

hold man no more, with the inhabitants of the world. But another and another grave opened, tells that all ages go down there. It receives the youngest, the middle aged, as well as those whom years have bent to the earth. It is a solemn thought; that the most robust, the healthiest, those who bid fairest for a long life, are those whom death marks as his own, whom he selects for his choicest arrow. He chooses them out of a neighbourhood, and all are arrested by the sureness of the aim, and by the suddenness of the stroke. Are we counting upon long life, and not fearing the stroke of death? Does it excite no uneasiness in us that others are cut down in the midst of their days? Do we know whether we may not be the next objects of death's sure archery? Why should he pass over us and take others? Let not health or youth speak flatteringly to any, when death's quiver seems so rapid in discharging its shafts. Do we not, as it were, hear the rustling of death's wing—the noise as of his arrows cleaving the air?—or do we not mark his dark and hovering shadow, as from the silent land he makes his way secretly and noiselessly over the world? Who can tell his course? Who can tell whether that course may not be to us?

What is the message? "Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live." It is unnecessary surely, to prove the certainty of death, in the case of any who have a place on this earth.—That may be presumed to be sufficiently well established, and to have indeed been proved in the remarks already made.—And therefore to every one, not as an immediate address or summons from the presence of Jehovah, as it was to Hezekiah, but as pronouncing a truth which cannot be gainsaid, announcing a decree which cannot be resisted, it may be said: "thou shalt die, and not live." What matters it though it may not be immediately? though the decree may not be executed at once—if it is to be at some time? It matters comparatively little, whether it is to be soon, or whether it be later; it is to be, and that is sufficient for us. The difference of a few years is of no account, when the event itself is considered. It is the certainty of the event itself which ought to impress us; "*thou shalt die, and not live.*" A respite was given to Hezekiah even after this message by the mouth of the prophet. But fifteen years made all the difference—Who of us is it that is to see fifteen years more of his life on earth? To many,

that would not be a long life after all—But within these fifteen years what changes may happen! And if death is at the end of them; or let it be another, and still another, fifteen years, death will surely not be far away then: how emphatic should be the command or exhortation: "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live."

In the first place, we are to prepare our hearts for death—to put our souls in a posture of readiness. What does death imply? What is death? What do we live here for? And where, or unto what state of being, do we go at death? We live here to glorify God. That must obviously be the object for which we are in this world. But failing in that great object; but not only so, but dishonouring God, breaking his commandments—doing the very opposite of glorifying God: Therefore it is that death is in the world, and it is appointed to us to die—and after death is the judgment. Death is the result of man's failure in the great object for which he was created, even to glorify God: it is the punishment of his apostasy, his rebellion, his sin; it is the infliction of God's wrath against our race; and it but ushers the soul to the bar of the Judge, into the presence of God, who is Judge of all the earth. *But what preparation is necessary* for that solemn event, so momentous to the destinies of our race and to every individual? It might be supposed that we had but to await that event, that we had but to wait our fate, the decree affixing our eternal destiny.—No, God has revealed a remedial scheme, suited to our state as rebels and sinners against him, and intended to deliver us from this state of rebellion and guilt, and introduce us into the favour of God, and into his presence in heaven. That scheme has been appointed, has been accomplished, and is now revealed, and is in operation through the ministry of God's word, and the agency of His Spirit.

Set thine house in order. Give welcome to this scheme of mercy and reconciliation. Believe on the name of the only begotten son of God. Receive the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Be persuaded to entertain the overtures of reconciliation, made to you by an offended God—the very God against whom you have sinned, and before whom you are to appear. It is he who has issued this command—who said to Hezekiah: "Set thine house in order," and who is saying so to every individual