



4986 cc. 56

**A Funeral Sermon.**

---

A

**SERMON,**

DELIVERED

AT HARTFORD, JANUARY 6, 1807,

*AT THE FUNERAL OF*

**THE REV. JAMES COGSWELL, D. D.**

LATE PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN SCOTLAND,

IN THE TOWN OF WINDHAM.

---

By **NATHAN STRONG,**

Pastor of the North Presbyterian Church in Hartford.

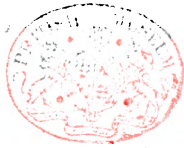
---

*HARTFORD:*

PRINTED BY HUDSON AND GOODWIN.

---

1807.



---

## A FUNERAL SERMON.

---

GENESIS XV. 15.

*And thou shalt go to thy Fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.\**

**T**H**ES**E words were a promise to Abraham, the ancestor of the Jewish church, who in the scriptures is called the friend of God and the spiritual father of the faithful. Much is said of this eminent patriarch, and many promises were made to him, as father of the Hebrew nation and progenitor of our divine Lord, the saviour of mankind. The dealings of God with this ancient saint, and the favour he received from him, are known to all who read the holy scriptures. In the chapter from which our text is taken, there is an account of a solemn covenant, which God was pleased to make with his servant Abraham, insuring many temporal blessings to his posterity, and in them as a type, many spiritual blessings to his church unto the end of the world. To Abraham personally he promised, "Fear not Abraham, I am thy shield and exceeding great re-

ward: Thou shalt go to thy Fathers in peace, thou shalt be buried in a good old age."

The occasion leads me to consider the promise made to Abraham; and in a more particular manner, that part of it which related to his death. "Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age."—The blessings promised him in this passage are that he should live to a great age, and then die in peace; two greater blessings, especially when we consider them connected with many others, cannot be mentioned; no other benefits are more generally desired by mankind.

I. First he had a promise that he should live to a good old age.

Whether old age, considered by itself and unconnected with other considerations, is to be esteemed a distinguished blessing, I am sensible may be doubted. It must have its peculiar pains and troubles; they are very many, and such as the young cannot possibly conceive; still, it is generally considered as a blessing, and there are two most important reasons why it should be thus esteemed.

The first is, it gives a longer opportunity for doing good, which is one of the important reasons for our present existence. The aged have had many talents committed to their charge; they have had a long season to labour in the Lord's vineyard; and many opportunities to minister to the earthly necessities and spiritual wants of their fellow creatures. If they have been faithful in duty, they have warned many sinners, instructed and comforted many Christians, relieved many necessities, poured the oil of gladness

into many disconsolate hearts, and done much to build up the kingdom of Jesus. What more venerable sight do we ever see, than an aged Christian, whose faith and good works have been an example and a blessing to others around him; who hath cautioned, warned, instructed and educated many to serve the Lord and keep his commandments; who hath resisted the obduracy of the age in which he lived, and been a pattern to the people of God. The influence of such an one in society is great; it hath acted not only on the young, but on his contemporaries in life; the guilty have trembled before him, the fages have been instructed, and he hath had the power of directing the sentiments of many near him, and perhaps of the age in which he lived. To be spared to old age for this purpose; to be an Abraham in the earth, is indeed a blessing from the Lord. It is principally in this view of the subject, that such a promise, as the text contains, can be considered a distinguished favour; for we must believe in the divine assurance, that the sinner, an hundred years old is accursed. If there be aged persons attending on this occasion, who are yet in their sins; let them remember that they are the most miserable of men; that years will not exculpate their transgressions; and that their long continued sin against the grace of God, will accumulate upon them a double weight of sorrow. By the present scene, let all such be warned to spend the remnant of their days in reviewing a mispent life, and turning to the Lord, by such faith and repentance, as are productive of good works.

A SECOND reason why old age is commonly considered as a personal blessing, is that it gives the longest opportunity to prepare for entering on the rewards of another world.

Preparation for another world, will appear to every considerate person, of the greatest importance. The chief thing, for which this life was given to us, is to prepare for another. This is not our home; nor can we here lay up durable happiness. The work of preparation is great; great considered as an act of sanctifying and pardoning grace in God; and great as containing all the diligence, watchfulness, striving, faith and obedience, which we ourselves can exercise. It appears to us, as though the longest season of preparation is most desirable; therefore, men naturally wish for it. It must be allowed by all a happy circumstance, to have an opportunity, deliberately to consider, to examine and review ourselves: to search into the ground of our expectations and compare them with the unchangeable rules of trial in the word of God, and to make proof of our own principles and steadfastness, by those opportunities which must necessarily arise from the events of a long life. Such are the apprehensions of mankind, from which they always esteem the continuance of life to be a blessing; and such appears to be the representation of God's word, or it would not have been promised to Abraham that he should go down to the grave in a good old age. Altho' the Christian, for this reason, may wish to be continued in life; yet, if he were certain of his interest in Christ, and did not think that his



continuance in the world was necessary for the best interest of the church of God, he would say like Paul, "It is better to depart and be with Christ." There, are my home, my house not made with hands, my city whose builder and maker is God, my brethren and companions in the faith and patience of the gospel, and my eternal deliverance through the free grace of God, from the appetites, passions, and sin with which I am now burdened. There, are the God whom I love and adore, the Saviour in whose merits alone I hope, and the Spirit of holiness, with whose influence I desire to be eternally filled. There, are those anthems of praise, offered around the throne of God and the Lamb, in which I desire to join forever.

But let not any, from this representation, imagine that old age will prepare them for death. Let not any, when they behold the remains of an aged saint, think from this, that if they might live to the same age, they also should be pious. Though aged piety be honourable, beyond all other things on earth; yet piety doth not depend on age. My Hearers, many years will have no efficient power to make you pious. Time will give you a further space for repentance: If rightly used it will be a blessing; if misused it will add to your guilt. Let me also, remind you that every year, every day is adding to the difficulty of repentance and reformation. Delay not, therefore, a life of sincere religion, imagining that old age, if you should through the sovereign determination of God arrive to it, will assist you in the duties of religion. So far from this,

be assured that every moment you spend in sin is adding to the difficulty of repentance, and every new infirmity of age will make it more painful, laboriously to strive that you may enter into the kingdom of heaven.

II. Abraham had a promise, in the text, that he should be gathered to his fathers in peace.

This is a summary, a comprehensive promise of all blessings, which can be granted by Sovereign and Almighty grace to a dying Saint.

The phrase of being gathered to their fathers, which we find so often in the history of the patriarchal age, was generally used in the case of those saints, who were eminent for piety. Without entering into the inquiry, whether or not this was always the case, all must agree it was a very respectful representation of their death; and where we find such an addition as the text contains, "gathered in peace," we must allow it to be a very plain intimation that they were removed to the happiness and glory of the world to come.—Therefore, to be gathered to our fathers in peace implies the richest blessings, salvation from sin, and everlasting life.

1. It implies reconciliation with God through the blood of the covenant, and in consequence of this, the forgiveness of all sin.

This covenant was made and renewed with Abraham, at divers times, one of which was the very solemn occasion on which the words of the text were spoken. He believed the truth of God in this covenant, and his faith was counted to him for righteousness; by which, as it was afterwards ex-

plained by the apostle, we must understand that thro' his faith he was entitled to the righteousness of Christ and all its benefits, of which the forgiveness of sin and peace and reconciliation with God were principal.

Being gathered to the grave in peace doth therefore mean, the forgiveness of all sin, and a free and full justification through the merits of a Saviour.

2dly. To be gathered to the grave in peace, implies a love and enjoyment of God, and those smiles of his reconciled countenance sometimes enjoyed by his people in this world, which give them joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The scriptures speak of a peace which passeth understanding, as being the peculiar portion of Christians, who love and serve the Lord. They often enjoy this in the exercise of faith and communion with God, in the discharge of their duties, and in the hour of death; so that the change, which dismayeth others, to them is stript of all its terror. This peace consisteth in a sight of the divine excellence, particularly imparted to them by the divine Spirit; in a love of God, with confidence in his grace and all-sufficiency; and a sense of his love and grace shed abroad in their souls, thro' the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost.

Happy is that Servant of the Lord, who enjoyeth this, whether he be living or dying! If he live he will live unto the Lord; or if he die, it will be his unspeakable gain.

B

3dly. To be gathered to the grave in peace, implies eternal life and glory to succeed the death of these frail bodies.

“ Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”—“ Precious in the fight of the Lord is the death of his faints.”—“ And I heard a voice, saying, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them.”—“ Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.”

This is the blessedness and consolation of the faints in the prospect of death, and their reward after it ; especially, of those, who like Paul are faithful in declaring his gospel to men, and seal their sincerity to a good old age, by becoming examples to mankind, thro’ a life of obedience to the truth. When consummated in holiness, they will find a perfect and glorious happiness, in beholding, praising and serving the Lord. Such, altho’ departed from us, are not gone to an useless and inactive state. While their bodies sleep in the dust, until the glorious resurrection morning, their departed spirits, clothed with new energies of action and made perfect in holiness, will be more active instruments in the kingdom of Jesus, and sound louder alleluias to God and the Lamb, than any of their surviving brethren can do here on earth.

In this world, Christians must have pain and disease, the common infirmities of life and old age, the afflictions which arise from fore bereavements,

and all the sorrows of an earthly state : and thro' these things they are travelling in the steps of their once suffering, but now exalted Redeemer. Such appointments are designed by God in covenant faithfulness for their good. They must, also, feel the burden of remaining sin over which they frequently weep, saying, O wretched man, that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? But there is a promise remains to them of entering into the joy of their Lord. O happy, O glorious prospect ! How can we contemplate it without speaking forth the praise of the glory of the riches of sovereign grace in the Lord our Redeemer ! My Brethren, we must be afflicted, and who will fly from afflictions, when he considers that they shall work out for him the peaceable fruit of righteousness, and a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory !—We must die, but who would refuse to die, that he might come to a state of perfect holiness, to the presence of God, and the innumerable assembly of the spirits of just men made perfect ? These are the prospects and promises held forth to every child of God. Christian, if thou art assured of thy faith and obedience, be not afraid of death, for it will be thy admission to a state where sin shall never pain thee more, nor the smiles of thy Saviour's countenance ever be withdrawn ; and whatever be the circumstances of thy death, thou shalt sleep in Jesus and rest in glory.

The occasion on which we are convened hath led me to these reflections. We are gathered around

the remains of an aged Father, who hath been one of the Abrahams of our age, and I do not know an instance, in which we have better reason to hope that the promise hath been fulfilled, "Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age;" of the latter we have ocular demonstration, and of the former we have no reason to doubt.

Doctor JAMES COGSWELL, whose remains are now before us, was the son of Mr. Samuel and Mrs. Ann Cogswell, born in the town of Saybrook, January 6th, 1720. In his childhood his parents removed to the town of Lebanon, where they remained to their old age, when he took them to his own house, and most tenderly supplied all their wants, until he was called by the providence of God to commit them to the dust.—This son was early distinguished by a love of science, and a conviction of the truth and importance of the Christian doctrines, which was the occasion of his being selected by his acquaintance as a proper subject for a learned education.

He was admitted a student in Yale College, in the year 1738, and was graduated in the year 1742.—Soon after this he became a preacher of the gospel, and was ordained Pastor of the first Church of Christ in Canterbury in the year 1744.

In the year 1771, he was dismissed from this pastoral charge, and early in the following year installed pastor of the Church in Scotland, a parish in the town of Windham, where he continued until De-

ember 1804. While in this place he received the degree of doctor of divinity, from Yale College.—Being rendered incapable of public ministerial service, thro' the natural infirmities of age, it became necessary for his comfortable support, to remove him to the family of his son, Doctor Mafon Fitch Cogswell of this place.—This was a comfortable retreat to the venerable parent, and here the Lord hath repaid to him in kind, his filial piety to his own parents in their old age; here he hath been nourished with the most tender affection, which may God reward, untill his decease January 2d, 1807, and had he survived until this day, which is the anniversary of his birth, he would have completed 87 years.

This servant of the Lord hath been a man of affliction, having buried three wives and four children, one child only surviving;\* and thro' all these

---

\* The father of the deceased, Mr. Samuel Cogswell, died at his house, in the year 1752; and his mother about two years afterwards. His first wife, Alice, was daughter of Jabez Fitch, Esq. of Canterbury. His second wife was Mrs. Martha Devotion, relict of Rev. Ebenezer Devotion of Scotland. His third wife the Widow Hibbard of Scotland.

His children, all born of the first wife, were;

James, born July 1746, died Nov. 20th, 1792.

Alice, born December 1749, died May 9th, 1772.

Samuel, born May 1754, died August 24th, 1790.

Mason Fitch, born September 1761, still surviving.

Septimius, born August 1769, died October 1773.

The mother of the above children, died April 1772, in the 48th year of her age.

scenes of sorrow, had grace given him, to honour the divine sovereignty, and his own christian and ministerial profession.—He was an example to the Church of Christ in tribulation as well as in joy.

While a member of college he was distinguished for sobriety, application and especially for classical science, which he preserved thro' his whole life.

While he was in his collegiate life, there was a great revival of religion in the land, in which the college shared, whereby many were disposed to undertake the work of the ministry, who have since been burning and shining lights in our churches.

At this time, what was with him before a general conviction, of the truth and importance of Christianity, was changed into an experimental acquaintance with its power and comforts; which confirmed him in the purpose, of devoting his life to the service of his Redeemer, in the ministry of the gospel. His natural temper was social and cheerful; he had a great command of his passions; his intellect was quick and clear; his imagination was lively and pleasant, yet chastened with the sobriety and seriousness of a Christian, and accompanied with the dignity becoming a minister of the gospel.

His natural disposition, together with his religious acquirements, rendered him a pleasing companion to all who reverence virtue; a beloved child of his parents; a kind husband, and a parent, whom his children could not fail to love and reverence.

He was a firm believer of the evangelical doctrines of the gospel, and as on these he built his own hope



of a blessed immortality ; so, he inculcated on others the necessity of both believing and obeying them, that they might inherit eternal life.—The faith on which he relied as divine and saving, was one that is accompanied by fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, and productive of good works.

His preaching was, generally, plain and practical, addressed to the understanding and consciences of his hearers.—The natural and Christian benevolence, which shone in his countenance, were admirably adapted to enforce the doctrines of divine love, and impress the minds of his hearers with the words of our Lord, “ A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another ; as I have loved you that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.—”

His private diary, which he kept for many years, gives abundant evidence, that in prosperity he was grateful to the giver of every good and perfect gift, especially for the gift of an all-sufficient Redeemer, and the grace of God which he purchased on the cross ; that in affliction he was still before the Lord, adoring the corrections of a father’s hand ; that he was anxious to fill up his life with usefulness ; and that in his extreme old age, he was enabled to adopt the words of the apostle, “ I have fought a good fight ; I have finished my 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 to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing.—” This servant of the Lord, as we believe, now sleepeth in Jesus. The righteous are taken from the evil to come. When the saints die, altho’ heaven may gain a new inhabitant, Christians on earth cannot but feel, that the number of those, who pray with the effectual prayer of the righteous, is lessened.—For the friends of the deceased, especially his children by nature and connection, we cannot but wish that the spirit of the departed father may rest on them.

You have had the instruction of his lips and of his example ; you doubtless have had his prayers.—Altho’ every one must stand in his lot, and the piety of the parent cannot be accepted as the faith and obedience of the child, yet it is a great blessing to be the offspring of godly parents. To such children, many instructions have been given ; many good examples have been placed before their eyes ; many prayers have been offered up for them, which we have reason to hope, will be remembered by the Lord God, who heareth prayer and keepeth covenant with his people.—It now remaineth for you my friends, to walk in his steps, and to imitate his faith and good works. May the Lord give to all the descendants, whether present or absent, that grace which he gave to the ancestor. You doubtless will remember to the end of life, the kind intreaties, the solemn warnings, the doctrinal instructions, and the fervent desires of a pious parent,

which you have heard from his lips.—We must, we will hope, that as God hath given you the means, he will bless you with his grace.

My Brethren in the ministry, may we not this day say, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.” Thus said Elisha when Elijah ascended to glory. “The fathers where are they, and the prophets do they live forever?” Our fathers are gone, and a number of us by the surprising pass of time stand in their places. While we are amazed at the flight of years, and to find ourselves in the place of the fathers, let us firmly adhere to that faith, thro’ which they served God in life, and have died in peace. O that we might walk in their steps, and be faithful as they have been. Altho’ we are unworthy servants, may the Lord bless our labours for the ingathering of his people.—The promises are sure, and if we adhere to the doctrines of the precious gospel, and keep the charge committed to us, we may hope, thro’ divine grace, to follow unto the end, in the steps which the fathers have trod before us.

And are we all, my hearers, soon to be gathered to the grave? then let us live as those who must give an account. Altho’ it be but few of us can live to the age of him who is to be now interred, we shall all come to the same end; we shall all die, and shall need the grace of God to help us thro’ the remainder of life. Let none neglect to prepare for death, for the young as well as the old may die. The two last similar occasions, on which we assem-

bled in this house, were at the interment of young persons ; therefore let the young remember their Creator in the days of their youth. Now, we are to commit the remains of an aged father to the dust ; therefore, let those of us who have numbered many years, particularly regard the warning. Let us watch for the coming of our Lord, which must be soon ; that at his appearance we may hail his approach ! and be accepted by him as good and faithful servants—

**Amen.**

24 JU 68

