Rebecca Warham Mather Stoddard: the name reads like a litany of New England Puritanism. Born sometime around 1644, she was the daughter of Rev. John Warham, the first minister of Windsor, Connecticut. In 1659 she married the first minister of Northampton, Eleazar Mather, one of the sons of the eminent Richard, minister of Dorchester, Massachusetts. Eleazar died in 1669, and when Solomon Stoddard was chosen to fill the post, he, following a not-uncommon practice, married his predecessor’s widow the following year. Solomon died in 1729, and as the “relict” of the former pastor she lived in the family manse on Prospect Hill for another seven years. She suffered tragedy in her life, losing not only two husbands but also, in 1704 alone, a daughter, Esther Mather Williams, and two grandchildren in the Deerfield Raid, not to mention the captivity of other members of the Williams family; and the death of a son, Isaac Stoddard, in a French prison after being taken captive by privateers.

But by all accounts, she was learned, forceful, vigorous, and resolute—as indicated by the fact that she lived well into her nineties. Samuel Sewall, Boston judge and diarist, while visiting Northampton, describes her at age seventy-four as “lame with the sciatica” yet still spinning at her “linen-wheel.” And she was pious. When her husband Solomon confessed to her that he had not had a converting experience, she arranged secret weekly prayer meetings with other women in town to beg the Lord for his regeneration. Solomon finally inquired about these weekly rendezvous of hers, and she admitted the reason; not long after, he had his enlightenment while administering the Lord’s Supper.

His widow died on Feb. 10, 1736, a Tuesday. Edwards, in memorializing her, states that she “departed this life the week past,” so he may have given
this sermon on the Sunday following, the 15th. However, given the importance of the deceased to the community, it is not unlikely that the town called a local fast on a weekday.

To eulogize his grandmother, Edwards chooses an apocalyptic text, from Revelation, which confirms blessedness on those who “die in the Lord,” but applies it to the present. As with those who die in the latter times whose “works follow them,” so too with the likes of the venerable woman laid to rest beside her husband on the little knoll in the Bridge Street cemetery. The life of a saint is a life of good works, Edwards affirms, both materially, according to “rule,” and formally, according to “good principle.” When true saints die, their works do follow them to heaven. Their religious acts of course have not saved them, but God remembers the good works of those who are saved, and rewards them proportionally, through free grace, their deformities hid in Christ and their relation to Christ giving “positive value” in God’s sight. Their reward will be glorious and everlasting, and will be even greater after the resurrection.

The doctrine teaches that there are different “degrees of glory” in heaven, that there are those who will be set in higher dignity and happiness than others. But the doctrine also reveals, to the contrary, the misery of those who are out of Christ. Just as the good works of the saints accompany them to heaven, so the evil of the damned infests their very bones, a rottenness that is only increased in hell. Thus, Edwards exhorts his hearers to make sure that they are in Christ, and that they abound in good works. Read the Word of God to see what is stipulated there for believers to do. And follow the example of departed saints, such as “the aged and excellent person” being remembered that day, who was so “extensively useful” as “a mother in our Israel,” eminent in charity, exemplary as a wife and mother. “Example,” Edwards comments, “has a powerful influence.”

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The manuscript is twenty duodecimo-sized leaves. At the top of the first page is Edwards’ inscription, “On occasion of the death of Mrs. Stoddard, who died Feb. 10, 1736.”
WHEN THE SAINTS DEPART INTO ANOTHER WORLD, THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM

Revelation 14:13.

And their works do follow them.

What is here said in this verse, is spoken more especially and directly for the encouragement of the saints under the cruel persecutions of Antichrist. In the foregoing chapter, the beloved disciple tells us of a vision he had of Antichrist, under the representation of a beast that had "seven heads and ten horns," and that should "make war with the saints, and overcome them"; and another beast that "had two horns like a lamb, but spoke as a dragon," that should "cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be killed."

In the beginning of this chapter is related a vision that he had of the church of God in the time of Antichrist, or of those that had kept themselves pure from the general corruption when "the world wondered after the beast" [Rev. 13:3], who are represented as those who are "not defiled with women"; i.e., those who are not defiled with the rest of women, or as other women were, but are virgins "that follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth"; that are "redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" [Rev. 14:4].

And after this, there follows a vision of the fall of Antichrist, and of the fearful punishment of those that adhered to him.

What is said here, is especially spoken for the comfort of those saints who should suffer under Antichrist, and should not live to see the fall of Antichrist. Though they should die in dark times and under sufferings, or should be put to death by their cruel enemies, and should never live to see the accomplishment of those glorious things that were to come when Antichrist should fall, yet Christ would have them be encouraged and comforted, and to
that end proclaims with a voice from heaven that which we have in this verse, with a command to John to write it. Wherein we may observe:

1. What it is that is proclaimed: viz., that "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord from henceforth." Though they might live in dark times, and never live to see the fall of Antichrist, and never see any good or happy days while they remained here, [and] might be afflicted and persecuted all the while they lived, yet when they were dead, thenceforth they were happy. From that day that they died, happy days began with them. Then their evil days were at an end, and their blessedness thenceforward should never suffer any end or interruption.

2. We may observe the attestation that is given to this testimony:
"Yea, saith the Spirit." The Holy Ghost bears witness to it. The first voice that proclaimed from heaven, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth," seems to be the voice of Christ, the same that pronounced blessedness in the beginning of the 5th chapter of Matthew to these and those. He here pronounces those blessed that "die in the Lord," and commands John to "Write," that it might stand on record as his testimony and promise, for the benefit and comfort of saints in after ages. It seems to be the same person that John beheld sitting on a white cloud, spoken of in the next verse, whom he tells us was one "like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown." He is "the faithful and true witness," as he is called, Rev. 3:14. But yet, besides his testimony, the same is confirmed by the testimony of another divine person, viz., the Holy Spirit. That the saints might have the more strong consolation, it is confirmed by two divine witnesses: the Son and the Holy Ghost.

This same apostle John that is commanded to write this, tells us in the 5th chapter of his First Epistle, 7th v., that "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three
are one." There are two of them here, expressly bearing record to the
blessedness of the dead that die in the Lord.

3. We may observe the reasons given why they are blessed, and they are
two:

(1) "That they rest from their labors." Though whilst they live they
may undergo great sufferings and cruel persecution, and therefore may have
their work that God has appointed them to do and their race to run under
great difficulties and with great labors, yet when they are dead, they shall
rest from their labors.

(2) "Their works do follow them." They shall not only rest from the
labors and difficulty and suffering that attends their works, but then will
come the time when they shall eat the sweet fruit of their works. The evil
and labor of their work shall then cease, but the good of their works shall
never cease. The difficulty of their work is but temporary and short, but the
sweet fruit is eternal. And at that same time when the difficulty and labor
ceases, the happiness and glory that is the fruit, shall begin, viz., as soon
as ever they are dead.

DOCTRINE.

When the saints depart out of this into another world, their works do follow
them.

[Prop.] I. The life of a saint is a life of good works. The saints
han’t only a holy heart, but do live a holy life. The tree is not only good
and the root good, but the fruit is good.

This is what we are taught in the description of a citizen of Zion in
the 24th Psalm, 4th verse, that he hath "clean hands and a pure heart." Pure
hands and a clean heart always go together. The same we are also taught in
the 15th Psalm, 2nd verse, that he that shall dwell in God’s "holy hill," is
he that "worketh righteousness." They that live destitute of good works are no saints, because faith is to be shown by works; and "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also," Jas. 2:26. It is as essential to a true faith that it should be a working faith, as 'tis essential to a man that he should not only have a body, but a soul. And therefore a true faith is described to be a "faith that works by love," Gal. 5:6. The saints are not those that live a life of wicked works. This we are abundantly taught, because we are very [often] told how the workers of iniquity shall not be acknowledged, but rejected and condemned.

And not only so: the true saints are not only those that don't live a life of wicked works, but that do live a life of good works. The life of saints is neither filled with wicked practice, nor is it empty. The godly are neither those that ben't active in wickedness, nor yet those that are idle. It is essential that we should not only be negatively, but positively, good.

Though men should avoid all wicked practices, yet the defect of good works will be enough to condemn 'em at the day of judgment. This appears by the account Christ gives us of the day of judgment in the 25th [chapter] of Matthew. What is there mentioned as what they at the left hand are condemned for, was not wicked works, but want of good ones. Matt. 25:41[-43], "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hunged, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."

That life that is not a life of good works, is a wicked life. Its being thus negatively wicked is sufficient to denominate it a wicked life, without any positive wicked practices: for the very living in that defect, is living in wickedness. And 'tis a wicked life for that reason, because [it is] without good works. And those that are true saints not only do good works
sometime, but their life is a life of good works; that is, it is the sincere desire and aim of their hearts and the true endeavor of their lives, to live in all holy practice, and to perform all righteousness; to do those things which shall be well-pleasing and acceptable to God and to his glory. This is the fruit that a good tree brings forth.

And that is not only sufficient to condemn a tree, that it bears briers and thorns, but that it is barren. Matt. 3:10, "And now also the axe is laid at the root of the trees: therefore every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." 'Tis not said, "Every tree that brings forth evil fruit," but, "Every tree that brings not forth good fruit."

Works, in order to being denominated good, must be both materially and formally good.

Works are said to be materially good, when the matter of them is agreeable to the rule, and when they are such as are of a good tendency. And so a wicked man may do works that are materially good. They may do things that, as to the matter of them, are conformed to the rule, and that have a good tendency. Thus a wicked man may do an act of justice; or may give to him that needs; or may promote religion. But in order to a work's being indeed a good work in the sight of God, it must not only be materially, but formally, good.

In order to their being formally good, they must not only be, as to the matter of them, such as are agreeable to rule and such as are of a good tendency; but must be performed, in some measure at least, from a right principle, and for a right end. For works that are materially good, may yet, in the sight of God, be wicked works, because done with a wicked heart and from a wicked principle and aim. But a truly godly person lives a life of good works, as their works are both materially and formally good.

Prop. II. When the life of a saint is at an end and they depart into another world, their works do follow them. While they live, they live a life
of good works; and when they come to die and their life ceases, yet their good works don’t leave them, but follow them into the eternal world where they go. There they shall reap the sweet fruit of them.

God takes notice of the good works of his people, and he never forgets any of them. God is not more exact to remember the evil works of the wicked than he is the good works of the saints. God does as it were keep a book of remembrance. Mal. 3:16, "A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought on his name." And no one good work, however small, shall in anywise fail of its reward: "whosoever shall give a cup of cold water to a disciple, [he shall in no wise lose his reward]," Matt. 10:42. And that, though there may be very imperfectly done, and a great deal of corruption, and but little grace; though it be done in a great measure out of self-love, yet if there be any gracious respect to God, it shall not be forgotten, or fail of its reward.

And when a saint dies, then is the time when the reward that is laid up in heaven shall be bestowed. God oftentimes rewards the good works of the saints in this world, and sometimes rewards them an hundredfold more then, to make up for the pains and cost. But the rewards that God bestows here are not the full rewards that his grace designs. They are but little things in comparison of it. Matt. 19:29, "And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children or land for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." The good works that the saints do in this world, are as it were the seed that they sow. This life is the seed time, but the life to come is the harvest. When they die, then shall they receive the fruits of their labors. Gal. 6:8-9, "He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due time we shall reap, if we faint not."
Many times, the saints in their Christian course meet with great labor, and difficulty and much affliction. They sow in tears, but they shall reap in joy. Though they go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, yet when they come home to their Father’s house, it shall be with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them, Ps. 126:5-6.

Then shall they receive the blessed fruit of all their labor, and all their self-denial in God’s service. Then shall they reap the glorious harvest.

Here, I would speak briefly to two Inquiries:

First. How the good works of the saints come to be entitled to a reward.

Second. What reward they shall have.

First Inq. How the good works of the saints come to be entitled to a reward.

Ans. 1. The reward is not of merit, but of free grace. Not only the religion and righteousness of natural men and hypocrites deserves no reward, that have indeed no real goodness in them, but neither do the real good works of the godly: for when they have done all, Christ teaches them to acknowledge that they are "unprofitable servants," Luke 17:10. And not only do no more than is their duty to do, but if we look at the manner of the performance, every work of theirs falls short of duty, and is attended with a great deal of corruption. So that even the godly have cause to confess that their "righteousnesses are as filthy rags," and that they might be cast as dung in their faces [Is. 64:6]. But God, of his free and rich grace, don’t behold the pollution of their services, and is pleased gloriously to reward what they do, and to become bound by promise so to do, though they fall so much short in it.
[Ans.] 2. The reward is through Christ, i.e., 'tis through Christ that God has such respect to the good works of the saints as to reward them. In order to their being rewarded, they must first be accepted, for the reward is a testimony of God’s acceptance. But the good works of the saints are acceptable to God only through Jesus Christ. Heb. 13:21, "working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ"; and I Pet. 2:5, "Ye are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." And therefore we are commanded, whatsoever we do, either in word or deed, to "do all in the name of Jesus Christ," Col. 3:17.

As we are in ourselves, we are guilty creatures, and guilty creatures can in nowise be accepted, nor can anything be accepted from 'em while they stand guilty. As we are in ourselves, we are condemned creatures, and 'tis against the law that anything should be accepted of one that stands condemned by the law. And then there is nothing that we do but what is in a sense corrupt; even the holy exercises and gracious actions of the godly are so, and that, not only as corrupt acts are mixed with them, but their good acts themselves. Take them as they are in themselves, in their dimensions and manner in which they are put forth, they are defectively corrupt or sinfully defective.

That defect that is in them is sin, and is very abominable to God. And if God marked it, it would be ten times so abominable, as the little good that is in it is acceptable. Take the very best works of the saints in this world, with their sinful defects, and they might be just matter of provocation to God, and must be so if they were looked upon as under the law, and can’t be otherwise than only as they are looked upon in Christ, by whom that pollution is hid.

'Tis therefore only through Christ, and for his sake, that they are looked upon as rewardable or fit for any reward. Two things come to pass with
respect to the good works of the saints, by virtue of their relation to Christ:

(1) That the deformities and pollution of their works is hid. Not only the exercises of corruption that go before and follow their holy acts, but the sinful defect and pollution that is in them. For Christ’s sake, God has respect only to the good that is in them. For Christ’s sake, God does "not behold iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel" [Num. 23:21]. For his sake, their transgression is covered, and their sin hid, Ps. 32 at beginning.

(2) Their relation to Christ puts a positive value upon their good works in the sight of God. God beholding the saints as in Christ, their inherent holiness and good works, what little of it there is, receives vastly greater value in God’s sight than otherwise it would have, and that, because God looking upon them as in Christ, as members of Christ, their persons receive in God’s account a greater dignity. Is. 43:4, "Since thou wast precious in mine eyes, thou hast been honorable." The same love and obedience in a person of greater dignity, is more valuable than in one of lesser dignity. Believers are become immensely more honorable in God’s esteem by virtue of their relation to Christ, than man would have been considered as by himself; as a mean person becomes more honorable when married to a prince. According to the tenor of the first covenant, the person was to be accepted only for the works' sake; but in the covenant of grace, the works are accepted for the person's sake, and that as considered as honorable and acceptable in Christ.

Second Inq. What reward the saints will receive for their good works at death. I answer, In two things:

1. They shall receive an exceeding glorious reward. ‘Tis often called a crown, because an earthly crown is looked upon as the highest earthly attainment, the highest object of men's ambition. But this crown, with which
their good works are rewarded when they come to die, is no earthly, but an
heavenly crown. It is called, "a crown of righteousness," II Tim. 4:8; and
also, "a crown of life," Rev. 2:10, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will
give thee a crown of life"; and also, "a crown of glory," I Pet. 5:4.

The reward is an inheritance above, an inheritance of a child of God,
and therefore 'tis called, "the reward of the inheritance." Col. 3:23-24,
"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men;
knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance."

The reward that they receive, is to enter into the joy of their Lord.
Matt. 25:21, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been
faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter
thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The reward is so great, that all the labor, and difficulty and
suffering that is ever undergone in their Christian course, is lighter than
vanity in comparison of it. II Cor. 4:17, "Our light afflictions, which are
but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight
of glory."

2. 'Tis an everlasting reward. The reward that the saints receive when
they die, they shall receive to enjoy forever. 'Tis not only exceeding
glorious, but eternal.

Their works follow them out of this world into another, and never shall
leave them. That crown of glory that shall be given, is an incorruptible
crown. I Cor. 9:25, "And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate
in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an
incorruptible." So it is said of their crown, that "it fadeth not away." I
Pet. 5:4, "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown
of glory that fadeth not away." So their inheritance is also said to be
incorruptible and unfading. I Pet. 1:4, "To an inheritance incorruptible, and
undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." That honor and
blessedness which they shall be advanced to, shall continue forever. Thus Christ promises in Rev. 3:12, "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out."

But yet,

3. The reward that they receive at death, will not be their full and complete reward. It shall be exceeding glorious and will make them exceeding blessed, yet there is a still greater reward laid up and reserved for them, to be bestowed at the resurrection.

Their reward that they receive at death is not only a reward that will never fade away, but it shall be greatly added to and increased at the day of judgment, when the body shall be raised to partake with the soul in glory and incorruption. Thus Rev. 22:12, "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me." Not but that Christ bestows a glorious reward before, at death, but the consummate reward is what he will bring with him at his last coming. Then is the time appointed for the saints to receive their most glorious crown. As in II Tim. 4:6-8, that the Apostle speaks of his death's being nigh, but yet he speaks of a crown of righteousness, as of that which is to be given him not then, but at Christ’s appearing; meaning by the "crown of righteousness," his consummate reward. "I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: hereafter 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 to all them that love his appearing." So in that forementioned place, I Pet. 5:4, the "crown of glory" is said to be what the saints shall receive, "when the chief Shepherd shall appear." And hence the appearing of Christ at the last judgment is mentioned as the main object of the Christian's hope, whereby he is encouraged to do good works and to deny himself therein. As Tit. 2:12-13, "Teaching us that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this
present world; looking for that blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the
great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

And therefore when those that are in Christ, and have lived a life of
good works, come to die, they put off their earthly tabernacles to lie down
in the dust, and to be subject to corruption, in a blessed hope of the
glorious resurrection. And their dust is reserved as precious to that end,
that however "it is sown in corruption, it may be raised in incorruption;
though it be sown in weakness, it may be raised in power; and though sown in
dishonor, it may be raised in glory; though it is sown a natural body; it is
raised a spiritual body" [I Cor. 15:42-44]. And when they shall rise to a
glorious resurrection, and come to stand before their Judge, then shall their
good works be openly declared. Thus in the account that we have of the day of
judgment in the 25th [chapter] of Matthew, Christ declares the good works of
the saints. Thirty-fifth and 36th verses, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me
meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me
in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison,
and ye came unto me."

And then shall their works be found to honor and praise, when Christ
shall call them to an account how they have improved the talents that he
committed to them, and shall declare how much they have gained in the
improvement. Then shall they receive praise of their Lord, who will say to
them, "Well done, good and faithful servant" [Matt. 25:23].

Then shall those holy works of theirs, which they have done in secret,
which none but God and themselves know while in the present state, be brought
to light and be rewarded openly. Then shall Christ openly honor them for
things they did, when they did not let their left hand know what their right
hand did.

And as many will rise up in judgment as witnesses against the wicked,
those that have injured by their wickedness, so then shall those rise up to
testify for the godly, that have been benefited by their good works; those who have had their bodies relieved by their [care], or have had their soul's benefits by their good counsel, and faithful reproofs or good examples.

APPLICATION.

I. Hence we may learn that there are different degrees of glory in heaven. If the good works of the saints are rewarded in heaven, it will inevitably follow that there are different degrees of glory. For if a saint, when he does a good work, shall have no higher degree of happiness or glory in heaven than if he had not done it, then he has no reward for it: for in what sense can a person be said to be rewarded in heaven for such a good work which he has done, when he has nothing at all, than if he had not done it?

Christ has said that he that does so much as give a cup of cold water to a disciple in the {name of a disciple}, shall in no case lose his reward [Matt. 10:42]. But how can this be, if he has no more than if he had not given it?

But if it be so that a person, when he has done a good [work], stands entitled to a greater degree of glory than if he had not done it, it will certainly follow that there are different degrees of glory, because it will follow that their glory is greater or less according as they have done more or less of good works. The saint that has done many good works, if he be rewarded for them all, must necessarily have a higher degree of glory than if he had done fewer. And so in like manner, they that have done many will surely have a higher degree of glory than those that have done few, and every saint will be rewarded according to his works.

As I observed before, the good works the saints do in the world are compared in Scripture to seed sown, and the reward that is received in heaven is compared to the harvest that they that have sown this seed do reap. But
the Apostle tells us that they that "sow sparingly shall reap sparingly; and that they that sow bountifully shall reap also bountifully," II Cor. 9:6.

Those therefore that while they lived, were eminent in holiness, and abounded in holy carriages, and are now dead, we may determine that they are advanced to proportionally high and eminent degrees of blessedness.

Hence, those that have friends and relations that have been near and dear to them that are departed, that while they lived were eminent in a close walk with God; who were shining Christians of an amiable spirit and Christian behavior; who have set bright examples, and abounded in those works that have been to the honor and the good of men: they may upon good ground, comfort themselves with the consideration not only of their being gone to heaven, and being there in a state of rest and blessedness, but also that they are exalted high in glory; that they are distinguished by the honor that their Savior puts upon them there. And [they] may expect to see them at the resurrection of the just, shining forth with a distinguished brightness; and to see the Judge put honor upon them, above others whose holiness and good works have been in a lesser degree.

II. This Doctrine may lead us to reflect on the miserable and doleful state of those that die out of Christ. Their misery appears in that they have no good works to follow them; they have no reward of anything to receive; they go out of the world, out of this place where God has set them to work, without any good account to give of their having done any part of their work that God has set 'em to do. When they are called to give an account how they have improved their talents, they will [have] no account to give of any gain that they have made of them, or any good improvement at all. They'll have no other account to give, than that of the slothful servant who buried his talent and hid it in the earth, and when he came to return it, it was without any increase at all. When the husbandman comes seeking fruit, he'll find none. Instead of having that to comfort themselves with, that they have
fought a good fight, and have done the work that God has given them to do, they will have to think that they have done no part of it; never have done one thing to the glory of God, and from a gracious respect to him, in their whole lives: but will be found to have lived in vain, and to have spent the only working day that ever they are to have throughout the whole of eternity, without doing any good. When night comes on, and the Master calls 'em to an account, it will be found that they han't done one stroke of the work that he sent 'em into the world for.

And they won't only have no good works to follow them when they come to die, but they will have a vast number, an innumerable throng of wicked works to follow them. All the sinful deeds that ever they did, every sinful act, will keep close to them and follow them whither they go.

Not only the sins they committed more lately, but all the sins of their whole lives. If they die in old age, their sins of youth shall all attend them, and follow them into another world. This is represented in Scripture by their bones being full of their sins, and their lying down in the grave with them. Job 20:11, "His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust"; i.e., when they have done with this world and all things here below, they han’t done with the sins they committed here, though they were committed long ago. Yet their sins as it were follow them to their graves, and lie down with them in the dust. Yea, and when they have lain there till the flesh is all rotted off from their bones, still their very bones are full of their sins; "their iniquity shall be upon their bones." As it is expressed in Ezek. 32:27, "And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords under their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their bones."

Sin lies at wicked men's door while they live. The guilt of sin, it lies upon them: all the sins that ever they committed. Though the acts of sin
are past, yet the guilt of them remains. It lies upon them, and wherever they go, the guilt of sin follows them. And 'tis upon them when they lie on their deathbeds, and it follows them into another world.

And as the godly, when they die, go to reap the fruit of their good works; so do the wicked, when they die, go into another world to reap the bitter fruit of their evil works.

As they sow to the flesh, so then they shall of the flesh reap corruption. Job 4:8[-9], "they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed." And so Hos. 8:7, "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."

We are told "that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment," Matt. 12:36. Which teaches us that not only some special and more gross sins shall follow those into eternity, that die out of Christ, but even the least sins that ever they have been guilty of. We are told that "the wages of sin is death," i.e., eternal destruction. Every sin, even any one sin, deserves this at least. How dismal then is the case of those that die out of Christ, with the guilt of all the sins of their whole lives; to suffer the full punishment of every one; to be cast into prison, and to delivered to the tormenters, till they pay the very uttermost farthing.

This shows that there are degrees of damnation, as well as degrees of happiness and glory, in those that have died in Christ. Men shall suffer misery in hell, in some proportion to their wicked works.

Consider this, ye that are out of Christ: consider what a multitude of sins you have that are lying at your door, ready to follow you into another world whenever you shall die. If you shall die by sickness, or should die by any sudden accident, or whatever way you should go out of the world, that vast throng of sins that you have [been] guilty of, lies at your door, ready
as it were, waiting for such a time, to follow you into another world. Now your sins as it were, still they are tame; you are perhaps pretty quiet, notwithstanding them all. But then when they come to follow you into another [world], they will fall upon you like millions of lions.

Though they seem to lie still now, and do you but little harm, ‘tis not because they are of a harmless nature. No, every one is a viper full of deadly poison; every one has venom and strength enough eternally to destroy. But this is not the [time]. The time is not yet come wherein they shall be suffered thus to do. But when you die, they will be let loose upon you, and will jointly fall upon you; and you shall feel the utmost of every one’s venom, strength and cruelty. And consider how many thousands and thousands there [are] of them; how have you multiplied them; and how do you still continue to multiply them day after day.

You cannot bear the punishment of one of the least of your sins. It will be enough everlastingly to destroy you, to have but one of your sins follow you when you die. It would be an enemy that you could not grapple with, fiercer ten thousand times than a lion, and its poison far worse than the cruel venom of asps.

What then will you do? what then will you do with thousands of thousands of them, when they shall altogether fall upon you, and shall continue biting at you to all eternity?

Every sin that you have committed, is a seed that has hellfire in it. You have spent your life in sowing such seed. Consider what a dreadful harvest you are like to have, when the fruit comes to be ripe.

And the time is but short. You have but a little while to continue here before you must die; a very short time; ‘tis even at the door. Consider that in the 7th [chapter] of Ezekiel, 10th verse: "Behold the day, behold it is come: the morning is gone forth; the rod hath blossomed, pride hath budded."
The seed that you have sown has budded and blossomed already, and it will soon bring forth its fruit.

*Use III, and the last, may be {of} Exhortation, in two branches.*

*First.* Let all be hence exhorted, to give all diligence to make sure of being in Christ. This blessedness that I have spoken of, of being followed by good works into another world, is predicable of none but those that die in Christ. It is given in the text as one instance, or reason, why those are blessed that die in the Lord. But in order to die in Christ, we must get into Christ while we live. The time of this life is the only season or opportunity to get into Christ.

This is of necessity, in order to have good works follow us when we die, because until we are in Christ, we can have no good works. 'Tis being engrafted into him, and by life and strength derived from him, that any are enabled to do good works, or to bring forth any good fruit. John 15:4-5, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, and ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." And besides, if we could do any good work out of Christ, it could not be acceptable, or entitle us to any reward: for as we have already observed, ‘tis only in and through him, that even the least works of the saints are acceptable and rewardable. If they are beheld out of Christ, their persons are under guilt and condemnation, and therefore ‘tis against the law that anything should be accepted from them. And their best works, if beheld out of Christ, would be abominable.

It appears this way, as well as many others, that if you would have death be an happy change to you, you must get into Christ. Death is a terrible enemy out of Christ, but in him, ‘tis a servant; the sting is taken
away, and 'tis a happy and glorious change. For to such as are in Christ, "to die is gain" [Philip. 1:21].

Second. I would hence take occasion, to exhort all that look upon themselves to be in Christ, to abound in good works. The Doctrine sets before you a most powerful motive thereto: viz., that when you come to die, your works will follow you. None of them shall be lost. If you abound never so much in them, there is no danger that God will not be observant of your works, or that he will forget them, or that you shall lose the reward of any of them.

Consider, the time will soon come when you must die. Let the consideration of it be of the same weight with you as it was with Christ, who says, John 9:4, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work."

The same God that sent him and appointed him his work, has also appointed you yours, and you have your day set. Let not this short day be misspent, but let it [be] filled up with work. The day is not a time to sleep in; 'tis a time to labor in.

If you labor now while it is day, and spend the whole day in labor, when the night comes, you shall have rest enough then. You shall rest from your labors, and your rest shall be eternal. Therefore don't begrutch your labors now, and you shall not only rest when night comes, but you shall be rewarded then richly for all your work. God has given his faithful promise and he won't fail of fulfilling of it. Consider that in Heb. 6:10, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed towards his name."

Consider how much of your precious time has been spent in idleness already; how much of the day is already gone, that has been spent to no good purpose. O! let the rest be filled up with good works.
Labor to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, to walk in the ways of God. Seek that God may be glorified in you, and religion adorned and not dishonored, and others stumbled by any of your carriages. Let your life be spent in doing good, that you may not live barren and useless in the world. Strive to do what good you can to others' souls, and also to their bodies. And don't spare pains and self-denial. Never was anyone that brought forth much fruit to the glory of God, without great self-denial; it can't be without bearing the cross. For us to expect to do much to God’s glory, or to lay much treasure in heaven by good works without great self-denial, is a vain thing. Those that spare themselves, that are tender of crossing their carnal inclinations, and backward to put themselves out of the way, will be barren Christians. As the fruit of the womb is not brought forth without hard labor and travail, so neither does the spouse of Christ bring forth fruit to God without this. Don’t think therefore of any other, than living a life of continual labor and travail.

You have received enough already from God to engage you to do good works. If you are in Christ, you have already received more at the hands of God, than if he had given you the whole world. And God’s own excellency, and willingness to be obeyed and served, should be motive enough.

But besides these, God has promised such a glorious and eternal reward for your good works, as you have heard: "a crown of life," "an inheritance incorruptible."

How great a motive, to strive to your utmost to do good works, that every good work that you do shall be so greatly and richly rewarded, and that the more you abound in good works, the more glory and happiness you shall have to all eternity. The more excellent that happiness is, the more is it worth your while to strive for great and high degrees of it, and especially considering that every part of that glory is eternal. Hence, the least addition to it, is of infinite value. Would not one strive to get as much of
that which is so excellent as possibly they can, when they have such an opportunity, a day appointed on purpose to that end? The treasure in heaven is an exceeding precious sort of treasure. The least part of it, is more worth than all the treasures of earthly princes a thousand times. Therefore, let us heap up treasure to our utmost. Certainly 'tis worth the while, to get as much of it as possibly we can!

'Tis no unwarrantable selfishness for us so to do. We are allowed to be greedy and covetous here, and there is no restraint upon us. We can't toil ourselves too much night and day to lay up treasure in heaven. We shall never be blamed for being too greedy. Christ has forbid us to lay up treasure on the earth, Matt. 6:19-20; i.e., not to be greedy of it, and anxious about it. But he has commanded [us] to lay up treasure in heaven, and that without any restraint.

The Apostle, to encourage us to be covetous of a great deal, tells us in a forementioned passage, that they that "sow sparingly shall reap sparingly" [II Cor. 9:6].

How industrious are many, to heap up earthly treasure that is but dirt and dung. Amos 2:7, "They pant after the dust of the earth." Shall men be so greedy after that which is so worthless, and we be negligent of that which is so precious?

Supposing some great prince should make a man an offer of as many jewels as he could gather up in a day, and should order them to be scattered on the ground before him, that he might have all for his own that he could heap up before the sun set. Would not a man in such a case, spend that day very diligently? Would not he be content to work hard, and even not to give himself time to eat or sleep, and not begrutch either his pains or self-denial, from the prospect he had of being richly paid for it; and considering that it was but a day, and that he should have opportunity enough both to rest, and eat, and daintily to feast himself afterwards? How much more should
we spend our day diligently and laboriously, that the King of heaven has
appointed us, in heaping up [an] heavenly treasure of jewels that are
incorruptible, and that can’t be lost, and ten thousand times more excellent
and precious than all the gold and precious things that the earth affords.

And what a blessed thing it is, after we have industriously spent our
lives in thus heaping up treasure in heaven, to have such a treasure to go
[to] when we come to die and to leave all earthly enjoyments. How comfortable
may the prospect of this be on a deathbed. The apostle Paul, he comforted
himself with it when his end was approaching. II Tim. 4:6-8, "I am now ready
to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 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 also that
love his appearing."

Two Directions.

[Dir.] 1. Be much in reading the Word of God, with that aim, to see
what works are there insisted on. When we read the Holy Scripture, we should
not read it merely as a lesson that is set us, or a task that is appointed,
as if we had nothing else to do but just to read over the words of such a
part of Scripture, without considering what we aim at in reading; what it is
that we are inquiring after, or would be informed of, or directed in, in what
we read. If persons would set themselves to read the Scriptures, especially
the New Testament, with that proposal, to search it and see what kind of
behavior, what works are there insisted on and chiefly urged, still keeping
that end in view, by the time they had got through, it [would] give ‘em a
clearer idea what a kind of life became a Christian, and how God expects we
should live as Christ’s disciples, and what duties we have before us. Many,
if they would be often searching the Scripture for this end, would have much
righter notions about their duty than they have. They would have other ideas;
they would see wherein they chiefly fail, and many of their errors would be
discovered to 'em, that now pass unobserved. Many persons ben't complete
Christians; they ben't of the right stamp because of this. There are some
unlovely things in them which they themselves ben't sensible of, which, if
they did but search the Scripture for that end, and apply to themselves,
searching themselves withal, they would see and correct. But instead of that,
the Scriptures are very often cursorily read over, without much of this
searching and applying, and so do but little good. Those that do, are those
the apostle James speaks [of], Jas. 1:22-24, "that are like a man that
beholds his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his
way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

[Dir.] 2. Follow the examples of those that are departed, that in their
lifetime were eminent for holiness and good works. This we are commanded to
do in Scripture. We are often called upon to follow Christ, and not only so,
but we are called upon to follow the saints wherein they have followed
Christ, I Cor. 4:16. We are to go in "the footsteps of the flock," Cant. 1:8.
And especially we are directed to follow the holy examples of such eminent
saints as are dead, and to give diligence to that end. Heb. 6:12, 'That ye be
not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit
the promises."

Example has a powerful influence. We see it continually. It has greater
force in many respects than precept, and therefore God has been pleased to
deal with us in this way. He sent Christ to give us an example of holiness of
life, as well as to teach and enjoin by precept, and so directs us to follow
the example of saints [who] have gone before us.

Living examples have, in some respects, the advantage. But in other
respects, the examples of the dead have something peculiar to enforce them:
as particularly that consideration that they in their lifetime have thus and
thus abounded in good works, and do now actually possess the promised rewards of their works.

And I would take occasion at this time particularly, to mention the aged and excellent person, the relict of your former eminent pastor, that departed this life the week past. I shall not in my present discourse pretend to any such thing as to give her character, being upon several accounts unfit for it, and uncapable of it, and especially by reason of my being unacquainted with her in her day of action. Many of you are more capable of informing me, than I am of informing you in this matter. But she being one to whose memory so much regard is due from the inhabitants of this town, on the account of her relation to your former pastor, who we may say has been the father of this town, and she so extensively useful in that place, and so much of a mother in our Israel, especially this part of it; and her example so eminent in those things that are universally famed of her by all that have known her in her day, and visible in a great degree even in her old age: it seems to be no more than meet, and what the case requires, that I should take occasion at this time to exhort you not to forget her example, now she is gone. Though she can no more be useful amongst you as she has eminently been in times past, yet the remembrance of her holy, exemplary walk, and her good works, may yet be useful to you, now she is gone. Her example should stir us up to labor after spiritual wisdom and understanding, which she was eminent for. Her example should also influence us, to seek that there may appear in us such a pious concern for the interest of religion, and the honor and glory of God, and that this concern may be directed with that wisdom and prudence which shone so brightly in her.

And she was one remarkably amiable, not only for her wisdom, in discretion in all behavior; but for her extraordinary meekness and patience and humility. Though she was a person of such distinction, yet she was not less distinguished, but much more, in a meek and humble disposition, than in
honor. As such a spirit is abundantly insisted on in God's Word, as becoming of Christians, so I would urge it on you on this occasion. 'Tis suitable and amiable in persons of all ranks, and in some respects, especially so in those that are of highest rank.

And let our humility and meekness be such as proceeds from a pious principle and grace in the heart, as it evidently did in her, and not merely from natural temperament and from our circumstances in the world.

She was eminent as the mother and mistress in a family, in her prudent, pious care to educate her children in the ways of God, and particularly in the wise and strict exercise of family government: as I have had particular opportunity to be informed, having the honor to be descended of from one of her children.

I would hence take occasion to exhort those women in the congregation, that stand in the like family relations that she did, to the like care in bringing up their children. A wise, and pious and diligent care in instructing and governing of children, is of vast importance to the well-being of their souls.

And mothers are under some peculiar advantages in it, especially when children are young, which is, on some accounts, the best time for forming their minds to that which is good. The mother at that time, commonly has more to do with her children; and the child has easier access to the mother than the father; and being commonly more constantly at home, has many opportunities with a child that the father has not. Hence Solomon particularly mentions the instruction that his mother gave him. Prov. 31:1, "The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy which his mother taught him." There is no mention of his father, which yet was not because that he had not a pious father. So he charges his son, not to forsake the law of his mother, Prov. 1:8 and 6:20. A prudent, steady government of children, is commonly a
part of family education that is greatly wanting, and yet of very great importance, and greatly recommended by the person we are speaking of.

I would also take occasion at this time, once more to put you in mind of the solemn instruction and holy examples of your former pastor. These are what you should never forget, and 'tis not out of season to put you in mind of them, because [it] is now some years since you have heard or seen him. Whether you remember them or no, God remembers them, and you must give an account of your improvement of them. The eminent means that you, most of you, have been brought up under, in the enjoyment of his ministry, will dreadfully aggravate the condemnation of such of you as continue in sin. Take care, therefore, yet to improve the instruction and many solemn counsels and warnings he gave you. And then, there is hope that you may hereafter meet them that have been thus eminent in this world, and dwell with them forever in the enjoyment of the same God, in fellowship with the same Lord Jesus.
Notes:

1. The top line of the MS indicates: "On occasion of the death of Mrs Stoddard, who died Feb 10 1736."
2. MS: "is."
3. MS: "Isai 44. 3."
4. At this point in the MS, JE wrote "Rev. 14. 13," which is omitted, indicating the start of the next preaching unit.
5. MS: "glory."
6. MS: "Jame 2. 22. 23."
7. MS: "Heb. 6. 10."