TWELVE
SERMONS
PREACHED ON
Several Occasions.

By GEORGE STANHOPED, D.D.
Dean of Canterbury, and Chaplain in
Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

I. The Nature of that Obedience, which is the Condition of Salvation.
II. Of God's deferring to answer those Prayers, which he intends at length to grant.
III. Of Preparation for Death and Judgment.
IV. The Perfection of Scripture Stated, and its Sufficiency Argued.
V. A Sermon before the Sons of the Clergy.
VI. The Happiness of good Men after Death.
VII. The Seaman's Obligations to Gratitude, and a good Life.
VIII. The Case of Mistaken Zeal.
IX. The Influence which National Deliverances, and the Preservation of True Religion, ought to have upon a People.
X. The common Obstructions to Faith and a good Life considered.
XI. A Thanksgiving Sermon for the Successes of the Campaign, 1710.
XII. The Sin and Folly of immoderate Carefulness.

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SERMON III.

Of Preparation for

DEATH and JUDGMENT.

PREACH'D at

WHIT E H A L L,

JANUARY 27. 1694.

MAT. XXIV. 44.

Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an Hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.

ROM the Disciples shewing our Lord the Buildings of the Temple, He takes Occasion, in the Beginning of this Chapter, to foretel the lamentable
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Satisfying herein, so far as his Divine Wisdom thought fit, their Curiosity; who desired to know the precise Time of those dreadful Punishments, kept by God in reserve for the malicious Enemies of his Son, and the Truth. But, in regard there was, one Day, a more eminent Discrimination to be made, between them that believed in Jesus, and them that believed him not; a Distinction, not confined to one particular Place or People, but Universal, and such as none of the Sons of Adam can possibly be exempted from; a Process and Sentence of that infinite Consequence, that the Tribulation of the Jews, horrible as it was, should be but a faint and feeble Image of the Vengeance of the Lord, and the Terrors of the Wicked in That Day; our Saviour does therefore prudently improve this Opportunity, into a Discourse concerning That also. In which, he represents it, as a Thing of the highest and most general Concernment; the Last Great Revolution, which the Persons to whom he spoke, and all
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all Christians after them, were obliged daily and hourly to expect, and diligently to prepare for. Upon which account it is, that he expresses himself in such Terms, as might awaken their Souls, and quicken their Care; by shortening its Distance to the Eye, and declaring it, not only certain, but nigh at hand to every one of them. For thus (according to the known Usage of Prophetick Style, involving withal, and looking forward to the Antitype, when the Type is more directly mentioned,) I understand that Passage; Verily I say unto you, This Generation shall not pass till all these Things be fulfilled; Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my Words shall not pass away.

Several remarkable Dispensations of an avenging Providence had been exhibited to the preceding Ages of the World, which might and should have been abundant Intimations, that God will not fail to call Sinners to Judgment, and repay them to their Face. These ought to have made Men wary, and prevailed upon them to live, as becomes those, who know
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know they must render an Account of their Actions. But, notwithstanding so many repeated Instances of a severe Reckoning, our Lord foresaw, that there would be vast Numbers still unmoved, and unprepared; insomuch, that the Son of Man's Coming should not more resemble the Flood which drowned the Old World, in the Horror and Universal Extent of the Judgment, than it would in the Surprise and Indisposition of Men to meet him. Just such another sweeping Deluge shall This prove, as Swift, as Fatal, as Astonishing to all, who by timely Thought and due Vigilance are not ready for the sudden and amazing Separations it shall make: Watch therefore, for ye know not what Hour your Lord doth come.

And farther yet; Because we ought to be much ashamed, that the Children of this World should be so much wiser in their Generation than the Children of Light; the Example of a careful Householder is propounded, as a fresh Incentive to our Diligence. For if He would most certainly have watch'd, could he but have learnt at what Time the Thief would
would come; how much more ought We to be upon Our Guard against the Son of Man's Coming, which, for its Own Suddenness, and Our Unpreparedness, is compared to that of a Thief in the Night? If He, I say, the Extremity of whose Damage is supposed not to exceed the Breaking up of his House, and the Loss of such Goods, as Time and Providence have a thousand Ways of restoring; how much rather We, whose Treasure is greater, and whose Danger is infinitely greater, and whose Loss, if once sustained, is for ever irreparable? Therefore be ye also ready, for, as at a Time when that Householder is not aware, the Thief rushes in upon Him: So in such an Hour as You think not, the Son of Man cometh.

This I take to be the true Order and Connexion of what our Lord hath deliver'd upon this Matter, from Verse 29. to that of my Text inclusively. Upon which, that I may discourse in the most clear and familiar, as well as what I conceive the most profitable Manner, give me leave to observe this following Method;

I. First,
I. **First**, To propose some Observations leading to a right Apprehension of the Words themselves.

II. **Secondly**, **Coming up to the Point in my Text**, To say something of the Suddenness of the Son of Man's coming, and how that Quality belongs to it.

III. **Thirdly**, To lay down some Directions, how we may be ready to meet him, at that Coming of His.

IV. **After all which**, if the Time will allow me to draw an Inference or two from the foregoing Heads, I shall fully satisfy my Intention in the Choice of this Subject.

I. **I begin** with some Observations relating to the Words themselves, and preliminary to the main Business and immediate Intent of them.

1. **And here, first of all**, I cannot but take notice, That the Son of Man's coming,
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coming, whatever that Expression means, is not at all attempted to be proved, but declared only, and spoken of as a sufficiently known and uncontestable Truth. The Manner of it indeed, and its pompous Appearance, are largely described; The Suddenness of it, and the Improvidence of the World, are particularly foretold; Many importunate Exhortations to qualify and put our Souls in due Posture for it, very movingly insisted upon; and the End of this Coming, both in This and the following Chapter, manifestly declared to be, the taking an Account of his Servants, examining how Each of them had acquitted themselves in their respective Trusts and Capacities, and Awarding to Every one his Portion and Recompence accordingly. From all which it is exceeding plain, that the last General Judgment is meant by it, when All Men shall give account for their own Works, and they that have done Good shall go into Life everlasting, and they that have done Evil into everlasting Fire. But of the Judgment itself, there are no Pains taken to argue and evince, that such a Thing should...
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should be; because this was already an establish'd notorious Principle: And none of those, with whom our Saviour now conversed, were so bold as to call it publickly into question, or so ignorant, as to admit any Doubt concerning it, in their own private Opinions and Consciences.

2. But Secondly, Though by this Coming of the Son of Man, the General Judgment be principally intended; yet to any who shall compare this Passage in St. Matthew, with its parallel in St. Mark, it will be very obvious, that This cannot be the Only Thing meant by it. Our Lord adds there, What I say unto You, I say unto All: Intimating hereby, that the Cautions he lays down, and the Reason of them, concern not some Few, of One Generation only, but were equally applicable to every succeeding Age of Christians to the World's End. It is also evident even to Sense, that the Day of Judgment, literally speaking, did not surprize those very Persons, to whom these Oracles were delivered: There having run out, since their Deaths, more than
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than Sixteen hundred Years already; and at what Distance that Day may still be from us, none but God can tell. If then we can discover any Other Thing, which every Man is equally concerned to provide for, and which may very justly be termed the Coming of the Lord, there will be all the Reason in the World for extending our Saviour's Discourse to That also. Now such in every Circumstance is the Day of our Death; This being to every single Man in particular, what the last Judgment will be to the whole World in general. The Suddenness of its coming may be the same; the State of our Souls will be the same; and consequentially the Danger of being unprovided must needs be the same. For these Two have a strict Connection, and absolute Dependence upon one another. And, "For this Reason (says St. Augustin) he speaks to All, Things, which in their literal Sense belong to such only as shall be found alive at his second Coming, because they do really in this Respect concern All, that the Last Day shall find them in the very same Con-
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"Condition, that the last Day of their Life left them in. Such as every one dies, such shall he come to Judgment. And hence it is his Duty to watch for the Lord's Coming; because that Last Coming shall find him unprepared, if his Death found him so." To the same Purpose St. Jerom, in his Comment on Joel ii. "By the Day of the Lord, says he, understand the Day of Judgment, or the Day of every particular Man's Departure out of the Body. For what shall be done in the Day of Judgment to All, the same is fulfilled, as to each single Person, in the Day of his Death." With these two Fathers agree the Generality of ancient Interpreters, and upon the same Ground too. So little it seems were those good Men sensible of a middle State for the purging Mens Souls by Fire; or any other way of putting those into a Capacity for Heaven afterwards, who were not so at their Entrance into the Chambers of the Dead.

3. Thirdly, It is well worth a Remark, That although both these Comings of
of the Son of Man be intended, yet That Serm. only of the Last Judgment is mentioned. And a great deal of Reason there is, why it should be so: Because This being the Last solemn Appearance of Quick and Dead, attended with all the Terror and Pomp, which we find described in Scripture; would naturally (if any Thing would) work Mens Minds up to a becoming Sense, and mighty Apprehension of their Danger. Whereas Death is become so ordinary, that the very Commonness of it, (which ought in Reason to move us the more) hath render'd it familiar: And therefore This would have been mentioned, as it is seen and discoursed of every Day, without any great Matter of Efficacy or Impression. To which we must add too, that, were it not for that Great Audit before God's Tribunal, there can be no Account at all given, why we should be in any Degree solicitous to prepare for Death. For what is Death, considered in itself, but only a Dissolution of Soul and Body; a State of Darkness and Oblivion; a Fate common to all Things under the Sun? And so, not worth the
the least Part of our Care and Concern, any otherwise than as it consigns us over, and leads us directly to that General Hearing. But upon this Account, everybody must confess, that we lie under the strictest Engagements to work, while this short Day of Life continues; because Our Sun draws towards setting, and the Night comes on apace wherein no Man can work: Or, in the Preacher's Language, to do whatsoever we attempt with the utmost of our Might, because there is no Device nor Knowledge, no Repentance, no Reformation, no Improvement of our selves, in the Grave, whither we are all going.

From these three Considerations thus premised, you easily discern the Substance of my Text to be this: "That it is the Duty of every Christian, as he values his Safety and his Soul, to bear constantly in Mind, and make good Provision against, the Second Coming of the Lord; whether that be the Last Great Judgment; or, which in effect will be all one to Him, the Time of his own Death; since this is but a Preface
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"Preface to that Judgment, and only reserves him bound up in Fetters of Sleep and Earth, till the Almighty Judge shall unlock our close dark Prisons, and summon us all to our Trial." For the Coming of the Son of Man in both these Senses is sure, and therefore it concerns every one to be ready: Especially if we reflect again, that there is a Hazard, nay, a high Probability of his coming in such an Hour as we think not: Which leads me to the

II. SECOND Particular I promised to discourse of: The Suddenness of the Son of Man's Coming, and in what Sense that Quality belongs to it.

Now an Accident is reputed Sudden, either with regard to the Time when it happens, or the Persons to whom it happens; Either when it comes immediately, and without any notice of it beforehand; Or when it overtakes Men unawares, at a Season in which they least think of it, and before they have competently arm'd themselves against it. In the former of these
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SERM. these Respects, the Son of Man's Coming is not, cannot be sudden: For,

1. If by that Coming we mean the General Judgment, Who can have the Confidence to pretend, that This is brought upon the World in a Trice, and without sufficient Notice? Did not the Prophet Daniel, above two thousand Years ago, declare to his People what God had shewed him in a Vision, when his Throne was like a fiery Flame, and his Wheels like burning Fire; Thousand Thousands ministered unto him, and Ten Thousand Times Ten Thousand stood before him; when the Judgment was set, and the Books were opened? Did not the same Mouth proclaim aloud, That they, who sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall awake, some to everlasting Life, and some to Shame and everlasting Contempt? So that, even before the Light of the Gospel shone forth, there were Intimations in abundance given, that the Almighty would arise to Judgment, and reward every Man according to his Work. But we have a much surer Word than that of Prophecy; The express Testimo-
ny of our Blessed Lord, and his Holy Apostles; That very Son, to whom the Father hath committed all Judgment, tells us in the following Chapter, that He will come in his Glory, and all the Holy Angels with him; that he will sit on his Throne, and all Nations shall be gathered before him: And in this Chapter, That he will send his Angels with a great Sound of a Trumpet, and they shall gather together his Elect from the four Winds, from one End of Heaven to the other. St. Paul accordingly hath forewarned the Corinthians, and in Them all to whom that Epistle should come, That we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. He hath likewise pressed the Athenians to speedy Conversion and Repentance, from this most unanswerable Argument, that God hath appointed a Day, in which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given Assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised
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raised him from the Dead. St. Peter acquaints us yet farther, That the Delay of this Judgment had tempted some ungodly and inconsiderate Wretches, to question, whether there would ever be any such Thing. But, while those Scoffers ridiculed Religion, and rallied this uneasy Doctrine, with that impious Taunt, Where, where is the Promise if his Coming? He teaches us to entertain quite different Notions of the Matter. Beloved, says he, be not ignorant of this one Thing, that one Day is with the Lord as a thousand Years, and a thousand Years as one Day. The Lord is not slack concerning his Promise, as some Men count Slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should Perish, but that all should come to Repentance. But the Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night. To all which, and many other express Testimonies of Scripture, if we add the constant Dictates and private Impulses, the Applauses and the Reproaches of Conscience; which, according to the Quality of each moral Action, never fail to strike us
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us with some Expectations of a distant Reward or Punishment: If we reflect upon the Reasonableness, the Necessity of such a Thing, in order to a publick Vindication of the Divine Justice, and a perfect Clearing of the dark and mysterious Methods of Providence, which with such seeming Indifference distributes the Good and Evil Things of this present Life: These will appear so many evident invincible Proofs of a future Judgment; and we cannot with any Forehead pretend, that Almighty God hath been wanting, either to inform us that it shall be, or to warn and fortify us against it.

2. But, Secondly, If by the Son of Man's coming, be understood our own Death; alas! where do we not meet with fresh Remembrancers of that? Besides, that Almighty God hath ordained this Coming, as a necessary Introduction to the Other, for It is appointed unto Men once to die, and after that, the Judgment: Besides this, I say, Every Thing we see, or hear, or know, turns our Monitor, and we must be blind and deaf not to be sensible, and perfectly stupid,
not to apprehend and consider it. Every dying Year, every declining Day, every drooping Flower and falling Leaf, are but so many Emblems of our certain Mortality. And, for fear we should neglect these, as Instances too remote, and too little concerning us; the continual Change of our own Bodies brings the Matter home, and makes the unwelcome Application for us. For, in despi8ght of all the vain Flatteries, and perverse Reasonings of Flesh and Blood to the contrary; the unsteady Condition of Human Nature is a most sensible, an ever-present Argument, that as Man comes up like a Flower, so there is no Remedy, but one way or other he must be cut down like it too. If he escape the rude Assaults of sad untimely Accidents; if neither Violence crop him off, nor Sickness blast him in the Bud; yet the Slower Decays of Age will be sure to wither his Beauty, and make his Strength bend and stoop, till he be forced down into his native Earth again: And yet in all this Comparison there is, as Job well observes, one mighty Disproportion; That of
of a Plant or an Herb there is hope, that it will sprout again; The Return of the Year and a kindly Season may cherish it, or the Care of the Cultivater and Refreshing Moisture may make it bud, and hinder the tender Branch from ceasing; But Man dieth and wasteth away, be lieth down, and riseth not, till the Heavens be no more.

Or, if the Examples of other Creatures be not drawn into Consequence, nor the gradual Decays of our own Persons duly attended to; yet even where these have not accomplished their full work, how prodigiously impenetrable must we be, not to take the Impression? The same common Nature is imparted to All Men, and All are liable to the same Dangers and Infirmities. Our own late sad Experience hath convinced us, that neither Youth, nor Vigour, neither Piety nor Power, is Defence sufficient against this Fatal Blow. If any Human Excellence could get above it; if the most Zealous Prayers, and United Wishes of Good People, could suspend it; that Royal Pattern of Virtue, whose Life was worth Ten Thousand
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Thousand of Ours, had not so soon left
us this most afflicting Instance, That not
Any, not even the Greatest, not even
the Best, can have any Pretence to think
themselves exempted from a Destiny,
which is inflicted without Distinction, upon
Persons of all Ages, all Conditions, and
all Constitutions. And of This indeed
we have Experiments without Number,
the fullest Evidence that can possibly be
given. For the last Groans and Agonies
of departing Souls, the sad Solemnities
of Funerals, the dejected Looks and
mourning Weeds of Melancholy sur vi-
ging Friends, and the still more melting
Sighs and Tears of the poor Widows and
Fatherless, bereaved of their best Com-
fort and Support; These are Objects in
every Time, and every Place, that do
so constantly present themselves to our
View, that a Man must even go out of
the World not to meet with them. How
then shall we call that Coming of our
Lord Sudden for want of sufficient No-
tice; which we are so many several ways,
and so continually reminded of, that with-
out doing the extremest Violence to our
Reason,
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Reason, and our Senses, it is impossible for us not to expect and daily apprehend it?

But I observed before, that an Accident is sometimes reputed Sudden, as well in regard of the Person to whom it happens, as of the Time when it happens. And certainly, that Observation never met with so many Experimental Proofs in any one Instance, as it does in the Case before us. For it would really amaze any thinking Man, to reflect, how the Generality of the World behave themselves upon this Occasion; and how very small a Part of their Care they make it, to provide for the Coming of their Lord, in Either of the forementioned Respects. They commonly profess to believe a Future Judgment with the highest Degree of Assurance that is possible; They make frequent and pathetical Harangues upon the Certainty of Death, and the Shortness of the Time permitted us here upon Earth; They pretend too to be sensible, that upon this fleeting Moment depends an Eternity of Bliss or Woe; That their Immortal Souls, and all that can
can be called Precious, lie at stake; and must be dealt with hereafter, as this little Span of Life is improved now: But still, as if they had made a Covenant with Death, and were in League with Hell, their Conversations argue a quite contrary Persuasion; their Affections and Desires fix and terminate here below; and, by a strange Sort of unthinking Perverseness, the perishing Trifles of this World wholly possess and employ them; while the main End and Business of their Creation, the Concerns of a Future and Better State, (which are in truth the only Things worth a Man's Consideration and Pains,) are scarce allowed any Place at all in their Thoughts and Memories.

How Prodigious, and withal how Dangerous a Folly this wretched Negligence is, you need not be told any more, after what hath been already delivered in the Beginning of this Discourse. And therefore, without farther Enlargement to represent it here, I shall descend to my

III. Third Particular, Wherein I proposed to lay down some Directions, how
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how we may escape the Condemnation of such careless Men, and what Course we must take, to be found ready to meet our Lord at his Coming.

And here I shall insist upon such Rules only, as I find given by our Blessed Saviour himself upon this very Occasion. Now they are especially Four; Two of which are Negative, and regard some Vices, which must be declined; The other Two are Positive, and prescribe some Duties to be observed. The Vices to be avoided, are Sensuality, and Love of the World; and against these our Lord gives this Caution: Take heed to your selves, lest at any time your Hearts be over-charged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, and Cares of this Life, and so that Day come upon you unawares. In which Words, the Advice is given in such a Manner, as at the same Time to discover the Ground upon which it proceeds; and wherein the Danger of being addicted to such a Course of Life consists. For by this means, it seems, Men are exposed to Surprise, and apt to have their Hearts over-charged. My present Intent from
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from hence is to shew, that This is the Natural and Unavoidable Consequence of those Vices, and so they cannot but be most pernicious Hindrances to a Christian's Preparation for Death and Judgment.

1. The Former of these is Sensuality, which our Lord hath expressed by Surfeiting and Drunkenness; Intending I suppose hereby, not only those two Sins, barely considered in themselves; but all the cursed Effects of Gluttony and Intemperance, and the many vile Lusts and Mischiefs, which are wont to follow thereupon. For the Indulging an Habitual Practice of these Vices, discomposes the Inward, no less evidently, than it distempers and destroys the Outward Man. For as Here they pall the Appetite, vitiate the Palate, clog and dull the Animal Spirits, and, in one word, render the Body a Sink of Diseases and Ill Humours; the very same Effects in Proportion have they upon the Mind too. From hence Mens Love of God, and Esteem for Goodness grow faint and cold; Their Inclinations and Desires are per-
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perfectly changed, and corrupted; They lose all Relish of true and manly Satisfactions, and can no longer taste any Thing that is Rational, and Heavenly, and Pure. Thus, while they are gorged with carnal Delights, they become listless, and heavy, and unactive; degenerate into Flesh and Sense; grow more and more unfit for any Attempt becoming Men and Christians; and at last lie utterly sunk and buried in Spiritual Stupidity and Sloth. Now all this proceeds, partly from the Intimate Union between the Soul and Body, and partly from the Opposition between these Two in the Business of Religion. Hence it comes to pass, that, as oft as we pamper the Flesh, we do at the same time not only load our Better and more refined Part, but we cherish a deadly Foe too. Whereas on the Contrary, a Religious Sobriety keeps Men awake and active; gives them Leisure to cool and be serious; admits so necessary Thoughts as Death and Judgment; and suggests, that upon Them depends the Bliss, which Immortal Spirits were design'd to attain. A Sensual Man hath only his Intervals, and short
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SERM. short Snatches of Thinking, and even in
III. Them, a Byass upon his Judgment; and incredibly hard it is to raise him up to any tolerable Estimate of Heaven and Intellectual Joys. But Mortification and Temperance leave us free and unprejudiced, give us a right Turn of Soul, and Reason room to exert itself; They inspire a generous Disdain of all Earthly Enjoyments, and dispose us to thirst after another World, rather than to take up with the Treacherous Soothings of This. For, by removing our false Opticks, and shewing every Thing to the naked Eye, they soon convince us, how very little the Gayest Man here can arrive at; the bitter Conclusion Sinful Pleasures are sure to find; and the many Dreadful Snares and Inconveniencies, which Ease and Luxury betray Men to.

2. The Second Thing our Blessed Saviour advises his Disciples against, is the Love of the World. Take heed (says he) that ye be not over-charged with the Cares of this Life. Where, by forbidding to engage too deeply in such Cares, you may be very confident, it is no
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no part of his Meaning, that we should so entirely lay ourselves out upon the Next Life, as to look after no Provision for a Convenient Subsistence in This: But, as in Matt. vi. he blames such Degrees of Anxiety, as argue unworthy Distrusts of Providence, and ill suit a Christian's Faith; so here he condemns that criminal Excess of Care, which disorders Men in their Duty, and takes their Minds off from their own Mortality, and the Regard for another World. Every one's own Experience would quickly teach him, if our Saviour had not done it to his hand, what inconsistent Things the Service of God and Mammon are; and how impossible it is, at one and the same Time, to be extremly solicitous for this World's Goods, and to seek the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, with any becoming Degree of Affection and Zeal. The Matter indeed is so ordered, that these Cares, in any Condition, are the most dangerous Snares a Man can fall into. If he be poor, and struggling hard for a Competency; Then they perplex and distract him, they fill him with a thousand mean
mean Despondencies, and expose him to all the little Shifts and base Arts of unjust Gain. If he be wealthy, and a Desire of increasing Riches occasion it; nothing can be more directly opposite to the Duty of Preparation in my Text: For Abundance and Success commonly inflame those Desires, and render the Mind but more Sordid and Abject; They fasten the Soul down to the Vanities of This World, and will not suffer it to soar up to Another. But above all, they render the Thoughts of Death, and of leaving those belov'd Treasures, a most tormenting Consideration. So that every Way this immoderate Solicitude is irreconcilable with a Christian's making ready to meet his Lord. For the Indigent Man, who is overcharged with it, gives himself no Leisure to provide for his Coming; and the Rich Man cannot endure to think of it. No wonder then if Men thus cogg'd and incumber'd do not escape that Snare, which the Gospel says that Day shall prove to all them that dwell, but especially to Them that so dwell, as to set up their Rest, on the Earth.

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To the Two fore-mentioned Evils our Lord opposes as many Positive Virtues, which may assist and further us in our Provision for his Approach.

The Former of these is Watchfulness. By which we are to understand in general, Frequent Meditations upon, and a continual Regard to, that most Important Day: A having, as the Scripture calls it, our Loins Girt, and our Lights burning; A discharging our selves from the burdensome Concerns of Life, and making all here fit easy and loose about us; and A Weaning our Affections from all such Pleasures, as might detain and divert us in our Christian Course. And as Light is sometimes, with a peculiar Energy, called Shining, thus it denotes an exemplary Piety, a graceful Behaviour, and extraordinary Diligence in our Calling; A Conscientious maintaining the Post we are appointed to, and answering all that can be expected from us, in our respective Stations and Capacities. Thus our Lord explains himself in the Verses next after my Text, and that one Instance is applicable to
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Ser. III. infinite others, *Who is a Faithful and Wise Servant, whom his Lord hath made Ruler over his Household, to give them Meat in due Season? Blessed is that Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.*

2. *Once more. In regard our Task is difficult, and our Avocations many; our Enemies Strong, and We of our selves but Weak, but very Weak; we are farther advised and commanded, to be frequent and diligent, in calling in Succours from abroad, and applying our selves for Strength and Help to Him, who alone can, and who will not fail in his due Time to deliver us. *Take ye heed, (says Christ,) watch and pray, for ye know not when the Time is. And in another Place, Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all those Things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. Our own Endeavours will do something; and certain it is, that most Men might do a great deal more, than either they do, or think they can do,*
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would they but set about their Business heartily, and in good Earnest.

But still, nothing can be a more fatal Injury to us, than the relying upon our own Strength and Diligence; supposing This to be never so Faithful, That to be never so Great. For the very Best of us all, (God help us) does not so far conquer the Infirmitiies of Human Nature, as to be always upon his Guard; but will frequently find himself surprised, and hath therefore abundant occasion to pray, both that he may be forgiven his former Inadvertencies, and enabled to stand faster for the Time to come. Especially to intreat and implore, with all the Earnestness and Holy Passion imaginable, that In the Hour of Death, and in the Day of Judgment, the Good Lord would deliver him. That the Last mighty Change, upon which the whole of his future Fate must depend, may not find him Idle or Unprovided; but Awake and Busy, Discharged of every Weight, and his Lamp
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Lamp lighted and trimm'd; that when the Bridegroom appears, he may have nothing to do, but to obey his Call, and Go in with him to the Marriage.

I proceed now, in the last Place, to draw some few Inferences from what has been said, and so conclude.

1. And First of all. We have here a very fair Occasion given us, of contemplating the Exceeding Wisdom and Justice of our Universal Judge. His Wisdom is eminently seen, in taking such a Course to inform Men of this Second Coming, as is, of all others, the most proper and likely to put them upon Preparing for it; and This vindicates his Justice, when he Punishes all those, who do not prepare for it accordingly. That he will most assuredly come, as that respects both our own Death and the Last General Doom, we have all the Certainty imaginable: But as to the punctual precise Time of Either of these Comings, he hath left us as utterly uncertain. Now this very Manner of Dealing is the Strongest Argument in the World, for Care and Cir-
Circumspection. For, had that Critical Serm Minute been revealed to every particular Man; this had been the Way to encourage Licentiousness and Security. The Corrupt Inclinations of Flesh and Blood might have taken mighty Advantage from hence, to persuade Men, that some little of the last Remains of Life, the Dregs of a Feeble old Age, would abundantly suffice to be dedicated to God; and that a small Matter would set all a'right between Them and so Gracious, so Forgiving a Matter; That it were too much in all Reason to put themselves under Restraints, and be perplexed for a Thing a great Way off; and therefore they might safely indulge, and live at large, the Beginning of their Days at least; and thus Many would have laid hold on but too fair a Pretence, for a late Reformation and Death-bed Repentance. We see daily, how apt Men are to run these Risques, as the Cafe stands now; and may reasonably presume, they would have been much more bold in venturing their Souls, had it been otherwise. But as it is, there can be no colourable Excuse for such a wicked Negligence. For the
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particular Instant of a Thing's happening, is but an Accidental and Extrinsic Circumstance, and does not in the least take off from the Reality and Certainty of the Thing. The Promises and Predictions of God are unchangeable in this Point; Where Eternal Truth stands engaged, the Thing subsists, in His Decree, already; and what he hath so said shall be brought to pass, we ought to esteem as Certain, (and in truth it is as certain every whit) as if our own Eyes beheld it now, performed in every Circumstance. Come he will, That's beyond all Question. But whether in the first, or the second, or the third, or the fourth Watch, we cannot tell; And for this Reason we ought to be extremely circumspect, and to watch always. Death and Judgment may overtake our Infancy; or they may snatch us away in the Heat and Bloom of Youth; or they may crush our riper and more confirmed Years; so that Health and Vigour will justify no Man's being unprovided; But if they should delay till the fourth Watch, till Old Age, and Grey Hairs shed themselves upon our Heads,
Heads, yet still this Forbearance does not prove, either that they might not have broke in upon us sooner, or that they will never do it at all. Against the former our Saviour uses this very Motive to Caution in my Text; and to the latter I may very properly apply that Passage of the Prophet Habakkuk concerning his Vision, *It is (says he) for an Appointed Time; at the End it shall speak and not lye; though it tarry, yet wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

2. Secondly, What has been said upon this Subject, may serve for a very just Reproof to the Unreasonableness and Vanity of such Men, as are eternally bewailing the Shortness of Life, and uttering such Complaints, as seem to insinuate, that God deals hardly with Mankind, in allowing them no longer a Space for working out their Salvation. *My Brethren, let no Man deceive you with vain Words, Almighty God is a Fair and Bountiful Master. He affords every one abundant Opportunities for the Work appointed him to do.*
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to be accounted Long-liv'd, who have finished the Task and Business of Life, then (God knows) the Generality of People live but a very little while. But the Question in this Case must not be, whether such Men have actually wrought out their Salvation; but whether or no, supposing them to make the best Use of their Time, they might not have done it, if they would. And the true Christian Way of Computation is to measure Life, by the Improvements made of it, rather than by a Term or Number of Years, be they never so many. He that dies Old in Virtue, can never be so Young, as to die untimely; and he that is a Stranger to This, tho' he should equal the Years of Methuselah, yet, as to all the true Purposes of Living, is an Infant still. In a word, If Men will trifle away their precious Hours, when they are perpetually told how much depends upon them, the Fault is their own, and who can help it? The shortest Life is sufficient to bring a Diligent and Careful Man to Heaven, and therefore the shortest Life is long enough. For Ten thousand Ages can do no more; and
and to the Idle, the Sensual, and Secure, even those Ten thousand Ages would be as much too short, as the Space now afforded them.

3. Thirdly, and Lastly, From what went before, it does likewise appear, with what Prudence and Piety our Holy Mother, the Church of England teaches, all her Children to deprecate the Misery and Judgment of a Sudden Death. Sudden I mean, in respect of its self; when it is not usher'd in, by any preceding Sickness, or such visible Sinkings of Nature, as God is commonly pleased to send before, for the more awakening Significations of his last Great Call. 'Tis true, indeed, not knowing what Hour the Lord doth come, we should expect him every Hour; and the Suddenest Death will be no Excuse to them who do not so; but yet we have a great deal of Reason to wish and to pray, that so important a Change may approach with something of Warning and Solemnity. The best of us all, after his nicest Preparation, will find Employment enough for his last Hours; and I am apt to believe, it is very difficult, even for Good Men, in Health and Vigour,
Of Preparation for Vigour, to bring themselves into so serious a Frame of Mind, with regard to the next World, as They may, who see and feel themselves just upon the Brink of it. A new Scene of Things and Thoughts then opens; such as kindles a Zeal sometimes where it was not before; and makes it burn brighter, where it was. And oft we see such glad Foretastes of Bliss, as abundantly compensate the bodily Pains, and make all a Good Man's Bed in his Sickness. Besides all This, to be assisted with the Advice of our Spiritual Guides, to be strengthened with the Viaticum of the Church, the Sacrament and Seal of our Redemption, to be recommended by the Intercessions of our parting Friends; These are mighty Comforts and Advantages. So that a lingering Disease, which usually passes for a great Affliction, is in this respect a great Blessing; for while Death makes regular and leisurely Advances, he deals with us like a Fair Enemy, calls aloud to the Field, and bids us make ready for the Combat. But to be hurried away to Eternity in a Trice;
Death and Judgment.

Trice; To have Body and Soul torn asunder at one Stroke, without one poor Minute or two allow'd to take leave; without one, Lord, have Mercy upon me, at the last Gasp! Jesus defend us! Sure this cannot but seem a dreadful Thing to every considering Christian. We will wish then, and we will pray earnestly, that God would not deal so with Us; But, since it is possible, that he may use This, as well as any other Method of calling us to himself; it will be as much as Heaven and our Souls are worth, to take care that the suddenest Death may not be sudden in respect of Us; but that we be always watchful, and upon our Guard, Provided and Ready, and therefore especially so, because, as my Text tells us, In such an Hour as we think not, the Son of Man cometh.

And now, were it necessary (as I hope, after what has been said, it is not,) to urge this Duty yet farther upon you, I promise my self, that could not be done more successfully, than by proposing to Your Imitation that Royal Example, which ought, and certainly will not cease, to
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To live in our Remembrance and Admiration, as long as Time and Memory themselves shall last. But the Endeavouring to represent this is attended with many Difficulties. For Bright Patterns in Christianity, and Master-pieces in Nature, are what a Man may shew respectful Intentions in Drawing, but there are few hands so Masterly, that their Art and Colours can ever come up to the Life. Besides, Your own Recollection can give you more lively Images of this kind, than all the Words in the World are able to express; and Happy sure were You, her Servants, who stood continually before Her, and saw and heard her Wisdom and Goodness. Happy indeed, if you so saw, and so recollected, as in your own Lives to express those Graces, which render’d Her the Glory and Ornament of Her Age and Sex; the most conspicuous, not of Queens only, but of Wives and Women; and to every Humble, and Charitable, and Devout Christian, a Pattern of Prudence, and Piety, and Condescension; of all that Sweetness and Good Nature, which Religion, and no-

8.

1 King. x.
thing but Religion, can inspire Men with. But the Enlarging upon This Subject, in This Place, and This Presence, would be apt to provoke a Passion, which, though it might sit well upon Friends and Attendants; yet ill agrees with the Reflections of a Christian, upon so Pious, so Majestick a Death. All therefore that I shall add is only This: That the Last Act of our Lives will depend upon those that go before; and the only Way to Die as your Admirable Mistress did, is to Live as She did. When we can with Her declare, that our Provisions for Eternity are not to make at our Last Hours; Then, and not till Then, may we hope to attain to some competent Degree of Her Magnanimity, and Noble Resignation. Surprise is the most dangerous Distress, that can possibly befall us in that great Conflict; and They, who have fenced themselves well against This, may with an Easiness and Composure, like Hers, look the King of Terrors in the Face, and Triumph even in Death. And, May the Illustrious Virtues of our Sovereign excite this commendable Emulation in
I 12 Of Preparation for, &c.

S E R M. us all, That so, in God's due Time, we

III. may not only attend and rejoice about

Her Heavenly, as we did here about Her

Earthly Throne, but (which could not

be done here) that we may partake of,

and share That Crown with Her for Ever!

Which He of his Infinite Mercy grant

for Jesus Christ his sake. Amen.