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II. Of the fruit of watching and praying (William Sheridan, D. D. Lord Bishop of Kilmore and Ardagh, in his several Discourses, printed at London 1704. Disc. 3. p. 96.)

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The *Articles* themselves at large, with the admirable *Exposition* of them by Dr. Burnet, the present Bishop of *Salisbury*, are well worth any man's perusal.

## II.

Of the fruit of vatching and  
praying

(*William Sheridan, D.D. Lord Bishop of Kilmore and Ardagh, in his several Discourses, printed at London 1704. Disc. 3. p.96.*)

LUKE XXI. 36.

**W**atch ye therefore and pray alwayes, that ye may be accounted vworthy to escape all these things, which shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

**T**He Fruit of *watching* and *praying* set forth in these words is (1) Privative : *To escape all these things, which shall come to pass.* (2) Positive : *To stand before the Son of man.* First of the privative; *To escape all these things* (i.e. dangers and judgements foretold by *Christ*) which they did, partly upon our *Saviour's* advertisement in this *Chapter*, and partly upon some



me later *Premonitions* : For as soon as *Cestius Gallus*, not able to give any *Reason* for his so doing, but (without doubt overruled by *GOD*) withdrew the *Siege* from *Jerusalem*, the poor *Christians* removed to *Pella*, a little Village, not far from it, and escaped all those *plagues*, that fell upon the *City*. And we must conclude, that next to the *Mercy* of *GOD*, they owed their deliverance to their *watching* and *praying*. For *GOD* has promised deliverance upon these terms: *Call upon me*, saith he, *in the day of trouble*, and *i will deliver thee*; For *watching* and *praying* blot out the *Score*, that *Sin* has contracted; and then *punishment*, which is always in relation to an *offence*, is removed or withheld; and they do this not by way of *satisfaction*, or paying the debt, but by way of *impetration*, and pacifying the *vvrath* of *GOD*, and that for this reason: because all *Gods threatnings* of punishments are under a *condition*, exprest or implied. Otherwise the *Ninevites* had not prevented the punishments denounced by *Jonah* by their repentance; nor *Ahab* by his humiliation defer'd the destruction of himself and family; nor *Hzekiah* by prayers and tears prolong'd his life. *I have seenthy tears*, saith *GOD*, *behold i will add to thy days fifteen years*. And good reason, it should be so: for *Nineveh* was not the same *Nineveh*: And tho' this be so, you are to take notice, that *GOD*



never changes his will, tho' he oftentimes will *change*; that is when the object is changed. The *Sword* and the *Crown*, (to use *Anselm's* comparifon) hang immoveable from the *roof* of the *houfe*, and we remove fucceffively from under the one, to be under the other; that is, we move by *Sin* from the *Crown* to the *Sword*, and by repentance back again from the *Sword* to the *Crown*. And therefore the *Primitive Church* did prefcribe to their penitents mourning *garments*, abftinence from *feasts*, and from the use of the *Marriage bed*, watching and *faftings*, and humiliations and *prayers*, and tears, and fighs, and alms, and *profttrations*; not only to fatisfy the Church in point of *Scandal*, but alfo becaufe by thefe means *God* is pacified, his judgements prevented, his wrath averted, and confequently his juftice fatisfied; not by a fatisfaction of *merit*, but by a fatisfaction of *complacence*, for *Chrift's* fake: Nay further, the watching and *prayers* of but one of *God's* fervants may prevent the calamity of an whole *Nation*, *City* or *Society*. For ten righteous *Persons* upon *Abraham's* prayer had prevented the deftruction of *Sodom*. And *God* fpared the whole people of *Israel* upon the fupplication of *Mofes*; and the *City* of *Zoar* upon the petition of *Lot*; and all the paffengers in the fhip for *St. Paul's* fake; the words are very emphatical: *Fear not, Paul, God bath given*

given



given thee all them, that sail with thee. Acts 27.  
 24. They were utterly lost in themselves, and owed their lives only to St. Paul. His arms not so *shortned*, but that he may do again, what he has once done. But put the case, that our *watching* and *prayers* should not prevent a National Judgement; yet they will prevent our own particular calamity. For so saith God: go through the midst of the City and set a mark upon the foreheads of all that sigh and cry, for the abomination thereof, that the destroyer may not touch them. Ezek. 9. 4. Or if God for just and hidden causes thinks fit to dispense with his Temporal promises; yet they shall be our safety at the day of doom, when we come to stand before the Son of man.

And this brings me to the second branch of my last particular; the positive fruits of our *fasting* and *praying*, in these words, to stand before the Son of man; that is, with confidence, with comfort and with joy; without that *fear* and *shame*, with which they shall be confounded, who shall, through the guilt and horror of their *consciences*, cry out to the Hills, and the mountains to fall upon them, and to cover them from the wrath of the lamb, and from the face of him, that sits upon the Throne. To stand, that is, to conquer, to overcome in judgement, before the Son of man; that is, the Tribunal of Christ at doomsday, which is therefore call'd the day of the

H 3

Lord



*Lord.* For as we have had our *days*, and mispent them, so the *Lord* will have his *day*, to call us to an account. Now all things are confusedly shuffled in an *burly burly*, they then shall be settled in their proper places for ever and ever; and tho' the *consideration* of the great *distance* of this day, together with its *Relation* to a final and general judgement, may tempt us to defer this so necessary a *Duty* of *watching* and *praying*; yet the particular day of *judgement*, which is at the end of every man's natural *life*, is not very far off, but may (for ought we know) *overtake* some of us, before we go from hence; and therefore should enforce the immediate and present *practice* of this *duty*: because, that if we be not qualified for *Salvation* at this our particular *period*, we shall never be able to stand before this our *judge*; unless it be to our confusion, and to receive that killing sentence: *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting burnings, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* And tho' we have escaped many dangers and sicknesses, and judgements; yet let us not presume upon this, and think to put the *evil Day* far from us; for we shall at last partake of the common *Fate* of *Mortals*, and appear before the *judgement seat* of *Christ*; who will make all those considerations, by which he was formerly reduced to commiserate our condition, the most prevalent *motives* to enhance our punishment



ment. For he is appointed to be our *judge*, not only because he has merited to be thus highly exalted for his great *humiliation*, but also that he might be *visible* and conspicuous to the judged. The School-men make four sorts of judges: First *Authoritative*; so the blessed *Trinity* shall judge: The *Father* has committed all judgement to the *Son*. (2) *Pronunciative*; so God shall judge the secrets of Men by *Jesus Christ*. (3) *Approbative*; Know ye not, that the *Saints* shall judge the world. (4) *Comparative* or *Exemplary*; The *Queen of Nineveh* shall rise up in judgement with this generations, and condemn it. I might prove the *Certainty* of this judge's coming by texts of *Scripture*, by types and figures, before the *Law*, under the *Law* and after the *Law*; by testimonies of *men*, *Angels* and *Devils*; by *Heathens* and *Christians*; by the *Justice* of *God*, and the internal Power of *Conscience*. But it is an *Article* of our *Faith*, and that saves me the labour of proving of it, and forbids you to question the *Truth* of it.

I might now set out the *Terrors* of this day by reciting out of *St. Jerom* those *Prodigies*, that shall happen for fifteen days before it, the least whereof is sufficient to strike the *world* into an amazement, by telling you, that at *Christ's* first coming he came to *suffer*, and not to triumph, to be judged, and not to judge: But now he shall come with *Majesty*



and great glory, with *justice* and an impartial *Spirit*, to judge both the quick and the dead. Before *John*, the *Baptist*, was his *herauld*, but now the *Archangel* of *God*; before he rood upon an *ass*; but now the upon *clouds* of the *air*; before there vvas no *form* nor *beauty* in him; but now the glorious *Raies* of his *Majesty* shall more eclipse the *Sun*, than the splendor of the *Sun* does not out-shine a *glow-worm*; before he came in the *form* of a *servant*; now in the *Majesty* of a *King*: The *Day* of *Mercy* is past, and this is the *day* of *wrath*, wherein the *stars* of *Heaven* shall lose their light, the *Sun* and the *Moon* shall put on the bloody colours of the day; and the powers of *Heaven* shall be so shaken, that the *Axle-tree* thereof shall give a great *Crack*, and both the *Portes* shall clash against one another; and the *Sea* shall make an hideous roaring, by vomiting up its *dead*, and the *Earth* shall be violently torn from her *Centre*, appearing full of yawning *clifts*, and suffering grievous *thraws*, and strong *convulsions*, as if she were teeming with an other *Generation*; and the *tombs* and *grave-stones* shall be violently broken up, with a sudden *eruption* of a more numerous *offspring*, than that of *Cadmus*, hastning to come to judgement: and in the close of all, this great fabrick of *Heaven* and *Earth* shall be offer'd up, as an *Holocaust*, to honour the approaching of this most glorious and impartial judge; and the *smoke* of the tormented shall ascend up for



for ever and ever. Here will be no bushes to run behind with *Adam*; for *we must all appear before the judgement-seat of Christ.* 2. Cor. 5. 10. *Φανερωθήναι*, or English word, *appear*, is too short; rather *manifestari*, as *Erasmus* has it, be made *manifest*, *conspicuous*, *transparent*, as *Chrifall*; all mask and hypocritical *disguises* must be laid aside, and all our secret thoughts and actions or midnight *Revels* and closet *filchiness*, with their respective aggravating circumstances of disgrace and irregularity, shall be exposed to the publick view of all the *world*; so that the best and modestest person will have cause enough of *shame* and confusion. This, this is able to make a man tremble with *Foelix*, and to strike him into *Belshazar's* paralytick posture: believe but this, and spend a few of your morning and sober *thoughts* in meditating on it, and *Sin*, willfully upon deliberation; nay miss of *Heaven*, if you can.

I confess, that, though vicious habits are more easily contracted, than lost; yet the remembrance of this judgement, and that Eternity of *Bliss* or *torment*, that attends it, you shall find by *experience*, will so soften your hard hearts, and break the chains of your *sins*, and set you at such *liberty*, that you shall run the ways of *God's* commandments with cheerfulness. Therefore as *Gideon's* soldiers were arm'd vvith *pitchers* and *lamps*, every *Christian*

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ought



ought to arm himself vwith the Remembrance of his mortality (*that is our pitcher of clay*) and the sound of the last trumpet; and, being *Christ* shall be our judge, to endeavour to please him, and to even our *accounts* with him now, that he may be our *friend* then; To judge our selves, that vve may not be judged; to lay a side all rancour, *malice*, and revenge, all double dealing and ungentleel, disingenuous supplanting one another; that having thus done our *duty*, vve may wellcome that day, that shall not only deliver us from the *snarcs* of the *devil*, and the *troubles* of this uncertain, miserable, wretched *life*; but also assign us to everlasting *mansions* of Eternal *Bliss* and happiness,

And now i shall add this general *application*, that we take notice, that all the *predictions*, that were fore-runners of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, are exactly come to pass in our days, and if so, you will be certainly easily convinced, that this *Kingdom*, this *City*, is not far from some fatal judgement: but then take notice also of *God's* unspeakable Goodness, that as he has forewarned us of the *danger*; so to shew us, how unwilling he is to destroy you, he has prescribed *remedies*, upon the sincere use of which you may certainly *escape*, for there is yet a possibility; his judgements are not gone so far yet; but that they are *reversible*. But if we slight and neglect this warning, and cast



cast away this *opportunity*, as vve have done many before, and be never a jot the better for all the *Remedies*, he has cast avway upon us, but add to the measure of our *iniquities*, by súperadding to all our other *sins*, impenitence and hardness of heart, there is no more hopes of *mercy*, but a *fearful* looking for *judgement*: For hitherto vvhath forbearance vve obtained by *Christ's* intercession, when *God* sent out his warrants to his destroying *Angels* against us, was out of meer pity and love to our *souls*, expecting, that vve should repent and amend; and now if we be not melted into some goodnes of *Nature* by those kinder dealings, he vwill punish us vvith all the *plagues* and *judgements* threatned in his *law*; or that, vvich is yet the heaviest *judgement* of all, suffer us to go on and prosper in our *sins*, and give over striking us, and dismiss us, vvith a *behold, you despisers, and wonder and perish*. But i hope better things of you, and therefore passionately beseech you, in *Christ's* stead, that before this fatal *Decree* passes out of *God's* mouth, you give but one vital *Spring*; and if not out of love to *God*, and gratitude to *Christ*, who has shed the last drop of his *bloud* for your redemption, yet out of meer charity to your *Souls*, and pity to these distressed harassed *Kingdoms*, hastning to ruin, stand in the breach, to turn away *God's* wrath by vvatching and praying: And since these are prescribed us  
by