

The Funeral Sermon of John Spilsbury

Fun. Sermon for John Spilsbury. Bromsgrove, 1699.

Together With

His Personal Confession of Faith

His Funeral Sermon was Prepared by Himself

and Delivered by John Eccles, 1699,

from Luke 17:10

**"So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all these things which
are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have
done that which was our duty to do."**

Published by some followers of the Lamb if their hearts do not deceive them.

Magazine, Arkansas

1993

Thank you:

**Brother John O'Brien for reading this
work and offering needful helps and corrections.**

This volume is one of many from The Old Faith Baptist Library of the Old Faith Baptist Church. This library is devoted only to the works of the old and real Particular Baptists of England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland and America from 1600-1700. In addition there are several General Baptists works and Pedobaptist works in our possession as historical documents only as they become involved in the various conflicts with the old Particular Baptists..

Publisher's Introduction

This message was handwritten and preserved for nearly 300 years and copied by the Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, Dr. Lynn E. May Jr., Director. It can be found on Microfilm No. 204, Reel 44, of their collection of British Baptist Materials. The listing for it is in their Supplementary Alphabetical Index for Publications Nos. 204-206. The Sermon comes from a large handwritten volume which contains other materials dating from 1641 up to 1703. The index from the historical commission reads:

Funeral Sermon for John Spilsbury and others. (Ms. not dated.) 27-670, 44-40

The code, 27-670, is from W. T. Whitley's A Baptist Bibliography, London: The Kingsgate Press; 4 Southampton Row, W.C.: 1916, 2 Vols. The number 27 means the 27th listing of the year. The number 670 means 1670. Therefore, Whitley assigned this date to the funeral of John Spilsbury. Why, how and upon what evidence? There is none. In the Whitley index this is found:

Funeral sermon for John Spilsbury (not dated).

Therefore, when this work was placed into modern English by the efforts of Brother John O'Brien, I was astonished when Brother John suggested that Spilsbury's death occurred in 1699. He translated this from old English hand script into modern English in a matter of days while working full time. I have had the printed copy from the microfilm for 3 years and could not make it out. If you have not turned to the old English copy, please do so and study it and see how far you can go. I have shared the date of the funeral of Spilsbury with the head of the libraries at the American Baptist Historical Society, Rochester NY. and the John T. Christian Library at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, La. Their reaction was the same as mine. But, the internal evidence favors the 1699 date. In addition, when you look at the original manuscript you can see this title:

Fun. Sermon for John Spilsbury. Bromsgrove, 1699.

Why, then, did Whitley list it as an undated manuscript? The date is clear and in place. Has the date of John Spilsbury's death been documented? Not yet. In Cathcart's Baptist Encyclopedia there is no mention of either his birth or his death. The article concludes with this line: "He was alive in 1660." Mr. James R. Lynch, Director of the Library of the American Baptist Historical Society stated to me in a personal letter, July 3, 1990: "While his death date has not been documented as far as I'm aware, the sources place his birth at 1593." Mr. Lynch has been of tremendous kindness and help to me in my historical researches and I value his contributions. He is a careful and knowledgeable student of history and makes no careless remarks.

I am discussing this question so that I will not be viewed as unscientific in historical matters by assigning the date of the funeral of John Spilsbury as 1699. It does not effect any position of Baptist history in any way. I am simply sensitive to the fact that some will wonder why I have chosen to go against the established date of Spilsbury's death. Remember, his death date has not been documented. In addition, if after reading this manuscript, you come to a different conclusion then please contact me and let me

know and I will be happy to make the necessary changes in future editions of this work. In our times we must be very careful to deal with Baptist history in a proper and scientific manner.

This brings us to two questions: Why was Spilsbury in Bromsgrove and not in London, and who was John Eccles?

The Particular Baptist church at Bromsgrove was a part of the Particular Baptist work of Worcestershire in the Midlands which belonged to the Midlands Particular Baptist association gathered in the early 1650s under the direction of Daniel King and others. John Spilsbury began ministering to this church somewhere in 1655-1656 era. In her remarkable work, The Political Activities of the Baptists and Fifth Monarchy Men in England During the Interregnum, Dr. Louise Fargo Brown records this interesting fact about Henry Cromwell, Oliver's son, and his efforts to secure the services of John Spilsbury in Ireland:

He followed his father's advice in using efforts to conciliate the Baptists still hostile to the government, assiduously circulating the loyal address of the Welsh Baptists to Cromwell. He endeavored, too, to secure for Ireland the ministry of Spilsbury, the Baptist minister who had so successfully interceded with his brethren the previous year. That worthy divine had, however, just accepted a call from a "very great people" in England, and was not obtainable.

p. 160.

The date is documented at the note on the bottom of the page as Feb. 19, 1655/6.

Between that time and 1661, John Spilsbury settled in the Bromsgrove area. There he continued for over 35 years and died in 1699. Does not the internal evidence of this funeral sermon suggest this? Now, on to the next question: Who was John Eccles? Thomas Crosby, the English Baptist historian, says:

Mr. John Eccles. He was pastor of a congregation at Bromsgrove, in the country of Worcester; and preached the gospel there and at Coventry, near sixty years. He suffered much for his non-conformity; was taken preaching, and greatly abused, and put into a dungeon in Worcester goal. But God raised him up a friend, Mr. Swift, one of the members of parliament for the county of Worcester, who became bound for him in a bond of one thousand pounds, and so procured his liberty. He was a man of worth, and given much to hospitality; and having a large family, and suffering much persecution, we was in the end reduced to great poverty; the which he bore in a very cheerful manner. The latter part of his life was spent at Coventry, where he died January 26, anno 1711, in the 76th year of his age.

A History of the English Baptists, Vol 3, p. 118.

At the general meeting of the Particular Baptists of England held in London, in 1689, John Eccles was still at Bromsgrove. The same is true at the next general meeting in 1691.

According to Crosby, Eccles started preaching when he was about 15 years old. This would be about 1651. According to Eccles, John Spilsbury ministered to him as a young boy. So we are able to put the facts together piece by piece.

The value of this message lies in its subject matter as well as in its historical information. You will note the strong and clear presentation of the grace of God displayed in the redemption of Jesus Christ worked out for His people according to the proscriptions of the Father to the Son in the Everlasting Covenant of Redemption. You will see and feel the love and tenderness of the hearts of John Eccles and John Spilsbury. It is very true that those old brethren lived and died in a higher state of Christian experience and knowledge than most enjoy today. May this message secure additional value in speaking to us after nearly 300 years of silence.

He, being dead, yet speaks.

Funeral Sermon for John Spilsbury Delivered by

John Eccles

1699

Luke 17:10:

**So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things
which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants:
we have done that which was our duty to do.**

This subject was chose by your late reverend and Holy Minister, your skillful, careful and tender pastor who though faith has obtained a good report, and being dead yet speaks. On that account, lay up, I beseech you, this text in your very hearts as being the legacy of so dear and precious a friend. He chose it for you and not for himself. As he desired not so he needs not our commendations. It was your good and happiness he studied, prayed and labored for, to the utmost bounds of time. And certainly he apprehended some very important truth wrapped up in this verse that he commended it to you as his last farewell. It was much on his mind, let it be much on yours. These are the last words that ever he'll chose for you. He has chose many a sweet, suitable and useful subject, your souls know very well, but he has now done his work, he will now chose no more. Which puts me in mind of what was writ on the tomb of an Aged Person, only. Mortuus Est, He's dead: He's now dead that for more than 40 years together has preached the everlasting gospel in this place. (This is one of the internal evidences that suggests Spilsbury lived well beyond 1669. Remember he settled here in the 1657-1659 era. R.E.P.) How many precious sermons have you heard from him? But you'll hear him no more. Alas, no more. He is now dead that was the blessed instrument of helping several of your dear parents to heaven. He is now gone to rejoice with them. He's dead under whom some of you have been trained up all your days. He can be no more serviceable to you. He's now dead that has brought some of you to the very gates of salvation. He is entered in himself and left you behind, a little, little longer.

He's dead that made the match between Christ and you, that has been employed by free grace to bring you many a rich subject. Your friend and your parents' friend and your children's' friend is dead. He's dead that has been treating with others of you about soul and eternity concerns and would have espoused you to Christ had you been ruled by him, but now, it is too late. He can't help you. Though it may not be too late for God to help you. Only what opportunities have you lost! He's now dead, whose death has been a long time feared. (Another evidence, R.E.P.) The fearful stroke is now fallen and it may be a greater stroke has not fallen upon this place. He's now dead that has outlived his brethren in the ministry (another evidence, Hansard Knollys died in 1691, William Kiffen died in 1701, but was too infirm to be about and may have supposed to have been dead by Eccles

in 1699, R. E. P.) and has stood the last dissenting minister in Worcestershire, the young minister may well cry out as 2 Kings 2:12, My father, My father, the chariot of grace and the horsemen thereof, the mantle is dropped. Where is the Lord God of Elijah? He's dead and has left you his dying thoughts. When you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable. And one serious thought or two, will lead you into the sense of these words. There is unprofitableness towards men and towards God. We are said to be unprofitable toward men when our talents lie by unimproved, when due care is not taken to promote our own salvation, nor the welfare of others; when we answer not the great end of our beings and Christian vocation to saving purposes. Much more when we serve the flesh and sin. Such unprofitable servants are damned to utter darkness Mat. 25:30 and Christ would not have disciples esteem themselves such cumber ground.

But when we are unprofitable toward God, Who though we serve Him and serve Him faithfully, yet can lay no obligation upon Him, to confer His favors upon us, can never plead merit, but must rely on mercy. The great God is not beholden to us. But we are intently to Him. When you have done all, ect. As if it had been said, "When you have preached the everlasting gospel, have converted thousands, cast out devils, raised the dead, done more miracles than ever I did; when you have planted churches and have recovered the world, in a considerable measure, from its wretched apostasy, be not puffed up with vain conceits of what you have done, but know and reckon that you have not in the least advantaged the Almighty; that after all you must depend upon the free grace and love of God for a reward. This great doctrine of free grace is illustrated by a common instance: Verse 9. Suppose one should take a poor despicable beggar, perishing for want of necessaries and entertain him in his family, employ him in his service, provide for him and encourage him with great rewards and a prospect of a rich inheritance. Would the Master be beholden to the beggar or the beggar to the Master, on whom he depends for all and starves without him? So likewise ye, whom free grace has pulled out of the very jaws of death and advanced in the house of God and has settled upon you a kingdom of glory. When you have done all say, We are unprofitable. Yea, suppose some mighty Monarch should of his mere compassion buy off, at a dear rate, a condemned malefactor and enemy, save him from execution and treat him as a child and make him his heir. Would not all that he could do for such a friend be too little? Could he ever answer his kindness? Would his promises and settlement mar his love? Would they not rather make him 10,000 times more his debtor? Would it not be unpardonable ingratitude in such a one to pretend merit? Or put his inconsiderable service in the balance with his Lord's kindness? Ought he not rather to say, Sir, what, thus treat such a wretch as I? I never deserved the least favor, all the service that I can do is nothing in the world to what I owe my Lord. Sir, I am your debtor forever. So likewise ye who have been redeemed from the wrath of eternal destruction by a price more valuable than a world and are made through grace (it must be) coheirs with Christ. Never talk, never think of worthiness in yourselves, but say when you have done all, we are unprofitable servants.

Yea, suppose the promised blessings should not instantly be enjoyed, but the exalted rebel be employed still in further acts of service and put upon some difficult tasks, Ought he not contentedly to wait and with all humility to say, If I should never inherit the estate, I never deserved it. I have had favors already that infinitely compensate all my labors. But, if I should be thus mounted I must and will forever exalt the free love of my most gracious Sovereign. So likewise, ye, though not at present wrapped up in eternal delights, but called forth to further exercise and improvements of your graces, with patience bear your trials with courage go on in your duty relying on the mercies of a God of grace and say when ye have done all we are unprofitable servants.

B. All results in this doctrinal proposition. That the surest and nearest way to heaven is to labor faithfully in the way of duty and to rely on the free grace of God in Christ for a reward.

I shall not pretend to vary the Method the great Teacher of this church has cast these words into, but shall inquire:

1. What we must do, that we may safely rely on the mercies of God in Christ when we have done all.

2. What we are when we have done all: unprofitable servants.

3. What we must think of ourselves after all, even while we are unprofitable servants and have done but our duty.

1. First, something must be done and to purpose too, if we would safely rely on the mercies of God in Christ. To depend on the grace of God in Christ in a dutyless course much more in a sensual profane way of living is gross damnable presumption. But to depend upon the rich mercy of God in his dear Son in a way of Gospel obedience is true saving faith.

(1) The great end true faith fixes its eye upon is the glory of the great God. Here is a servant in the text presented entirely devoted to the service of his Master. True faith is a hearty servant to Christ. It is the honor of God and not carnal interest it designs. It freely and resolutely chooses attendance upon God before the greatest preferment's the world has, Psa. 119:38 devoted to the fear. True faith levels its aims at the interest of and hates (as an unfaithful servant) to serve itself as Master, Phil. 1:21 for to me to live is Christ. Tis life to faith to honor Christ and death to be useless. Why do I live and be of no use was the frequent and humble inquiry of our deceased friend. The earnest solicitation of faith is How, where may I serve my good God most. And its great complaint is, Alas that I should live and do no more for so precious a friend. True faith resolves its will in Christ's and rolls up its interest in his, Rom. 3:4 Let God be true, though every man be a liar. Whatever becomes of the glory of the creature, let the honor of the Creator be exalted. True faith could be content to be reckoned a vile so that Christ may be owned and honored.

(2) The method faith takes to glorify God in, is by observing His commands. Here's a servant introduced at the beck and dispose of his master. God is most glorified when we strictly attend on Him according to His own institutions. Tis a reflection on the attributes of God for the creature to dare to prescribe to Him, when servants will have their own way and not attend to their Masters orders its offensive and provoking, whatever and however the work be done. It strikes at the authority of the Master. Lev. 10:3 I will be sanctified in them that come night to me viz. in observing my commands both as to the matter and manner prescribed. Peter pretends to direct his Master Joh 13:8 Thou shalt never wash my feet, this will not be honorable. But he meets with a severe check. If I wash thee not thou hast no part in me. It is not for a disciple to teach, but to submit, this is the way I will be honored in. I look on myself confronted when my commands are unobserved, Though upon pretense of deference to me. Faith looks for a warrant from God. As the eyes of servants look to the hands of their Masters and the eyes of a maiden to the hands of her Mistress "Lord, what would thou have me to do?" is for this great inquiry. The flesh, the world and the devil dictate this and that, but Lord what is the good pleasure ? Faith acts, speaks, thinks, trades, prays, doth all according to the rule of God's Word, Gal. 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them all.

(3) The manner in which faith observes the commands of God is with all readiness and diligence. Here's a servant, supposed with his loins all girt up, equipped and expedited for his Masters service. A slight attendance is neither suitable to the nature of God, nor of faith, for God is the most pure essence and faith the most active grace. And therefore an idle profession and a slothful devotion can never be a true gospel religion. Faith's greatest ambition is to do its work thoroughly and, its great trouble is that it is not better managed. Faith can't forgive itself when cramped up by unbelief. It can't be reconciled to dull services Rom. 7:24 Wretched man that I am. The obstructions of indwelling sin are the chief complaints of true faith. Paul lamented a dead heart more than he did all the sufferings he underwent. Tis the triumph of a young heaven when faith can mount upon its wings and keep soaring aloft in the sweet views of Jesus. Mat. 17:4, tis good for us to be here. Oh, that we could hold this light and life and love and never loose this sweet and heavenly frame, till wrapped up where they are in perfection. Faith thinks all too defective; unbelief is ready to imagine all well enough.

(4) The scope that a lively faith takes in observing God's commands is general and universal. When you have done all, ect. Unbelief makes reserves and exceptions. The Lord pardon me in this thing. It chooses the easiest work. But faith eyes Christ and follows him in the most difficult paths. Psa. 117, has respect to all his commands. Mat. 3:15 It becomes us to fulfill all righteousness. Christ did not stay till John come to Him, but underwent in fatigue of 14 miles (as its computed) for to be baptized of John. Faith if it have not the ordinances at home will take pains rather than live without them. Heb. 13:18 We trust we have a good conscience. But how is that evidenced? Willing in all things to live honestly. True faith is weak and cannot do all but is willing and strives to do all. True faith is willing to do all it can do and sometimes like an obedient child attempts more than it can well compass. As Peter throws himself upon the water; but his weak faith lets him sink, faith makes many essays even when it finds itself overpowered. It tries again and again like a young bird when it can't fly will be filtering. Mount a little though it drops down immediately. True faith seldom wants a heart though often wants strength, when indisposed and can't pray, would pray seriously and fervently. It will make one attempt and another as the poor child will be tattling when it can't speak plain and will be moving when it can't go and such little endeavors are very pleasing to parents, Mat. 25:61. The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. We must suppose the disciples were striving and shaking off sloth, but still are fettered with the prevailing flesh.

Faith is willing to do all it should do. It breathes after perfection pressing on that it may attain the crown, Phil. 3:11. Unbelief is satisfied with present attainments. But faith longs to be where it may serve God and have no distraction, within, nor interruption without. It laments its defects and desires to be hastened where it may lay down all its imperfections.

(5) And lastly, the measure that faith takes in observing the commands of God, is the whole term of life. When you have done all. And that can't be till life is finished. Faith is not an hireling for days, or months, or years. Tis not for changing Masters or services, but abides with Christ forever, Phil. 1:21 for me to live is Christ. Tis my whole life and happiness Job 27:3-6. Whilst the Spirit of God is in my nostrils I will not let my righteousness go. My whole life is God's gift and therefore shall my whole life be at God's service. True faith lives waiting and dies praying, Lord Jesus receive my soul. Now some may be ready to think such a person thus sincere and diligent and faithful is one of great renown and has some very considerable thing to depend upon. Tis true, such are heaven's worthies, the children of God, Heirs of Glory. But whatever excellency is in them,

its not from themselves, they are unprofitable still towards God Nehe. 13:22, Remember me O my God, concerning this also and spare me according to the greatness of the mercies q.d. Lord, consider me for my good deeds. But why should I mention what I have done? I have need of great mercy and shall perish without it. Rom. 3:27 Where is boasting, tis excluded. There was never room for any proud brag before God, much less is there in a Gospel dispensation 2 Cor. 12:5. Of such a one will I glory yet of myself will I not glory. How? Was it not himself he means? Yes, but it was not of and from himself. Whatever he had done and enjoyed was grace and not Paul; therefore, said he I will not glory about such revelations lest I should seem to impute anything to my self, but will glory about my infirmities that it may appear to be all of grace, for when I am weak, then I am strong.

2. What we are when we have done all- unprofitable servants. I will single out a few things that will evidence us after all to be unprofitable servants.

(1) God is infinite in Glory and so we can't possibly advantage the Almighty. What is He the better for our obedience, or the worse for our rebellion? He gets null by our salvation, nor loses by our destruction, Job 35:6,7. All the adorations and praises of men and angels add not the 10,000th part of a mite to his perfection. The poorest beggar by presenting his rags to the greatest prince, may with more reason pretend to have merited his crown, than we by our highest performances, presume that we have in the least obligated the great God, Psa. 16:2. My goodness extends not unto thee, q.d. though I have been a little useful among poor men, yet have I not added anything in the least to the perfections. My little goodness can't possibly reach near to the excellencies. Who art far above all praise and glory. I have obliged poor men like to myself, but am ever and shall be indebted to the glorious Majesty. How can a poor worm oblige an infinite King?

(2) We owe the great God all, yea more than we can possibly do. For an Infinite Being to stoop to poor dust is favor never to be retaliated, though we could borrow all the services of the whole creation. God's making us rational creatures lays us under obligations that can never be answered. That the great God should stoop so low as to breath a soul into our dust is such an honor put upon us that angelic services may not pretend to recompense. The very dignity of being employed in the services of the God of heaven is an honor so great put upon poor dust, that the highest acts of obedience in the world are infinitely short of one gift of love from such an inconceivable Being so far surpasses our services that we are yet in arrears for the very first mercy. The longest life filled up with duty can be no return for the first breath Gen. 32:10. I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies. And if all our services are less than a breath, what senseless insolence is it to challenge a heaven? If we are in debt for our food and raiment, its perfect frenzy to talk of meriting glory and if one mercy doth so much oblige us, what do 1,000s and 1,000s do? Will a person who pays me a just debt, yea, but the 1,000th part of it pretend worthiness? Will a person that owes me many 100s, by bringing me a grain of sand less one has obligated me? And yet this can't breach the case between God and us. We own him millions of talents and have not paid him a mite and yet presume? Put the hand upon the mouth proud worm. Rom. 12:1, I beseech you, by the mercies of God, ect. Divine favors make all we can possible do, a reasonable duty. The least mercy from an infinite God engages more than the greatest favors from the creatures.

(3) We have forfeited all and cannot make satisfaction to an offended God. Every blessing is lost and the greatest misery deserved. And had we 1,000 worlds to offer, it would not be a price of redemption. Heb. 7:18. The command is disannulled because of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, i.e. The greatest obedience could be no

satisfaction or Atonement. Shall undeserving, ill-deserving, hell-deserving worms talk of worthiness? What he that deserves 1,000 deaths deserve so much as a breath? The contempt man has cast upon infinite goodness, places it beyond a possibility of recovering by poor dust. Could we appropriate to ourselves angelic excellencies and perfectly obey the will of God ourselves. All this could not satisfy for the first apostasy. And when under such desperate circumstances it pleased God to send His only, His dear Son, infinitely, eternally beloved, to become man, to obey, to die, to redeem us, which he freely undertook and accomplished. And in this His Son our good God has established a new covenant full of the most gracious promises in which blessings spiritual, temporal and eternal are fully settled on true believers. Now can there be any pretense of requital to redeeming love? The least drop of Christ's blood will abundantly weigh down the united services of churches and ages of earth and heaven. Has free grace fetched thee from the brow of hell where thou deserves to be eternally burning? Has it plucked thee out of the devouring jaws of merciless devils? In leading thee in triumph to the gates of eternal salvation? Be silent, proud flesh, speak not a word. Think not a thought of the deservings. And is all this happiness procured by the meritorious obedience of the Son of God. 1,000 times 10,000 hearts, yea worlds are too mean a present for such a Savior. Join in the admirations with the 1,000s above. Rev. 5:12. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches. What are our prayers to the blood of Christ? What are our humiliations and obedience to the blood of God? Man, what are our troubles and sufferings to those of the Lamb of God? How unworthy of such inestimable blessings are we that are unworthy of the least! O all the angels praise him and yet all their and our adorations are not so much as a return of a drop for an ocean, of a mite for a world.

(4) Besides, we are poor imperfect sinful creatures and our best services have need of the merits of another to render them acceptable. What's the value of a few shattered prayers, a few roving attendance? The imperfections of our most lively performances, that are more fit to be lamented in private than expressed, spoil the glory of our duties. We have more need with brinish tears to weep over our self sacrifices than to rest upon them. The High Priest under the law, Ex. 28:36, had Holiness to the Lord upon his mitre to atone for the sins of their holy things which typified the righteousness of Christ which alone gives our (most) exalted and spiritual worship acceptance with the Father. But was our devotion perfect, the frequent, neglect and miscarriages we are chargeable with would spoil our glorying. There's malignity enough in one sin to spoil 10,000 and 10,000 such duties. One sinner crossed out the prefect service of man and angels. What silly presumption is it for poor sinners to confide in imperfect services who deserve a hell daily and have deserved it 1,000s of times and are continually beholding to infinite patience that they are not frying in those flames. Lord not to us but to the name be the praise.

(5) Further, All that we do acceptably is by the special help of God's grace. Without the sweet aids of God's Spirit we can do nothing to purpose. That which is the work of mere nature will never pass for evangelical service. All must be done by divine assistance that all might be of grace. We can bring God nothing but what is His own and defiled too as it passes through our hands. David seems to arrogatesomething to himself I Chron. 29:14, who am I and what is my people that we should offer so willingly. But instantly checks himself. All things come of thee and thine own have we given thee. The apostle seems to speak highly, Gal. 2:20, I live, but soon corrects himself, yet not I but Christ lives in me. Every good motion and every heavenly design is the work of God's good Spirit though whose help we have access to the Father. What do you glory of proud dust? It's not thine own.

(6) Lastly, all our evangelic services are crowned by the prevailing intercessions of Christ. Nothing is acceptable but which passes through the hands of a Mediator, its the blood of Christ that gives our services their worth. Its the incense of the angel of the covenant that perfumes the prayers of saints, Rev. 8:3. Our services in themselves like pillars of smoke come up before God being perfumed with the murrh and frankincense of Christ's righteousness Can. 3:6. Faith itself must be sprinkled with the blood of Christ when it officiates at the throne of grace. Where is boasting then? It's excluded for ever. Its not possible for a perfect creature to oblige an infinite Being. Much less for such sinful worms as we, who are so much below the least mercy, have forfeited all that's truly good are beholding to the blood of Christ for a satisfaction and can't so much as make a sincere acknowledgment of the astonishing blessings without the assistance of divine grace and then too the intercession of Christ crowning all. How little have we to do in that which is truly good. All that is of God, the praise be to free grace. Hence its evident no creature can oblige God any further than he is graciously pleased to oblige Himself.

3. Thirdly, what must we think and say of ourselves after all? Why, that we are unprofitable servants. Strive hard in the way of Gospel duty. Don't dream of mercy in a way of profaneness or slothfulness. Its not indeed to rely upon mercy but upon your own fancy to say that your hopes are in God's mercy whilst worldly, sensual and dutilless. Let the glory of God be your great end, the word of God your rule, faith and love your principles, the whole of the gospel your compass, the whole of your lives, the measure of your labors and duties and yet after all, say, we are unprofitable servants which comprise these instructions.

(1) Maintain humble thoughts of yourselves. Have care of spiritual pride. Check the first rising of haughty unbelief. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, James 4:10. The stars you know veil their glory before the sun. Let your light be eclipsed whatever are your parts and gifts and graces and services before the Son of righteousness. Remember you can't think too highly of nor too meanly of yourselves. The greatest expressions are too low for Christ and the lowest too great for you.

(2) But then, let your dependence be on the grace of God in Christ for acceptance and salvation. Set not up your own duties in the room of a Savior. They that exalt their own righteousness deprive themselves of the merit of Christ, Gal. 5:4.. ye are fallen from grace and 1,000 pities that much should be done in a way of duty and all spoiled by depending on it. Your own righteousness is too weak a prop to bear the weight of a never dying soul. O flee to the obedience of Christ which is the city of refuge and keep there and all will be safe.

(3) And be content to wait God's time which is to be willing to go when Christ calls and yet be content to stay till he calls. Hold out faith and patience said a great Christian under sore struggles, is there more work to do? Are there more difficulties to pass through? Be it the service of more years. Go on. Its fit grace should chose its own seasons. Paul seems in a strait Phil. 1:23 and life and death, but humbly refers all (as is our duty) to the good will of God. Heaven is worth waiting for though it were many years and ages.

(4) Lastly, regulate your apprehensions of the great doctrines of the gospel by this rule, When you have done all say, we are unprofitable servants. As, here our dear Lord plainly states the great doctrine of free grace. He joins duty and grace together. He that separates these mars the glory and spoils the harmony of the gospel. He that separates duty from grace turns the gospel into libertinism and lasciviousness. And he that

separates grace from duty makes it an intokenable yoke of bondage. He that separates grace brings you to Mt. Sini and leaves you under the thunderings and flashes of divine Anger. And he that separates duty seems to bring you to Mt. Sion but places you on the pinnacle of the temple where soul and all are endangered. He that duly joins both these together adorns the gospel of our Lord and Savior and exalts free grace upon the gospel throne. Free grace admits poor worthless wretches into its service and then for Christ's sake freely crowns a few inconsiderable labors with eternal blessings, Psa.147:11.

(5) Here likewise our dear Lord explains the great doctrine of justifying faith. The apostles having begged ver. 5, increase our faith. The Lord Jesus puts on this comment when you have done all say we are unprofitable servants, q.d. whatever gifts and degrees of faith may be given, whatever may be the fruit or effects of such a faith, remember shall he put the crown upon free grace. Know that when you have done all you have nothing to rest upon that will bear the weight of a soul but the mercies of God in His own dear Son. Saving faith pretends not to set up for itself. Its only a servant to free grace. Its a faithful servant and pretends to do no more. Like the cherubims swift winged in the service of God but when it comes near the throne, it covers itself with its vary wings. Its the star that leads to Christ, but stops there and veils itself. It lives upon Christ as its all as a servant on the free bounty of His master as a beggar at the gate of Mercy. The crowning act of saving faith, I take to be, a hearty reliance on the mercies of God in Jesus Christ. Faith brings every duty to be sprinkled with the blood of Christ and to have a pardon annexed, yea comes itself for sprinkling and dares not adventure upon its own worth, without a pardon. Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief. Isa. 45:24, In the Lord shall one say had I righteousness and strength and not in myself.

(3) Lastly, we have here the doctrine of merits illustrated. Its not possible for any creature in a strict and proper sense to merit at the hands of God. We are unprofitable servants, if all were done. Perfect obedience in the 1st. covenant could not thus merit much less faith in the new and yet both have a considerable worthiness enstamped upon them by the free grace of God. Perfect obedience being made an absolute and immediate means of life and depending upon its own strength claimed life as a due debt and a way of works Rom. 4:4. But faith hath its beginning by office, God having exalted it above other graces and assigned it, its peculiar work to bring all to Christ, and its dependence is upon the free and continued communications of assistance from the blessed Spirit. Faith presumes not to do anything by its own strength and when it hath done somewhat by the grace of God it confines it not within its own circle, but puts all in the hands of a Mediator. Faith is the great officer of state at the court of grace that brings every service to be subscribed and settled by Christ our Mediator and cares back the answer of peace and love that our Redeemer sends to the souls of believers. Faith with its blessed fruits is highly exalted too as a certain evidence of an interest in Christ and the most proper method of advancing our own comforts and God's glory. Gospel duty is a most honorable work its an heavenly employment. Its not the will of Christ that you should give the obedience of faith ill names and unworthy characters. This can't be done without reflecting on grace that hath thus advanced it and on the Spirit of grace whose work it is. Upon faith is settled in a new and everlasting covenant all the glory of the other world. But faith sets not up in a way of works, pretends not to be a perfect obedience in the first covenant, or as the Jews made their legal obedience the absolute and immediate means of salvation. Faith disclaims all this and owns no other worthiness than as it officiates and leads to Christ and so is all of grace in comparison to the other. Saint Paul, Phil. 3:9 does not adventure his soul on his own righteousness as the absolute and immediate means of salvation, but desires that he may be found in the righteousness of God by faith. He does

trust his own faith as it leads to the righteousness of Christ and no further. But he dares trust the righteousness of Christ with soul and all.

I shall sum up this discourse with a few motives. There is in the very nature of man a proneness to self-dependence. It would fain have somewhat of its own for an atoning sacrifice and righteousness. It is very both to stoop to the grace of another. It will make 1,000 shifts that it may seem somebody in its own salvation, How hard is it to perform a duty with only liveliness and not be founded with haughty thoughts. As Bernard saith, I could never do anything well but me thought I heard a whisper well done Bernard. Self is the greatest idol in the world. Its an idol in every breast. How prone are the very best to go out in their own names and strength and how ready are we to appropriate to ourselves what we can't but know is the work of God and presume presently we have obligated God to give us his blessings and rest upon the work done. We are born Papists. The doctrine of merits is as old as corrupt nature. Our dear Lord knowing this cautions his Apostles. When you have done all, let not your hearts deceive you, rest not upon what you have done, but cast yourselves upon the grace of God as undeserving wretches. The denial of self-wisdom and righteousness is the hardest task in the world. It requires therefore the most care and concernedness.

Self-dependence is the ready way to self ruin. It was self-exaltation that dethroned both angels and men. We will suffer for such unreasonable presumption. Let all take heed: Self dependence is the ready way to mar our present peace and comports. Humility is the bond of union. It holds together, its pride and conceitedness that create divisions. This interrupts our communion with heaven and dashes out spiritual hopes and joy. Self-exaltation gives the reigns to brutal passions which humility tames and curbs. Do but think what a poor worthless creature you art. This will teach you patience under censures and abuses. Make thee easy to thyself and others, whilst through self-confidence men grow furious, disquiet themselves and all about their self dependence is the ready way to spoil your performance and undo your souls. To do good and rely upon it spoils all. This was the fatal mistake of the Jews Rom. 10:3. Who going about to establish their own righteousness submitted not to the righteousness of God. They depended upon their own and made it the immediate and absolute means of salvation and so robbed themselves of the benefit of Christ's righteousness. The proud Pharisee by his self-righteousness marred his own justification, Lk. 18:14. As you love yourselves, depend not upon yourselves.

3. You have the greatest instances of humility before you to lead you into the practice of this but I might propose the blessed example of our Lord Himself. Whose whole life was a pattern of the greatest humility, but I shall single out a passage or two that many more directly instruct us what poor unworthy wretches we are. In Psa. 22:6 a Psalm typical of Christ, we find such an amazing expression I am a worm and no man, q.d. This nature I have assumed is a poor mean despicable thing before your glorious majesty. And yet the human nature of Christ was in its highest exaltation. If our blessed Lord looked upon His human nature as a contemptible worm, what is thine poor sinful dust? Again, Psa. 16:2, (as some refer it to Christ) my goodness extendeth not to thee further, I own that by all the obedience of my human nature I have not, I cannot add to your perfections. Its believers that will reap the benefit of it. And shall impertinent duties presume to oblige the Almighty? And at last our dear Lord makes His solemn application to His Father, Jn. 17:5, And now, O Father, glorify you me with the glory which I had with thee-before the world was. He comes as a petitioner, O Father, though His human nature itself could never merit glory, yet being received into so near a relation to the divine and having its signified obedience vindicated the honor of your law and the glory of your Majesty which poor man had affronted according to our Agreement of Grace. Righteous Father, now advance this

human nature to that glory that I they Son from all eternity enjoyed with thee, what? The man Christ plead a worthiness from the divine nature and you poor vile worm disdain the dignifying excellencies of a Saviors righteousness! What? The man Christ pleading the compact of grace with the Father? And you sinful worm think scorn to be saved according to the promise of faith in a way of dependence on the Son of God? But lest this should seem too high, we will come to a lower instance, the Seraphim's, Isa. 6:2, we read, had six wings, with twain they did fly, with the rest they covered their faces and feet, as sensible of their own unworthiness, to be so near the throne of the great God; they had 4 wings to cover themselves and but 2 to fly with, intimating that their unworthiness exceeded all their services, that they had more to be ashamed of than to commend them to God. Dear little perishing clod have you no need of a covering of another's righteousness? Have glorious angels need of 4 wings to cover them and you not need of one to cover thee? Could not their large-spread shining wings of obedience render them worthy? And will your little black chipped wings render thee so? But to come down to our own rank: Abraham, Rom. 4:22, believed and 'it was accounted to him for righteousness, i.e. relying on the promised mercy in the Messiah that was to come of his loins in a way of duty. And do you think to be justified by your own duties without such reliance? Is this to be a child of Abraham? Job is very positive, ch. 9:20,21, If I justify myself, my own mouth will condemn me. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul, q.d. I dare not trust a perfect righteousness if I had it. That which I desire to know is that my Redeemer lives. But proud dust, you cannot not submit. How doth David that great Saint, 2 Sam. 7:18, in a great pathos acknowledge his unworthiness of an earthly crown! And what would he have said, had it been about a crown of Glory? Who am I, O Lord God and what is my house, that you have brought me hitherto? And is he now a man after God's own heart that presumes upon his own excellency and merit? The apostle Paul tells us, 2 Cor. 12:11, that he was not at all behind the very chiefest Apostles, and yet was nothing! Great and humble soul! Nothing! And who are you proud Self-Justiciary? Art you greater than Paul, yet than all the apostles, that are here taught they are unprofitable servants? Art you better than David, Job, Abraham, yea than the Holy Angels, yea than Christ Himself? Who art you proud flesh? Come, come, let every proud word and thought be eternally silenced.

4. Lastly, wait in the way of duty, and depend upon the mercies of God in Christ, and in due time you shall reap a glorious reward. Never did, never will soul miscarry that relies upon the mercies of God in Christ, in a way of gospel obedience. The good Master, in the text, assures the servant, ver. 8, that when he had served Him, afterward he should eat and drink. There is rich and abundant provision made for humble believers; there's a crown of Righteousness laid up for them, which the Lord the Righteous Judge will give unto them all, 2 Tim. 4:8. Commit your souls to the keeping of a gracious God, in well doing, and you'll find him as a faithful locator, 1 Pet. 4:19. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy, Psa. 147:11. The truth, and Power, and Righteousness of God are engaged to put the crown on the humble believer; and it is a crown so massive of such pure gold that it infinitely exceeds all crowns in the world. Its everlasting light and life and love and peace and communion with the great God I know not what it is, the Lord fit me to know: its happiness so great that all the happiness of the world is but a shadow to it, yea, all the happiness of all the ages of the world is nothing to one beautiful view of the blessed Jesus; its happiness so great, that it is only known by those that enjoy it but cannot be expressed by them neither, and as well secured, as well as can be, yea for ever secured: throw yourselves at the foot of Grace;, and break out into the highest admirations of the rich mercy of God. Lord, that such an unworthy wretch as I should have the least Mercy! That I should have so many mercies that deserve none! Who am I that you should speak to your servant of an eternity to come! As this the manner of men, O Lord God? I deserve not a smile, and do you offer me a crown? I deserve not your

creatures, and do you offer me thyself? I have deserved a hell and do you offer me a heaven? O forever blessed be God for Jesus. Let there be eternally ascribed Grace, Grace, Grace, unto it. Thus go on in the way of your duty. Pray, meditate, read, attend, receive, love, believe, and still rely upon the mercies of God. Let no difficulties discourage you. One moment's being in heaven. (They were the words of your dear minister) will make you amends for all.

This you see what a useful portion of Scripture your precious friend hath chose for you. He commended it to you and that upon his death-bed who loved and tendered you as himself. (Another evidence..would they keep this message for 30 years and then preach it in 1699 if John Spilsbury died in 1669? R.E.P.) And methinks his very commendation of it should have a mighty and cogent enforcement upon your practices. Never was a Minister more concerned about a people. Almost his last words were "Dear Lord Jesus, look after my people once and again" Yea, the advancement of the gospel in this place and the welfare of your souls had far greater room in his serious and dying thoughts, than the external happiness of his friends and family. Never was a more tender husband, a more loving father, nor a trusty and hearty relation, and, as far as I know every relation too was his real friend, and yet all they seemed forgot in comparison of you his dear people for His sake that loved you and yours. Believe and practice these things. If you have any love to him (sure your sorrowful continuances, bedewed cheeks, and throngs of sighs indicate it very much) show it regarding his last requests and commend it to yours after you. So likewise ye, when ye have done all, say, we are unprofitable servants, ect.

And now I would never desire a fairer opportunity to spend the little oratory I have in his commendation. But I must not. And yet I can't but say, "Silence is the best piece of rhetoric when a persons' excellency overlaps the highest branches and flowers of oratory. But sure I may propose his excellent example to press the subject he hath chosen for us. Paul would glory about his infirmities. His humility and his condensation was as exemplary as any of his other graces and his other graces as excellent as that. The low thoughts he had of himself might be evidenced in many particulars, as:

(1) The very choice of his subject. It was with some difficulty that he was prevailed with that there should be a funeral discourse on his account lest anything should be said in his commendation. And when this was yielded to, he fixed on these words that somewhat might be said to your edification and nothing said of himself.

(2) The great contentedness in this place cry out him a very humble man. He, had, as was obvious to all that knew him, capacities to move in a higher orb and had be been placed in a more lofty sphere, he had shone with the brightest. But how satisfied was he in this meanest place! Great offerings little affected him who thought himself most fit for the services of your faith. Here hath he labored many years. Aug. 27, 1652 I find was the date he preached the first sermon at Bromsgrove. And after some time was settled here where he hath constantly labored ever since with considerable success even in the darkest and most difficult times.

(3) His condensation to the meanest is another proof of his humility. Great and Humble man! He thought it not too much below him to converse familiarly with children themselves about their souls concernments. Of which I am an instance. Almost 30 years past he stooped to me. When (if ever in my life) I had communion with God, and such as I scarce ever attained to since, I remember it still. And there are many such instances in this congregation. (Another evidence of the 1699 date. If John Eccles meant by this that John Spillsbury helped him as a boy when he started preaching, that would mean near 1651

according to Crosby. Add 30 years to that and you get 1681. So the services occurred at least after 1681. However, if Eccles was referring to another period in his life, then it would be some thirty years before this which would place it in the late 1660s, or the times of extreme persecutions. This fits when we remember the horrible imprisonments that John Eccles suffered. R.E.P.)

(4) His great patience at all times was another argument of his humility. Scarce any ever saw him in a passion. And when he was a suffer and prisoner for the sake of religion, who ever heard him reflect upon his opposes? How quietly did he bear a long and tedious visitation for almost 12 months together while corroding tumors ate out the very bones and wasted the flesh and yet scarce a groan was heard in the house. But frequently was he admiring that he has no more pain and so much mercy. When once I said, sir I am sorry you must thus go down groaning to the grave (meaning only in such an affective manner) "Good man", He soon replied, "I do not groan, I am contented."

(5) Lastly, the low thoughts he had of himself was a further proof of his great humility. Though a man of unblemished conversation, such an upright walker before God and man, that scarce any exceeded him, and very few attained to his degrees, though a great scholar and the greatest casuistic divine that I ever knew; though of general acceptance and fame, yet was he continually expressing himself the meanest of saints. "I have been endeavoring", (saith this great man of God) "to do some good, and they say I have done a little, but I am nothing." And at another time, "I have been gathering my thoughts together, as my pains would allow me, and I have been considering justification which there is such a bustle about." (Another evidence that this funeral was in the late 1690s. The controversy over justification occurred in the 1690s. Benjamin Keach entered the controversy in 1692 with his work *The Marrow of True Justification or Justification Without Works*, London; 1692. His final offering to the controversy was in 1698 when he wrote his *A Medium Betwixt Two Extremes*, London; 1698. R.E.P.) "I have placed myself before the tribunal of God--whither I am going, and have supposed with myself what I could plead for myself, and found there nothing but the mercy of God in Christ I can rest upon." Again, at another time I heard him thus expressing himself, "I have no raptures as some other Christians have, I bless God, I have some good hopes, as I fetch them in by faith, and no more, I am content to wait till I get home to my father's house." When now he is enfolded in the arms of divine love and triumphing in the highest raptures of joy, he is lodged in the bosom of that precious redeemer whom he gladly and freely entrusted with soul. His sorrows and pains are swallowed up in an eternity of happiness, where he is shining as the stars forever and ever, being blessed with the blessing of those who turn many to righteousness, of which number some of you are, his dear relations and people. Bless God for such a faithful ambassador, and truly tender, trusty friend. I know a greater loss could not well be in one man; but its the case. Sit down and be silent. It must be so: let your loss drive you nearer to God, who alone can make up such a breach that's so great. And as for you his dear people, be sure you walk in love and gospel order and do nothing unworthy of so great an instrument, begging and depending upon the good shepherd for a suitable supply.

As for those of you that have not been prevailed with to seriousness, no not by such a Christian dispenser of the gospel, let me say this, I know how you will answer it to the great God. As ye of this place have had the greatest privileges and the best helps, so your miscarrying will have the greatest aggravations. Woe, Woe, to those that such an eminent minister must witness against. Consider it before its too late. As his bones raised the dead, so let this severe dispensation of the death of your most worthy minister _____ to your duty and drive you to Christ which his most serious and frequent

importunities have not done. I charge you all: Be ye followers of your dear minister that none of you miss of his happiness. Imitate his faith and humility, yet a little while and you shall see him again and rejoice with him where no death shall ever part you; which is the sum of the Apostle's advice, Heb. 13:7: Remember them that have the rule over you who have spoken unto you the word of God; whose faith follow (as living or dead) consider the end of their conversation.

Additional Note:

Upon completing this work and studying the ministry of John Eccles and the Bromsgrove church, Brother John O'Brien added these thoughts:

This Bromsgrove church was represented at least at the 1691 General Assembly of Associated Particular Baptist Churches. Bro. Spilsbury was yet alive during the proceedings!

Bro. John Eccles preached this sermon. He signed both the 1689 and 1691 Confessions of Faith. Spilsbury was of too poor health to attend. This church was in full fellowship with all the churches of the 1644 confession who still held to the same.

Additional Notes:

1. Remember the happy balance these old brethren had between Christian duties and the doctrine of free grace. They believed in the proper usage of the Lord's means to bring about the ends which Christ had set for them. The truth is that many today need to re-examine their stand concerning the doctrines of grace and see if they are using the doctrines of free grace as an excuse for worldliness and no duties? Was this not called idleness by John Eccles and John Spilsbury?

2. Remember also the important place of Christian exercises in vital godliness. We are to strive to improve ourselves in our duties of godliness. While we are doing so, we rest on Christ's blood and not our acts.

3. We should go back and underline each reference to the importance of Christ, His righteousness, His blood and His redemptive work in opposition to our works and duties.

4. We should meditate long and often on the fact that Christ did not trust in His own sinless humanity while on earth, but the covenant mercies and proscryptions of the Father to Him formed before the foundation of the world. Should saints of God do any less than their Lord and Master?

5. The constant theme of following gospel faith and order should also be remembered often. Without saying it directly John Spilsbury and John Eccles hastened to

imply that the WAY saints go about doing the will of God is just as important as the desired ends or goals they are working towards in doing the will of God. Simply put this means that the way we do God's work is just as important as the results we secure in doing His work. Or, God is glorified in the way we do a thing just as much as in the result of our doing it.

Were you not struck by the love these old brethren had for each other and the cause of Christ as well as the total dependence they had upon Jesus Christ and the great care that they took to make sure that their works were such that gave glory to God and their lives didn't cause the doctrine of free grace to fall into misuse and reproach?

Surely the very men who wrote the Confessions of Faith in England knew well what they meant and strived to walk so that they had a proper balance between their faith and their works!

And, finally, while attending services at the old Welsh Tract Church in Newark, Delaware, I noticed some tombstones in the graveyard with the Eccles name on them.

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