me; and me, and me; for all the vessels of mercy before prepared for glory; for all chosen in Christ to holiness and happiness, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus; for all that love him, and love his appearing.

Secondly, The assurance the apostle had of his enjoying this happiness thus described; from whom he expected it would be bestowed upon him; in what way and manner, and at what time. 1. The person who, he was well assured, would give it to him, is Christ, who is described by the Lord, the righteous Judge; he is Lord of all, Lord of lords, and King of kings; who sets them up, and puts them down at his pleasure: and he who has the disposal of kingdoms, crowns and scepters, the apostle believed would give to him a crown of life and immortality: he who upon his ascension was made or declared Lord and Christ, and constituted head over all things to the church, and fills all in all; fills all the members of it with gifts and grace, and crowns them with loving-kindness and tender mercies; he had in his hands a crown of glory to bestow on him: he whom David could call my Lord, and Thomas, my Lord and my God, the apostle knew he had an interest in as such: and therefore counted all things but loss, says he, for the excellency of the

knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord (Philp. 3:8): and from this his interest in him, no doubt he concluded he should receive the crown from him; whom he also considered, for his further encouragement to believe it, as a righteous Judge: this character best agrees with Christ; for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:22); he has appointed him to be Judge of quick and dead (Acts 10:42); which office he will execute at his appearing, when the crown will be given, verse 1, and for which office he is abundantly qualified, being God omniscient and omnipotent: he is omniscient; he knows all persons and things; he is the living Word, before whom all things are naked and open, with whom we have to do, or to whom we must give an account; he has no need that any man should testify of men to him, for he knows what is in men; and therefore can bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart, and judge the secrets of all men: and he is the Almighty, the Lord God omnipotent that reigns, and so is able by his power to raise the dead at his coming; to summon all nations before him; to separate one sort of men from another; to pass the decisive sentence on them, and execute it: and he is a righteous Judge; Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 1:1), the Judge of the whole earth, who will do right; who will judge the world in righteousness, and the people with equity: as in the execution of all his offices, so in this, righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins (Isa. 11:5).

Now from the purity, justice and integrity of Christ as a Judge, the apostle had no doubt of the crown of righteousness being given him by him; and here also the apostle alludes to the Grecian exercises, in which crowns were given to the conquerors in strict justice:[11] at first they had only one judge of them, afterwards the number was increased; but always care was taken that men of strict justice and uprightness were chosen into that office, who would pass a righteous sentence, and give the crown to whom it of right belonged; and if any were found tardy in this matter, and gave it wrong, by an appeal to an higher court of judicature, if found guilty, they were severely mulcted:[12] it was always from the judges[13] the conqueror received the crown. 2.

The manner in which the apostle expected to have the crown; by way of gift; which the righteous Judge shall give me: not by way of merit; he knew his best works were not meritorious of eternal life; that what he did was not in his own strength, but by the grace of God; that there is no proportion between works of righteousness done by the best of men, and the crown of life; that the purest services of the saints, which are their sufferings for Christ, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in them; he knew that though he fought and ran, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy (Rom. 9:16): the crown of life is promised as a gift, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10); the heavenly kingdom is what it is the Father's good pleasure to give; and eternal life is the free gift of God through Christ; Christ gives grace, and he gives glory; he has power to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him; and he does give it to all his sheep, that hear his voice, and follow him.

Some translate the words of our text, which the righteous judge shall render unto me:[14] and so they may be translated without any contradiction to the crown being a free gift; for that will be rendered, not as the reward of men's works, or according to their deserts, but as the fruit of Christ's righteousness, satisfaction, and atonement; so our salvation, and all the parts of it, are both in a way of grace, and in a way of justice: God is a just God, and a Savior; just, and yet the justifier of him that believes in Jesus; and just and faithful to forgive sin, and cleanse from all unrighteousness; justification, though by the free grace of God, yet being through the righteousness of Christ, is according to the strict justice of God; and pardon of sin, though according to the riches of grace, is an act of justice; mercy and truth, righteousness and peace,

meet together in the salvation of sinners, in their grace and in their glory: with respect to them, it is of grace; with respect to Christ, and to his satisfaction and righteousness, it is of justice; and so it is given and rendered according to both. 3.

The time when the apostle expected the crown, at that day; a phrase used by him in other places in this epistle, as in chap. 1:12, 18, that famous day, that well-known day, looked for by all the saints; even the day of Christ's appearing to take his kingdom, and to judge the dead; which is the day of his second coming, as is clear from ver. 1. then he, in his whole person, soul and body, he believed, should enjoy the everlasting happiness, signified by the crown of righteousness.

Thirdly, The apostle adds, by way of encouragement to all believers in Christ, and lovers of him in common, that this crown was laid up for, and would be given to, not him only, and such as he, eminent for gifts and usefulness, but all them also who love his appearing: the appearing of Christ. In this there is a difference between the crown given to the runner in the Grecian races, the apostle has a respect unto; that crown was given to one only, this to many; of which the apostle thus speaks, Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all; but one receiveth the prize? (1 Cor. 9:24), but they which run in the Christian race, every runner therein, everyone that is tried and endures temptation, everyone that is faithful unto death, everyone that endures to the end, every persevering saint, every overcomer, receives the crown of life; everyone that loves the appearing of Christ, be their gifts, their grace, their usefulness, what they may.

It will be proper to inquire, 1st, What is meant by the appearing of Christ; his second appearance is intended: he appeared once in the end of the world; in the end of the Jewish world, their state, civil and ecclesiastic, when he became incarnate, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; which having done, he is gone to heaven again; where he indeed appears in the presence of God for his people, as their advocate and intercessor; but to them that look for him, shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Heb. 9:24, 26, 28): and this is the appearing which is here meant, when he will come to judge the quick and dead; which will be at his appearing and his kingdom, as says the apostle in ver. 1, of this chapter; then the dead in Christ will arise, and their bodies be united to their souls, Christ will bring with him: and the living saints will be changed; and both will be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and this will be a virtual judgment of them, and a declaring them to be the happy persons to whom the crown belongs: as there will be also a judging of the wicked then found alive, who will perish in the general conflagration, when the earth, and all therein, shall be burnt up; and when Christ will enter upon his personal reign and kingdom, which will continue a thousand years; at the close of which all the wicked will be raised, and stand, small and great, before the judgment-seat, and will be adjudged to the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

This appearance of Christ will be a glorious one; his first appearance was mean; he had no form nor comeliness desirable by men; he appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, and in the form of a servant: but his second appearance will be without sin, and any sinless infirmities; it will be a glorious one: he will come in his own glory; in the glory of his divine nature, the perfections of which will be gloriously displayed; and in the glory of his human nature, being in it crowned with glory and honor; and in the glory of his office, as mediator: and in his Father's glory; the same with his own, as a divine person, as the only begotten of the Father; and clothed as a Judge, with authority and power by him, to judge the quick and dead; and in the glory of his holy angels (Luke 9:26), as attendants on him, and ready to obey his commands: this appearance of Christ will be personal; he himself in person shall descend from heaven; not by another, by a deputy, or by the effusion of the Spirit, but he himself in person; in like manner as he went up to heaven at his ascension, will he come down from thence at his second coming: and this appearance will be

visible; he will be seen in the air by all the risen and living saints; and he will be seen in the clouds of heaven; every eye shall see him (Rev. 1:7), even all the kindreds of the earth. 2dly, This appearance of Christ is to be loved, and is loved by some: to some indeed it will be the great and dreadful day of the Lord; which will burn like an oven, and consume the wicked root and branch; on sight of him, and even of the sign of the Son of man in heaven, all the tribes of the earth will mourn; and persons of the highest rank and class will flee to rocks and mountains, to hide them from his face, the great day of his wrath being come, and at which also the devils will tremble; but he shall appear to the joy of saints, when others will be ashamed and confounded.

Now such may be said to love his appearing, who pray for his appearing and kingdom, or that his kingdom may come, and he appear in his glory; who took earnestly and wistly for the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who long for it, and hasten in their affections, desires, and petitions for it; and say, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly;" as it shows love to a man and his presence, when one most pressingly desires it, and most earnestly and ardently wishes and longs for it: and there are many reasons to be given, why the appearance of Christ should be loved by his saints. 1.

Because then they shall see the person whom they love, in all his beauty, glory and excellencies; now whom having not seen, they love (1 Pet. 1:8); they have not seen him with their bodily eyes, and yet having heard and known much of him, their affections are towards him; but then they shall see him in the flesh, and with their eyes behold him, and not another: now sometimes they lose sight of him in a spiritual sense; he withdraws himself from them, and they know not where he is, and they go in quest of him, saying to one and another, saw ye him whom my soul loveth? (Song of Solomon 3:1), but now he will be always in view, and they will see him, of whom they have often said, whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee! (Ps. 73:25). 2.

Because they will then see him who has so loved them; so loved them, as to become incarnate for them; so loved them, as to lay down his life for them; so loved them, as to wash them from their sins in his blood; so loved them, as to bear their sins, and all the punishment due unto them, to suffer, the just for the unjust; so loved them, as to be delivered into the hands of justice and death for their offenses, and to rise again for their justification; the appearance and sight of such a person, must needs be loved by those to whom he has shown so much love. 3.

Because his appearance will be a glorious one, as before observed, and therefore to be looked for gladly, to be loved and longed for; looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). 4. Because when Christ shall appear, his saints shall appear with him; their souls will be brought along with him, and their bodies will be raised, and both reunited, and they all appear in glory (Col. 3:4) with him, with a glory both on their souls and bodies: when he shall appear, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2); see him in his glory, and be conformed unto him, and changed into the same image and likeness, so far as they are capable of; and then shall they be completely satisfied, and not before; as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake in thy likeness (Ps. 17:15); and it is not to be wondered at, that such persons should love the appearing of Christ. 5.

Because the saints at Christ's appearing shall not only see him, and be like him, but they shall receive much from him; much grace they have received from him now, but they will then receive it in its full perfection; wherefore they are exhorted to gird up the loins of their mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto them at the Rev. of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:13): and when also they

shall receive from him the crown of life and righteousness; for when the chief shepherd shall appear, not only the under-shepherds that are faithful, but even all the sheep themselves, that hear the voice of Christ, and follow him, shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Pet. 5:4). 6.

Because then the saints will be put into the possession of their complete salvation; for to them that look for him, will Christ appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Heb. 9:28): when he came the first time, salvation was wrought out by him for them, he became the author of it; and it is brought home to them by the Spirit of God at conversion, and applied unto them, and they are shown their interest in it; but as yet are not in the full enjoyment of it; though now is their salvation nearer than when they first believed, and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time (Rom. 13:11; 1 Pet. 1:5); that is, when Christ shall appear, and reveal it to them, and put them in the full possession of it. 7.

The appearing of Christ is to be loved by the saints, because they shall be with him, and be forever with him, and never part more: here they have a visit from Christ now and then, and this but short; he is like a wayfaring man that tarries for a night; but when he shall come again from heaven, with all the saints, the dead raised, and the living changed, they shall be caught up to meet him, and so shall they be ever with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17, 18); with which words they may comfort one another now, whilst they are looking and longing for the appearing of Christ.

Thus have I considered this passage of scripture, as briefly as I well could, at the request of the surviving relative of the deceased; of whom it may be expected I should give some account: his person, doctrine, and manner of life, were known to many, if not most of you; some things I may be able to say, not known by you, or but by a few. The Reverend Mr. William Anderson was called by the grace of God under my ministry, between forty and fifty years ago; for I find on search, that he was baptized by me on a profession of his faith, Jan. 1, 1723-4, near forty-four years ago; and soon after was received into fellowship with this church, with which he walked very honorably and comfortably as a private member for several years: and in process of time, it being perceived and thought by some that he had a gift for public usefulness, he was called by the church to the exercise of it; and after sufficient trial, he was regularly sent forth to preach the gospel, where God in his providence might call him; and for some time he preached occasionally among the churches, with good liking and approbation; and in a course of time, I am not able to say exactly how long, he was invited by a small destitute people in Westminster, to preach unto them; which he accordingly did, to their great satisfaction; and after some time they chose him to be their pastor, and gave him a call to take upon him that office, which he accepted of; and was ordained, May 12, 1743, upwards of twenty-four years ago.

This charge he undertook, not with any sinister and worldly views, the people being few, and for the most part poor, and were far from being capable of providing a proper maintenance for him; and certain it is, he left a very lucrative employment to serve them, and the interest of Christ among them, on which his heart was set; and it pleased God to bless his labors, both for edification and conversion, so that there was an increase both of audience and members; and he laid himself out indefatigably to serve them, both as to their temporals and spirituals: by his means, and through his interest, a commodious house for worship was built, which they greatly wanted; and he also brought them to be one of the churches in the fund, for the assistance of poor ministers and churches in the country; in short, he was the instrument of raising them from a low and mean condition, to a greater degree of credit and reputation among the churches than they ever had before: and thus they went on comfortably and harmoniously for many years; but of late a sad retaliation has been made him for all his work and labor of love! the walls of that house, built by

him, through his interest, and the pulpit in it, out of which he was kept, will be standing witnesses against the people that meet in the one, and the man that fills the other, for their unparalleled ingratitude to him; I say, unparalleled, for I am persuaded, that neither the memory of any man living, nor perhaps the history of any age, can furnish an instance similar to this case; that a worthy minister of the gospel should be divested of his office, and turned out of his place, when no charge, neither of immorality nor of false doctrine, was laid against him.

Such hard usage did this faithful minister of Christ meet with! these were the wounds he received in the house of those he once thought his friends; the pain of which went to his heart, and the anguish thereof drank up his spirits. Nevertheless he ceased not from his Master's work; and which he performed with more vigor, comfort and cheerfulness, than could have been expected, among those few that cleaved unto him, and abode with him; and so he continued till his last illness seized him, which it seems was in this pulpit a few weeks ago.

This affliction he bore with great patience; though his bodily pains were sometimes so great, as caused him to cry out in the extremity of them, and to pray and desire his friends to pray for him, that the God of patience would give him more: not a murmuring word against the hand of the Lord was heard from him throughout the whole; nor did any worldly concerns, or any others, distress his mind; nor was the enemy of souls suffered to buffet him, which he thought a great mercy.

He expressed the inward joy and comfort he felt, to various persons at different times: to one, that the doctrines he had preached to others, he now found to be the comfort of his soul: -- to another, that he saw Christ to be his foundation, and doubted not of his interest in him; and in the presence of several declared, that Christ was the only bottom he had to rest on; and that he was precious to him, had been, and would be so: -- to another, that the indissoluble union between Christ and his people, was his great support; but wanted to find himself in a more waiting posture: -- to another, who said to him, Sir, you have almost finished your course; he answered, Yes; but I know, said he, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which he spoke with an emphasis: -- to another, What, my dear child, my joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord! this he spoke with an ecstasy of joy: -- to another, that saw his lips move, and asked him what he said, his answer was, though I am so unworthy in myself, yet I am complete in him; meaning in Christ: -- at another time he was heard to say, "Is Ephraim a dear son? is he a pleasant child?"

"can it be that he is a pleasant child? he answered, yes, he is;" and with an appropriation to himself. -- A few hours before his death, he thus expressed himself, in the words of the church, in the hearing of many friends, let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine; I say, is better than wine: a ministering brother coming into the room, and to his bedside at the same time, he said to him, "I am going home;" to which the brother replied, I perceive you are, and going apace; are you comfortable? he said, "I am; "God is with me, and will be with me." -- About an hour before he died, he uttered these words, "my God, my God, "my God in Christ!"

Then, Sir, said a stander by, you have enough; he replied, "I have." Thus died this worthy servant of Christ, who is now entered into the joy of his Lord, and into his rest; and you, his mournful widow, may dry up your tears, and rather rejoice that he is gone: where he is free from all trouble and distress; where there is no more pain, no more sorrow and crying, no more death; where he is delivered from, and is out of the reach of every open enemy, and every faithless friend; and where he enjoys uninterrupted communion with God, Father, Son; and Spirit, and with angels and glorified saints.

And as for you, his little flock who cleaved unto him, and followed him in his adversity, as I understand you design to keep together to see what the Lord will do with you, be encouraged so to do; for though you may be saying, By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small; the God of Jacob can raise you up; and multiply you, that ye be not few; and glorify you, that ye be not small; sometimes from small beginnings great things arise: if God should send you a pastor, to feed you with knowledge and understanding, which I perceive you have some hope of; if God should bless his labors, the place of your tent may be enlarged, and the curtains of your habitations may be stretched forth, and God may increase you with men as a flock; frequently meet together, pray earnestly and constantly, who knows but God may have a blessing in store for you?

To conclude; since we have all in one shape or another a warfare to war, a race to run, and a trust to discharge; let us manfully fight till the warfare is accomplished; and run, with patience and diligence, the remainder of the race set before us; and faithfully perform the trust reposed in us; that when all is done and over, we may enjoy the crown of righteousness, which is in common provided for all that love the appearing of Christ. ENDNOTES:

[1] Ton agwna ton kalon hgwnismai.

[2] PollouV ki kalouV agwnaV hgwnisato, Plutarch. in Vita Camilli, p. 129. a phrase similar to this in the text.

[3] Pausan. Corinth. sive 50:2. p. 88.

[4] Diodor. Sicul. 50:16. p. 470. Plutarch. Sympos. 50:5. problem 3. p. 676. & Alex. ab Alex. Genial. Dier. 50:5. 100:8.

[5] Pemyan qemiplektoiV ama latoida sefanoiV Pindar. Nemeon. ode 4.4. Vial. Olymp. ode 13. 2. & Isthmion, ode 2. 1. & ode 8.6.

[6] Pausan. Arcad. sive 50:8. p. 532. Plin. 50:19. 100:8. Tertullian, de Corona, 100:7.

[7] Ton amarantinon thV doxhV sefanon, 1 Pet. 5:4.

[8] Summa ejus natura in nomine est appellato, quoniam non marcescat, Plin. Nat. Hist. 50:21. 100:8.

[9] Instances of which may be seen in Pausan, Arcadica, sive 50:8. p. 520.

[10] Pemyan qemiplektoiV ama latoida sefanoiV, Pindar. Nemeon. ode 9. 11.

[11] Hence the sentence of those judges is called agnh krisiV, Pindar. Olymp. ode 3. 2.

[12] Vid. Schmid. Prolegomena in Olympion p. 12, 13.

[13] Called ellanodikai. Vid. AElian. Var. Hist. 50:9. 100:31.

[14] Apodwsoi, reddet, Grotius.

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