

Preached upon the Penitentiall Psalmes.

PSAL. 6.4, 5. *RETURNE, O LORD; DELIVER MY SOULE; O LORD SAVE ME, FOR THY MERCIE SAKE. / FOR IN DEATH THERE IS NO REMEMBRANCE OF THEE; AND IN THE GRAVE, WHO SHALL GIVE THEE THANKS?*

WEE COME NOW to the Reasons of these Petitions, in *David's* Prayer; For, as every Prayer must bee made with faith, (I must beleeeve that God will grant my Prayer, if it conduce to his glory, and my good to doe so, that is the limit of my faith) so I must have reason to ground a likelihood, and a faire probability that that particular which I pray for, doth conduce to his glory and my good, and that therefore God is likely to grant it. *David's* first Reason here is grounded on God himselfe, *Propter misericordiam*, Doe it *for thy mercy sake*; and in his second Reason, though *David* himselfe, and all men with him, seeme to have a part, yet at last we shall see, the Reason it selfe to determine wholly and entirely in God too, and in his glory, *Quoniam non in morte*, Do it O Lord, *For in Death there is no remembrance of thee, &c.*

In some other places, *David* comes to God with two reasons, and both grounded meerely in God; *Misericordia, & veritas, Let thy Mercy and thy Truth alwaies preserve me*. In this place he puts himselfe wholly upon his mercy, for mercy is all, or at least, the foundation that sustaines all, or the wall that imbraces all. That mercy, which the word of this text, *Casad* imports, is *Benignitas in non promeritum*; Mercy is a good disposition towards him, who hath deserved nothing of himselfe; For, where there is merit, there is no

mercy. Nay, it imports more then so, For mercy, as mercy, presumes not onely no merit in man, but it takes knowledge of no promise in God, properly; For that is the difference betweene Mercy and Truth, that by Mercy at first, God would make promises to man, in generall; and then by Truth, he would performe those promises: but Mercy goeth first; and there *David* begins and grounds his Prayer, at Mercy; Mercy that can have no pre-mover, no pre-relation, but begins in it selfe. For if we consider the mercy of God to mankinde subsequently, I meane, after the Death of Christ, so it cannot bee properly called mercy. Mercy thus considered, hath a ground; And God thus considered, hath received a plentifull, and an abundant satisfaction in the merits of Christ Jesus; And that which hath a ground in man, that which hath a satisfaction from man, (Christ was truly Man) fals not properly, precisely, rigidly, under the name of mercy. But consider God in his first disposition to man, after his fall, That he would vouchsafe to study our Recovery, and that he would turne upon no other way, but the shedding of the blood of his owne and innocent and glorious Son, *Quid est homo, aut filius hominis?* What was man, or all mankinde, that God should be mindfull of him so, or so mercifull to him? When God promises that he will be mercifull and gracious to me, if I doe his Will, when in some measure I doe that Will of his, God begins not then to be mercifull; but his mercy was awake and at worke before, when he excited me, by that promise, to doe his Will. And after, in my performance of those duties, his Spirit seales to me a declaration, that his Truth is exercised upon mee now, as his mercy was before. Still, his Truth is in the effect, in the fruit, in the execution, but the Decree, and the Roote is onely Mercy.

God is pleased also when we come to him with other Reasons; When we remember him of his Covenant; When we remember him of his holy servants, *Abraham, Isaac, and Iacob*; yea when we remember him of our owne innocencie, in that particular, for which wee may be then unjustly pursued; God was glad to heare of a Righteousnesse, and of an Innocencie, and of cleane and pure hands in *David*, when hee was unjustly pursued by *Saul*. But the roote of all is in this, *Propter misericordiam*, Doe it for thy mercie sake. For when we speake of Gods Covenant, it may be mistaken, who is, and

who is not within that Covenant; What know I? Of Nations, and of Churches, which have received the outward profession of Christ, we may be able to say, They are within the Covenant, generally taken; But when we come to particular men in the Congregation, there I may call a Hypocrite, a Saint, and thinke an excommunicate soule, to be within the Covenant; I may mistake the Covenant, and I may mistake Gods servants, who did, and who did not dye in his favour, What know I? We see at Executions, when men pretend to dye cheerefully for the glory of God, halfe the company will call them Traitors, and halfe Martyrs. So if we speake of our owne innocency, we may have a pride in that, or some other vicious and defective respect (as uncharitablenesse towards our malicious Persecutors, or laying seditious aspersions upon the justice of the State) that may make us guilty towards God, though wee be truly innocent to the World, in that particular. But let mee make my recourse to the mercy of God, and there can bee no errour, no mistaking.

And therefore if that, and nothing but that be my ground, God will *Returne* to me, God will *Deliver* my soule, God will *Save* me, *For his mercy sake*; that is, because his mercy is engaged in it. And if God were to sell me this *Returning*, this *Delivering*, this *Saving*, and all that I pray for; what could I offer God for that, so great as his owne mercy, in which I offer him the Innocencie, the Obedience, the Blood of his onely Son. If I buy of the Kings land, I must pay for it in the Kings money; I have no Myne, nor Mint of mine owne; If I would have any thing from God, I must give him that which is his owne for it, that is, his mercy; And this is to give God his mercy, To give God thanks for his mercy, To give all to his mercy, And to acknowledge, that if my works be acceptable to him, nay if my very faith be acceptable to him, it is not because my works, no nor my faith hath any proportion of equivalencie in it, or is worth the least flash of joy, or the least spangle of glory in Heaven, in it selfe, but because God in his mercy, onely of his mercy, meerely for the glory of his mercy, hath past such a Covenant, *Crede, & fac hoc*, Beleeve this, and doe this, and thou shalt live, not for thy deed sake, nor not for thy faith sake, but for my mercy sake. And farther we carry not this first reason of the Prayer, arising onely from God.

There remaines in these words another Reason, in which *David*

himselfe, and all men seeme to have part, *Quia non in morte, For in death there is no remembrance of thee, &c.* Upon occasion of which words, because they seeme to imply a lothnesse in *David* to dye, it may well be inquired, why Death seemed so terrible to the good and godly men of those times, as that evermore we see them complaine of shortnesse of life, and of the neerenesse of death. Certainly the rule is true, in naturall, and in civill, and in divine things, as long as wee are in this World, *Nolle meliorem, est corruptio primæ habitudinis*, That man is not well, who desires not to be better; It is but our corruption here, that makes us loth to hasten to our incorruption there. And besides, many of the Ancients, and all the later Casuists of the other side, and amongst our owne men, *Peter Martyr*, and *Calvin*, assigne certaine cases, in which it hath *Rationem boni*, The nature of Good, and therefore is to be embraced, to wish our dissolution and departure out of this World; and yet, many good and godly men have declared this lothnesse to dye. Beloved, waigh Life and Death one against another, and the balance will be even; Throw the glory of God into either balance, and that turnes the scale. *S. Paul* could not tell which to wish, Life, or Death; There the balance was even; Then comes in the glory of God, the addition of his soule to that Quire, that spend all their time, eternity it selfe, only in glorifying God, and that turnes the scale, and then, he comes to his *Cupio dissolvi*, To desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. But then, he puts in more of the same waight in the other scale; he sees that it advances Gods glory more, for him to stay, and labour in the building of Gods Kingdome here, and so adde more soules then his owne to that state, then only to enjoy that Kingdome in himself, and that turnes the scale againe, and so he is content *to live*.

These Saints of God then when they deprecate death, and complain of the approaches of death, they are, at that time, in a charitable extasie, abstracted and withdrawne from the consideration of that particular happinesse, which they, in themselves, might have in heaven; and they are transported and swallowed up with this sorrow, that the Church here, and Gods kingdome upon earth, should lack those meanes of advancement, or assistance, which God, by their service, was pleased to afford to his Church. Whether they were good Kings, good Priests, or good Prophets, the Church lost by their death;

and therefore they deprecated that death, and desired to live. *The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; But the living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I doe this day, sayes Hezekias*; He was affected with an apprehension of a future barrennesse after his death, and a want of propagation of Gods truth; *I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord*, sayes he. He had assurance, that he should see the Lord in Heaven, when by death he was come thither; But, sayes he, *I shall not see him in the land of the living*; Well, even in the land of the living, even in the land of life it selfe, he was to see him, if by death he were to see him in Heaven; But this is the losse that he laments, this is the misery that he deplores with so much holy passion, *I shall behold man no more, with the Inhabitants of the world*; Howsoever I shall enjoy God my selfe, yet I shall be no longer a meanes, an instrument of the propagation of Gods truth amongst others; And, till we come to that joy, which the heart cannot conceive, it is, I thinke, the greatest joy that the soule of man is capable of in this life, (especially where a man hath been any occasion of sinne to others) to assist the salvation of others. And even that consideration, that he shall be able to doe Gods cause no more good here, may make a good man loath to die. *Quid facies magno nomini tuo?* sayes *Ioshuah* in his prayer to God; if the Canaanites come in, and destroy us, and blaspheme thee, *What wilt thou do unto thy mighty Name?* What wilt thou doe unto thy glorious Church, said the Saints of God in those Deprecations, if thou take those men out of the world, whom thou hadst chosen, enabled, qualified for the edification, sustentation, propagation of that Church? In a word, *David* considers not here, what men doe, or doe not in the next world; but he considers onely, that in this world he was bound to propagate Gods Truth, and that that he could not doe, if God tooke him away by death.

Consider then this horreur, and detestation, and deprecation of death, in those Saints of the old Testament, with relation to their particular, and then it must be, *Quia promissiones obscuræ*, Because *Moses* had conveyed to those men, all Gods future blessings, all the joy and glory of Heaven, onely in the types of earthly things, and said little of the state of the soule after this life. And therefore the promises belonging to the godly after this life, were not so cleere

then, not so well manifested to them, not so well fixt in them, as that they could, in contemplation of them, step easily, or deliver themselves confidently into the jawes of death; he that is not fully satisfied of the next world, makes shift to be content with this; and he that cannot reach, or does not feele that, will be glad to keepe his hold upon this. Consider their horreur, and detestation, and deprecation of death, not with relation to themselves, but to Gods Church, and then it will be, *Quia operarii pauci*, Because God had a great harvest in hand, and few labourers in it, they were loath to be taken from the worke.

And these Reasons might, at least, by way of excuse and extenuation, in those times of darknesse, prevaile somewhat in their behalfe; They saw not whither they went, and therefore were loath to goe; and they were loath to goe, because they saw not how Gods Church would subsist, when they were gone. But in these times of ours, when Almighty God hath given an abundant remedy to both these, their excuses will not be appliable to us. We have a full cleernesse of the state of the soule after this life, not onely above those of the old Law, but above those of the Primitive Christian Church, which, in some hundreds of yeares, came not to a cleere understanding in that point, whether the soule were immortall by nature, or but by preservation, whether the soule could not die, or onely should not die. Or (because that perchance may be without any constant cleernesse yet) that was not cleere to them, (which concernes our case neerer) whether the soule came to a present fruition of the sight of God after death or no. But God having afforded us cleernesse in that, and then blest our times with an established Church, and plenty of able work-men for the present, and plenty of Schooles, and competency of endowments in Universities, for the establishing of our hopes, and assurances for the future, since we have both the promise of Heaven after, and the promise that the gates of Hell shall not prevaile against the Church here; Since we can neither say, *Promissiones obscuræ*, That Heaven hangs in a Cloud, nor say, *Operarii pauci*, That dangers hang over the Church, it is much more inexcusable in us now, then it was in any of them then, to be loath to die, or to be too passionate in that reason of the deprecation, *Quia non in morte*, *Because in death there is no remembrance of thee &c.*

Which words, being taken literally, may fill our meditation, and exalt our devotion thus; If in death there be no remembrance of God, if this remembrance perish in death, certainly it decays in the neernesse to death; If there be a possession in death, there is an approach in age; And therefore, *Remember now thy Creator in the dayes of thy youth*. There are spirituall Lethargies, that make a man forget his name; forget that he was a Christian, and what belongs to that duty. God knows what forgetfulnesse may possesse thee upon thy death-bed, and freeze thee there; God knows what rage, what distemper, what madnesse may scatter thee then; And though in such cases, God reckon with his servants, according to that disposition which they use to have towards him before, and not according to those declinations from him, which they shew in such distempered sicknesses, yet Gods mercy towards them can worke but so, that he returnes to those times, when those men did remember him before. But if God can finde no such time, that they never remembred him, then he seales their former negligence with a present Lethargy; they neglected God all their lives, and now in death there is no remembrance of him, nor there is no remembrance in him; God shall forget him eternally; and when he thinkes he is come to his *Consummatum est*, The bell tolls, and will ring out, and there is an end of all in death, by death he comes but to his *Secula Seculorum*, to the beginning of that misery, which shall never end.

This then which we have spoken, arises out of that sense of these words, which seems the most literall; that is, of a naturall death. But as it is well noted by divers Expositors upon this Psalme, this whole Psalme is intended of a spirituall agonie, and combat of *David*, wrastling with the apprehension of hell, and of the indignation of God, even in this world, whilst he was alive here. And therefore S. *Augustine* upon the last words of this verse, in that Translation which he followed, *In inferno quis confitebitur tibi?* Not, *In the grave*, but *In hell, who shall confesse unto thee?* puts himselfe upon this, *In Inferno Dives confessus Domino, & oravit pro fratribus*, In hell *Dives* did confesse the name of the Lord, and prayed there for his brethren in the world. And therefore he understands not these words of a literall, and naturall, a bodily death, a departing out of this world; but he calls *Peccatum Mortem*, and then, *Cæcitatem*

animæ Infernum; He makes the easinesse of sinning to be Death, and then, blindnesse, and obduration, and remorslesnesse, and impenitence, to be this Hell. And so also doth S. *Ierome* understand all that passionate deploring of *Hezekias*, (which seems literally to be spoken of naturall death) of this spirituall death, of the habit of sin, and that he considered, and lamented especially his danger of that death, of a departing from God in this world, rather then of a departing out of this world. And truely many pieces and passages of *Hezekias* his lamentation there, will fall naturally enough into that spirituall interpretation; though perchance all will not, though S. *Ierome* with a holy purpose drive them, and draw them that way. But whether that of *Hezekias* be of naturall, or of a spirituall death, we have another Author ancients then S. *Augustine*, and S. *Ierome*, and so much esteemed by S. *Ierome*, as that he translated some of his Works, which is *Didymus* of Alexandria, who sayes, it is *Impia opinio*, not an inconvenient, or unnaturall, but an impious and irreligious opinion, to understand this verse of naturall death; because, sayes he, The dead doe much more remember God then the living doe. And he makes use of that place, *Deus non confunditur, God is not ashamed to be called the God of the dead, for he hath prepared them a City*. And therefore reading these words of our Text, according to that Translation which prevailed in the Easterne Church, which was the Septuagint, he argues thus, he collects thus, that all that *David* sayes here, is onely this, *Non est in morte qui memor est Dei*, Not that he that is dead remembers not God, but that he that remembers God, is not dead; not in an irreparable, and irrecoverable state of death; not under such a burthen of sin as devastates and exterminates the conscience, and evacuates the whole power and work of grace, but that if he can remember God, confesse God, though he be false under the hand of a spirituall death, by some sin, yet he shall have his resurrection in this life; for, *Non est in morte*, sayes *Didymus*, He that remembers God, is not dead, in a perpetuall death.

And then this reason of *David's* Prayer here, (Doe this and this, *for in death there is no remembrance of thee*) will have this force, That God would *returne* to him in his effectuall grace, That God would *deliver* his soule in dangerous tentations, That God would

save him in applying to him, and imprinting in him a sober, but yet confident assurance that the salvation of Christ Jesus belongs to him; Because if God did not *return* to him, but suffer him to wither in a long absence, If God did not *deliver* him, by taking hold of him when he was ready to fall into such sins as his sociableness, his confidence, his inconsideration, his infirmity, his curiosity brought him to the brinke of, If God did not *save* him, by a faithfull assurance of salvation after a sin committed and resented, This absence, this slipperinesse, this pretermittting, might bring him to such a deadly, and such a hellish state in this world, as that *In death*, that is, In that death, he should have no remembrance of God, *In hell, In the grave*, that is, In that hell, In that grave, he should not confesse, nor praise God at all. There was his danger, he should forget God utterly, and God forget him eternally, if God suffered him to proceed so far in sin, that is, *Death*, and so far in an obduration and remorslesnesse, in sin, that is, *Hell*, The Death and the Hell of this world, to which those Fathers refer this Text.

In this lamentable state, we will onely note the force, and the emphasis of this *Tui*, and *Tibi*, in this verse; no remembrance of *Thee*, no praise to *Thee*; For this is not spoken of God in generall, but of that God, to which *David* directs the last and principall part of his Prayer, which is, *To save him*; It is to God, as God is Jesus, a Saviour; and the wretchednesse of this state is, that God shall not be remembered in that notion, as he is *Jesus*, a Saviour. No man is so swallowed up in the death of sin, nor in the grave of impenitence, No man so dead, and buried in the custome or senselesnesse of sin, but that he remembers a God, he confesses a God; If an Atheist sweare the contrary, beleeve him not; His inward terrors, his midnight startlings remember him of that, and bring him to confessions of that. But here is the depth, and desperatenesse of this death, and this grave, habituall sin, and impenitence in sin, that he cannot remember, he cannot confesse that God which should save him, Christ Jesus his Redeemer; he shall come, he shall not chuse but come to remember a God that shall damne him, but not a saving God, a *Jesus*.

Beloved in the bowels of that Jesus, not onely the riches, and honours, and pleasures of this world, and the favour of Princes, are, as *Iob* speaks, *Onerosi consolatores, Miserable comforters are they all*,

all this world, but even of God himselfe (be it spoken with piety and reverence, and far from misconstruction) we may say, *Onerosa consolatio*, It is but a miserable comfort which we can have in God himselfe, It is but a faint remembrance which we retaine of God himselfe, It is but a lame confession which we make to God himselfe, *Si non Tui, Si non Tibi*, If we remember not *Thee*, If we confesse not *Thee*, our onely Lord and Saviour *Christ Iesus*. It is not halfe our worke to be godly men, to confesse a God in generall; we must be Christians too; to confesse God so, as God hath manifested himselfe to us. I, to whom God hath manifested himselfe in the Christian Church, am as much an Atheist, if I deny Christ, as if I deny God; And I deny Christ, as much, if I deny him in the truth of his Worship, in my Religion, as if I denyed him in his Person. And therefore, *Si non Tui, Si non Tibi*, If I doe not remember *Thee*, If I doe not professe *Thee* in thy Truth, I am falne into this *Death*, and buried in this *Grave* which *David* deprecates in this Text, *For in death there is no remembrance of thee, &c.*