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## The St Mary's Heritage Project

**Sermon on the death of a member of the congregation,  
preached at Glasgow on Sunday 14 February 1731,  
by the Revd George Graeme,  
Minister of the Episcopal Congregation there.**

**SOURCE:**

*This is a transcription by Michael Kenny of one of seven manuscript sermons by the Revd George Graeme, in the collection of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Glasgow. On the cover in Graeme's hand is written, 'Ps. 90.6.10, February 14<sup>th</sup> 1731, Glasgow; in my Room, Glasgow July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1757'; in a different hand, 'Mary Graeme - her copy, 1759.' The sermon was therefore reused towards the end of Graeme's ministry, evidence that the penal laws of 1746 and 1748 had failed to halt his ministry. The psalm reference matches the theme of the sermon, and suggests congregational singing from the metrical psalter. Graeme himself died in about 1759, so Mary may be his daughter.*

*The deceased member of the congregation is not named. It may have been Lady Blackhouse, buried in Glasgow five days earlier, Janet Cuninghame, wife of John Alexander of Blackhouse. If so, her son-in-law, Provost Peter Murdoch, was father-in-law to Archibald Buchanan who included in his will drawn up the following year a bequest of £3 'to the poor of the Episcopal meeting house in Glasgow kept by Mr Alexander Duncan'. Murdoch, when a baillie, had actually been responsible for closing the meeting house in 1728, because it contravened the law. Graeme may have been the elderly Duncan's curate from about 1729 until his death in 1733, when Graeme assumed responsibility for the congregation for nearly three decades.*

[RGE, 2013]

## Sermon on the death of a member of the congregation.

Preached at Glasgow on Sunday 14 February 1731, by the Revd George Graeme, Minister of the Episcopal Congregation there.

Job 14:14b: *If a man die shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time, will I wait till my change come.*

When we seriously consider the vast and important change, that death brings along with it, and that we ourselves must certainly, and may suddenly, die; it highly becomes every one of us to take up the wise resolution of holy Job in the text; all the days of my appointed time, will I wait till my change come. In which resolution, there are two things observable, for our present Instruction.

First, that Death brings along with it a remarkable change to all, but especially to all good men, a very desirable one. Secondly, that our serious expectation of, and preparation for that change, should be the chief work and bussiness of our present life. Death brings along with it a remarkable change, and this first common to all mankind whether good or bad. Death puts an end to all the temporal Good or evil of this present life. It brings a writ of ejectment, to disseise us of our worldly possessions, and sends us naked out of this World, as we came into it. Our places on Earth, know us no more. It buries all our secular admired honours, in the dust, and leaves no visible distinction between the skull of a prince, and a peasant. When the rich die, they carry nothing away; nor will their Glory descend after them. Ps. 49:7. Death bereaves us of all those sensual pleasures, that depend on the union of our souls to these terrestrial bodies.

It forcibly rends us from the embraces of our dearest Relations & Friends, and confines us to the solitary Grave, where we shall behold man no more, with all the Inhabitants of this Earth. Isa. 38:11. Death puts a period to all the affective Evils of this present life. 'Tis a safe harbour and sure retreat from all the storms & troubles of the most calamitous condition here below, where no humane violence and malice, can ever reach us. It puts an end to all our present sorrows and Grievs, by closing our eyes on the sad objects and occasions of them.

Death puts an end to all the bussie affairs of this temporal life. It stops us in the eager prosecution of all our Worldly projects and designs. It hurries us off the theatre and stage of publick actions & bussiness, and brings on that night of darkness, in which no man can work. The wearied hireling there rests from all his painfull labours. It puts an end to all our Worldly cares and toil, and leaves nothing visible of these sprightly creatures we beheld a while ago, but a lifeless and unactive lump of clay. But the most considerable change that Death makes, is, that thereby we pass from a state of tryal, to a state of retribution.

At Death, our day of tryal is over; our time and space of preparation for a near eternity, is at an end. Our seasons of Grace are past. Our opportunities of work and service here cease. The commission that constitutes us God's stewards is recalled, and our account of our stewardship required. And as Death leaves us, Judgement will find us. An happy or miserable Eternity, is then before us. Eternal life or death then awaits us. Accordingly as we have demean'd ourselves in this probationary state, our dislodged

souls must take up their eternal abode either in the mansions of Bliss (a bliss Inchan'd by the delightfull prospect of the Glories of the resurrection day), or in the regions of darkness and despair, (which will be heightened by the dismall expectation of the awfull day of publick final Judgement). And o what a solemn change will this be, the Issues whereof, will be of so infinite moment and importance to our endless happiness or misery? A change so great, so certain, and so near, that we should be most inexcusable, if we Indulge ourselves in the stupid forgetfulness, or willfull inconsideration of it.

But I proceed secondly, to consider this change as it more particularly relates to good men. Now that death brings along with it a most desirable and happy change, with respect to all truly good men, will appear, if we compare a little their present condition, with that blessed state, which by Death they enter upon. They are here, while their spirits dwell in flesh, liable to all those afflictive evils and miseries, that sin has brought into this miserable World. Their most desirable temporal enjoyments are often either blasted, and like Jonah's Gourd quickly withered; or are embittered by many crosses and disappointments they meet with. Their tender sympathy with others, especially, their dear relations and friends, make them deep sharers with them in their troubles and sufferings. They dwell themselves, in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, and these frail and crazy bodies, are subject to manifold painfull Infirmities and diseases, that greatly allay all the present comforts of life.

The days of the years of their pilgrimage (as Jacob complains) are evil as well as few. Gen. 47:9. This World is to them, but a vale of tears, a scene of various successive troubles, that like Job's messengers, often tread upon the heels of one another. But Death conveys their dislodged souls to a state, where God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, where there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. For the former things are passed away. Rev. 21:4. It translates them to those mansions of bliss, where their Joys are without mixture or allay, and their pleasures in the divine presence, flow with a constant, and uninterrupted stream; and where the remembrance of their past afflictions and miseries, serves only to to inchanse the satisfaction of their entire deliverance from them. How happy a change, may we imagine, was it to pious Lazarus, to leave all his wants and his sores behind him, and to be safely conveyed by a guard of Angels into Abraham's bosom Luke 16:22 where all the evils he had patiently suffered here, gave a sweeter relish to his everlasting consolation. Again, if we consider a good man's Spiritual state towards God, death makes a most desirable and happy change in it.

He here knows only in part, and sees spiritual and divine objects, as thro' a Glass and darkly, I Cor 13:9.12. The clearest apprehensions of the invisible God, that he can here attain, are but inadequate and defective. He discerns only some few glimpses of the divine Glory, shining out in the works and in the word of God. How many things relating to the essential perfections of the divine nature, the mysterious distinction in it, between the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, are at present, wrapped up in impenetrable darkness and obscurity. How many things, both in the conduct of divine providence, towards the World, and in the peculiar dispensations of it towards his church, appear to us, attended with difficulties, which we are at a loss how to solve, and oblige us to cry out with the apostle St Paul, o the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable his Judgements, and his ways past finding out. Rom. 11:33. 'Tis but little we know of the Inferiour creatures round about us and comparatively but little of ourselves, & far less of the superior invisible World

that we are hastening to. We here walk by faith, and not by sight 2 Cor 5:7 and alas, how often is our faith but weak and wavering, clouded with darkness, puzzled and staggered with uncomfortable doubts, that force us to cry out, as the poor man, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief, and with the disciples, Lord, increase our faith Mark 9:24 Luke 17:5.

But o what an happy exchange does the soul of a dying saint make, when his faith is turned into vision. When he that saw but thro' a Glass, darkly, shall see face to face, and know as he is known, when he shall in God's light see (glorious convincing and satisfying) light Ps. 36:9. When he shall behold the brightest manifestations of the divine Glory, in the heavenly World, and shall have his Intellectual faculties Inlarg'd, to take in a more comprehensive view of it. When his present uncomfortable darkenss shall be dispelled, his uneasy doubts resolv'd, and those divine truths, which before, he endeavoured to trace by a laborious search, and could, at best, attain but an imperfect discovery of, shall display their naked and unveil'd beauty to his eye. If the queen of Sheba was so ravished, when she beheld the admirable order, and wise management of King Solomon's court, which before she had only heard the fame of, that 'tis said, there was no more spirit left in her, 1 Kings 10:9, how much more transporting will it be to a pious soul, to enter into those regions of light, where it shall behold the inexpressible Glories of God's extensive and eternal Empire? Again, a good man, while in this state of sinfull Imperfection, has many remains of corruption to struggle against, that render his present life, a continual state of spiritual warfare. And these often extort that bitter complaint from him, o wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death Rom. 7:24. Besides the manifold temptations from without that require his continual vigilance, to guard against and overcome, he finds a more dangerous enemy within, even that flesh that lusts against the spirit, and gives those principalities and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this World, which he is called to wrestle with, so great advantage to assault, and too often foyl him.

Hereby he is often betrayed into more secret declensions, and sometimes into more open relapses. And alas how often has he just occasion to mourn over the weakness & languor of his Graces (such as his faith, his hope and his divine love) how often are his religious duties themselves comparatively a dull and dispirited exercise, in which there is little of the fervour of true devotion. How hard a task does he find it to curb his unruly passions, and to crush the secret workings of pride and vain Glory, in his breast. But o happy change, when his dislodged soul shall put off all these hatefull relicks of sin, with this garment of flesh. When it shall be received into that heavenly paradise, where that seducing serpent, & roaring lyon can never enter either to tempt or molest. When one ravishing sight of the divine Glory, shall fully transform him, into the amiable likeness of his God and saviour; when the body of sin, of which he so often complains, shall be entirely destroyed and abolished, upon the dissolution of this mortal body, and he shall be presented faultless, before the presence of the divine Glory, with exceeding joy Jud. 24:6. When his will shall be perfectly conformed to the good & acceptable will of God, and he shall be entirely pleasing to him, as well as perfectly pleased in him. When this feeble spark of divine love, which is here kindled in his breast, shall be blown up into a vigorous and active flame, that shall render him all life and wing in his service, and render his homage and duty to him, his perpetual delight.

Again, as our Graces here are but very imperfect, so are our spiritual consolations and joys. Here, alas, our manifold follies & failures often make work for bitter

repentance. They often cast a dark cloud over the evidences of our own sincerity; they eclipse the light of God's countenance, and provoke our offended Father to hide his face from us. So that those who are children of light, often walk in uncomfortable darkness. Besides the manifold afflictions we meet with here, greatly damp our spiritual joys. And they too often prove a dangerous temptation thro' our own weakness, to question the love of God, and to entertain desponding thoughts of our being rejected and cast off by him. And hence we read such mournful complaints of pious Job in this book, of David, in severall of the psalms, of Asaph Ps. 77 at the beginning of Heman Ps. 88 throughout.

But o what a blessed change, does Death bring with it to every pious soul, that at once scatters all his disconsolate doubts and fears, banishes all his sorrows and griefs, that turns all his mournfull complaints and Groans into triumphant praises. What a ravishing surprise is it to him, to be brought under the conduct of a Guard of Angels into the presence of that blessed saviour, in whom he has believed and trusted, and whom he has sincerely lov'd and serv'd. To be graciously received by him, into those mansions of his Father's house, where a place is prepared for him; to behold his Glory, and to be admitted as a good and Faithfull servant into his everlasting joy; to behold the unveil'd face of his heavenly Father, to be imparadis'd in the bosome of divine love, and partake of the most liberall effusions of it for ever. O happy change, to be admitted as a member of that blessed community above, where there is no eye that weeps, no breast that sighs, no tongue that complains. Where their divine joy and felicity, is without intermission or allay.

O blessed change, to pass from a defiled World, that lies drenched in wickedness, into the regions of perfect light and purity; to go from the communion of the militant church on Earth (whose sufferings from Enemies without, and whose declining state from corruptions or dissensions within, they so bitterly bewailed) to that triumphant church above, all the members whereof are adorned with shining wisdom and spotless holiness, and united in perfect love to God, and to one another. To pass from an hazardous and tedious warfare to the possession of an immortal crown; from a wearisome pilgrimage, thro' this howling wilderness, into the heavenly Canaan; and from painfull labours, into everlasting rest: this is a change so desirable, so advantageous and blissfull, that it is every way worth our aspiring to, & waiting for. And this leads me to the second head of discourse, namely, that our serious expectation of, and preparation for this change, should be the chief work, and bussiness of our present life.

As to those of you, that have never entertained any serious thoughts of this solemn change, nor begun any preparation for it, your necessary preparation must be begun, by an unfeigned repentance for that past part of your life, that has been entirely alienated from God, and by a sincere confession to him, and a penitent application to his pardoning mercy, thro' the atoning blood of the great Mediator, thro' whom alone, he is reconcilable and accessible to such guilty sinners as you have been. It must be begun, by a voluntary renunciation of the service of sin, and abandoning the paths of Death and hell, and your entrance on a course of sincere and persevering obedience. Till this necessary step be taken, you are utterly unprepared for this awfull change, and the issues of Death, can be to you no other than ruinous and miserable for ever.

For those of you, in whom this necessary preparation is begun, it must be continued and carried on, by your continued progress in the ways of Faith and holiness; by your daily advances in a sober and righteous and Godly life; by your filling up all your relative stations, with the severall duties belonging to them, by your improving all

opportunities of receiving and doing good; by abounding in every good word and work, by a carefull redemption of your precious time, and a faithfull management of the talents you are entrusted with, for the honour of God, and the present and eternal good of others, by your living above this World, while you only sojourn in it; by having your heart and conversation in Heaven, where your most valuable treasure is laid up.

And let me suggest to all of you, that such a pious resolution as this of holy Job, should be early taken up. All the days of your appointed time, are little enough to make due preparation for this important change. This decisive change will come, when you by presuming upon longer time, carelessly defer making any provision for it. It may come so suddenly, as to leave you neither leisure nor capacity, of making ready for it. And in such a case, it must needs come by a terrible and unwelcome surprize. To such thoughtless and unprepared sinners, death will indeed bring a change with it, but it is a sad and deplorable one; like that of the rich sensualist, that was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and far'd sumptuously every day, but the next news we hear of him is, that in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment Luke 16:23. A woefull change indeed, to pass from a life of luxury and sensuality to, of carnall revelling and jollity, to weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever; to sink from a possibility, nay perhaps from a presumptuous and self flattering hope of the heavenly felicity, into a state of hopeless of remedieless despair. And you know not how soon this may be your case, if you willfully adjourn needful preparation for this awfull change.

From what has been discoursed, we may learn First, what it is, that must fortify a good man against the natural fear of death. Death abstractedly considered, is the greatest of natural evils, nature is ready to shrink at the near approaches of this last enemy, and does not yield to it, without some painfull struggle and reluctancy. But when a good man, can view it under this notion of a change, whereby he passess from his state of painfull and hazardous tryal, to state of great and sure reward; when he can look upon that gloomy and shaddy valley, as the safe passage into the mansions of light, when he can extend his prospect beyond the Grave, to the regions of life and immortality, when he can envisage death in those two enviable representations the Gospel gives, as with respect to our souls, a going to the Father, and with respect to our bodies, a sleeping in Jesus, in the certain hope of a glorious resurrection. These believing thoughts, disarm death of all its sting and terror, and enable him, to triumph over it. And it is this blessed change, that is the proper object of his wishes and desires, it is this makes him confident & willing to be absent from the body, that he may be present with his beloved Lord, and even desirous to depart, that he may be with him. 'Tis this livelie Faith and hope, that makes him to take death by the cold hand, and bid it welcome, as the acceptable messenger sent by his heavenly Father to call him home. All other pretended intrepidity and fearlessness of death, is rather the effect of brutal courage, or inconsiderate rashness. 'Tis in good men alone, the result of wise thoughts and sober consideration. Let us then endeavour to get our minds fortify'd against the terrors of death, by being able to look back upon a life spent in serious preparation for it with inward peace; and to look forward into that near eternity, we are entering into, with Joyfull hope.

Secondly, hence also we may learn to be comforted concerning the death of such of our relations, as have all the days of their appointed time, waited till their change came. And this solide ground of consolation, we may have in reference to the death of that worthy member of this congregation, that gave occasion to this discourse. When health allowed her, how constant an attendant she was on the publick worship of God, in all the

severall branches of it; with what gravity reverence and attention she behaved herself in it; how greatly she adorn'd her christian profession, by her exemplary conversation, I may safely appeal to those of you, that have longest known her. As I am told, she was strict and consistent in keeping up the exercises of Family religion and performed them herself. She had thro' the benefite of pious education, imbib'd betimes the principles of the christian religion. I may truly say of her, as the inspired historian does of Mnason of Cyprus, Act. 21:16 that she was an old disciple. That she entered early on the way of righteousness, and feared the Lord from her youth. And as Solomon advises remembered her creator in the days of her youth. Good reason then have we to hope that her hoary head was to her a crown of great Glory being thus found in the way of righteousness. That as the last words I remember to have heard her pronounce were Come Come, so according to her last breathing desires our Lord came quickly to her, and his reward with him. How faithfully she discharged all her relative duties, her relations can well attest. She was Just and upright in her dealings with every body having never wrong'd or injur'd any, tho' she found to her sad experience a great many were not so honest as herself being cheated and circumvented by them.

To say no more of her, she went thro' the tryal of long weakness and sickness, but was never hear to utter any repining thoughts against the providence of God in that tedious visitation. In those wearisome nights, which she so often spent without sleep, she was usually wont to solace and refresh herself by prayer. An exercise she accustomed herself so much to while awake that she often broke out into when a sleeping. I have mentioned these particulars for our Imitation, that we may not be slothfull, but followers of them, who thro' Faith and patience, inherit the promises of God. I would only add, that we must propose the best examples of piety, among meere men, with due limitation. The most eminent christians themselves, have those remaining blemishes, that shew them to be the sons of Adam, as well as those brighter lineaments of the divine Image, that denominate and distinguish them the sons of God.

Such involuntary and lamented imperfections, a gracious God overlooks, and much more should we, who have so much reason to be conscious of our own. But blessed be God, there is a state before us, wherein all our sinfull imperfections will be done away, and where the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, (with an unspotted light and purity) in the kingdom of their Father. To this blessed state, let us all with a commendable ambition aspire. Let us firmly...[ends here]