

THE SAINTS' REST:

OR

Their happy Sleep in Death.

As it was delivered in a

SERMON

AT

Aldermanbury London, Aug 24. 1651.

By *Edmund Calamy* B. D.

JOHN II. II.

Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.

PSAL. 116. 15.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his
Saints.

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THE SAINTS' REST.

“And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

Acts 7:60, the latter part.

These words contain in them the happy closure and upshot of *Stephen* life; wherein we have three particulars,

1. The Person that fell asleep.
2. The Speech that he made, when he fell asleep.
3. What he did when he had finished his Speech.

[1] First, We have the Person that fell asleep, and that was *Stephen*: He was a man full of faith, and full of the holy Ghost, as you may see *Act.6.5*. He was the first Martyr that ever suffered for the cause of Christ; hence I might gather this Doctrine, *viz.*

**That the best of men are subject to violent and unnatural deaths. Stephen* that was full of the holy Ghost, was stoned to death; and *John* the Baptist that was full of the holy Ghost from the very womb, was beheaded; *Peter* was crucified, and so was *Andrew*; *Isaiah* was sawed asunder; *Jeremiah* was stoned, and *Zacharias* was slain between the Temple and the Altar. But I shall passe this.

The second part of the Text, is the Speech that *Stephen* made when he fell asleep, *Hoc dicto obdormivit*, that is, when he had finished his prayer, *He fell asleep*. Hence observe,

That it is an excellent way to close up our lives with prayer. To die praying is a most Christian way of dying. They stoned Stephen calling upon God. After this manner Christ died, he prayed, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, and having thus said, gave up the ghost. This he did that it might be a pattern to all Christians.

Prayer is a necessary duty at all times, but especially when we are a dying; and that for these three Reasons.

1. Because when we are to die, we have most need of Good help, for then the devil is most busie, and we most weak.
2. Because when we are to die, we are to beg the greatest boon of God, that is, that he would receive us into his heavenly Kingdom. Now prayer is the chief means to obtain this mercy, for it is *Porta Coeli, Clavis Paradisi*, the Gate of Heaven, a Key to let us into Paradise. Therefore we have great reason to die praying.
3. Because when a Saint of God is dying, he is then to take his last farewell of prayer. In Heaven there is no praying, but all thanks giving; there is no need in

Heaven, therefore no prayer in Heaven. Now a Saint of God, being to take his leave of prayer, when he is to die, therefore it is sit he should die praying.

I beseech you remember this patern in the Text, S^t *Stephen* died calling upon the Lord. Let us die praying, as that Emperour said, *Oportet Imperatorem stantem mori*; so may I say, *Oportet Christianum mori praecantem*, it behoves a Christian to die praying.

Quest. But what was the substance of *Stephen*'s prayer?

Answ. He prayed for himself, and he prayed for his persecutors.

1. He prayed for himself, *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit*, ver.59.

2. He prayed for his persecutors, *Lord lay not this sin to their charge*, ver.60.

I will not enter upon this part of the Text, for it would swallow up all my time. Therefore I shall wave it, and come to the third part, which is that, that (by Gods assistance) I purpose to speek unto, *viz.* What *Stephen* did, when he had finished his prayer, *When he had said this, he fell asleep*, that is, he died.

Behold here the magnanimity, the piety, and the Christian courage of *Stephen*. The people were stoning of him, and gnashing their teeth upon him; and the good

man dies with as much quietness of minde, as if he had died in his bed, *He fell asleep*, while they were stoning him. While he died he prayed, and while he prayed he died.

But what made *Stephen* die thus quietly? Reade the 55.verse, and you shall see the reason of it. *Being full of the holy ghost, he looked up sted fastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Behold, saith he, I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.* This made him die with such a sweet, quiet and calm temper; He saw Jesus Christ standing at the right hand of God, ready to receive his soul, and that made him die with such an extraordinary quietness of minde.

Death in Scripture, especially the death of Gods children, is often compared to a sleep. It is said of *David*, That *he slept with his fathers.** And it is said, I *The.4.13, I would not have you ignorant concerning them which are asleep*; that is, concerning them which are dead. And I *Cor.II.30. For this cause many are weakly and sick among you, and many sleep*; that is many die. This expression is a metaphorical expression, and will afford us many rare and precious instructions about death. And therefore (the grace of God assisting me) I desire to spend the rest of the time in the opening of this metaphor.

* The Observation is this, viz. *That when a childe of god dies, though his death he never so unnatural and violent, yet it is nothing else but a falling asleep*: Or, The death

of a childe of God, though stoned to death, though burnt to ashes, though it be never so violent and unnatural, is nothing else but a falling asleep. *When he had said this, he fell asleep.*

Somnus est mortis imago, Sleep is the image of death. There are many notable resemblances betwixt sleep and death; some of which I shall speak unto at this time.

1. Sleep is common to all men; there is no man can live without sleep; A man may live long without meat, but no man can live long without sleep. So it is true of death, Death is common to all, it is *appointed for all men once to die*: And therefore *David* said, He was to go the way of all slesh; *Statutum est omnibus semel mori, Omnibus est calcanda semel lethivia*, All men must sleep the sleep of death, or else be changed, which is a metaphorical death.

2. As sleep ariseth from the vapours that ascend from the stomack to the head, and tie the senses, and hinder their operations; so death came into the world by *Adams* eating the forbidden fruit, and by the poisonfull vapour of sin, that brought death upon him, and all his posterity. *By one man sinne entred into the world, and death by sinne, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*, Rom.5.12. Had *Adam* never sinned, *Adam* should never have died: *But In illo die*, said God *In that day thou eatest the forbidden fruit thou shalt die the death*. Sin brings *omnimodam mortem*, all kinds of

death; it brings death temporal, death spiritual, and death eternal. Now because all men are poisoned with the poison of sin, therefore all men must sleep the sleep of death; It is sin that hath poisoned all mankind.

3. As a man when he goeth to sleep puts off his clothes, and goeth naked into bed: So it is with us when we come to die; *We came naked into the world, and we must go naked out of the world*; As we brought nothing with us into the world, so we must carry nothing with us out of the world; And therefore death in Scripture is called nothing else but an *uncloathing* of ourselves, 2 Cor.5.4. Death to a child of God, is nothing else, but the putting off of his clothes. The body of man is *animae* 〈 in non-Latin alphabet 〉 & *vestimentum*, it is the souls cloathing; and death is nothing else but the uncloathing of the soul; it is just like a man going to bed, and putting off his cloaths; S^t Peter calls it, The *putting off our earthly tabernacle*, 2 Pet.1.14. Our bodies are the souls tabernacle, and death is the putting off of this tabernacle.

Beloved, when we come to die, we shall be stripped naked of three things,

1. We shall be stripped naked of all our worldly honour, riches and greatness.

2. We shall be stripped naked of our bodies. And

3. Which is above all, we shall be stripped naked of our sins. And that is the happiness of a child of God, he shall put off, not only his mortal body, but the body of sin.

4. In the fourth place observe, As no man knoweth the time when he falls asleep, a man falls asleep before he is aware: So no man can tell the certain time when he must die. There is nothing so certain as that we must die, nothing so uncertain as the time when we shall die; Death comes suddenly even as sleep comes upon a man before he is aware.

5. Observe, As children and infants, because they do not know the benefit of sleep, are very loth to go to sleep, many times the mother is fain to whip the child to bed; even so it is with most of Gods people, because they do not study the benefit of death, That death puts an end to all miseries and sins, and opens a door to let us in unto everlasting happiness, and that we shall never see God or Christ before we die; I say, because Gods people do not study the benefit of death, therefore they are like to little children, loth to die, loth to go to bed. And therefore death is called *The King of terrors*.^{*} Death is terrible to many of Gods children, because they are but infants in grace, and because they do not know the benefit of death.

6. Observe, As when a man is fast asleep, he is free from cares, and free from troubles; Let it thunder (as it thundered not long since, as you know) yet a man that is fast asleep, while he is asleep he hears it not; Let the house be on fire, while the man asleep, he sees it not, neither is he troubled at it. So it is with the death of Gods children, when Gods children sleep the sleep of death, they are free from the thunders of this world, they are free from all cares, from all troubles, they go to their graves as to their beds, and rest in quietness, and are not sensible of any troubles that are in the world, *For Abraham knows us not, Isa.63.16. So 2 King.22.20. Thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace, and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place.* When a child of God sleeps the sleep of death, he doth not feel, nor is he sensible of any of the calamities or sad providences of God upon the earth.

7. When a man goeth to sleep; he goeth to sleep but for a certain time, in the morning he awakes out of sleep. So it is with the sleep of death; and therefore death is called a sleep, because we must all awake in the morning of the resurrection. We are in the grave, as in our beds, and when the trumpet of God, and the voice of the Archangel shall found, we shall all rise out of our grave, as out of our beds. Death is but a sleep for a certain time.

8. Sleep is a great refreshing to those that are weary and sick, and when the sick man awakes, he is more

lively and cheerful then he was before he fell asleep and therefore sleep is called *Medicus laborum, redintegratio virium, recreator corporum*, The great Physician of the sick body, the redintegration of man's spirits, the reviver of the weary body. And so it is with death, when Gods people awake out of the sleep of death, they shall be more active for God, then ever they were before; when you lie down in the grave, you lie down with mortal bodies; *It is sown a mortal body, it shall rise up an immortal body, it is sown in dishonour, but it shall rise up in honour, it is sown a natural body, but it shall rise up a spiritual body**.

9. As in the morning when we arise out of our beds, we then put on our clothes. So in the morning of the resurrection, we shall put on a glorious body, like to the glorious body of Jesus Christ, we shall put on *Stolam immortalitatis*, the garment of immortality.

10. As no man when he layeth him down to sleep, knoweth the direct time when he shall awake. So no man can tell when the resurrection shall be. They do but cozen you, who say, that the general resurrection shall be such or such a year; for, as no man can know the minute when he shall awake out of his natural sleep, no more can any man know when we shall arise from the sleep of death.

11. As it is a very easy thing to awake a man out of sleep, it is but jogging of him, and you will quickly

awake him. So it is with the sleep of death, it is as easy for Jesus Christ to awake us out of the sleep of death, as it is for me, or you to awake a man out of sleep in bed. *Nemo nostrum tam facilè excitat dormientem de lecto, quàm Christus jacentem in sepulchro.*

12. As when a man ariseth in the morning, though he hath slept many hours; nay suppose he could sleep twenty years together, yet notwithstanding, when he awakes, these twenty years will seem to be but as one hour unto him. So it will be at the day of Judgment, all those that are in their graves, when they awake, it will be *tanquam somnus unius horae*, but as the sleep of one hour unto them.

13. Lastly, and most especially, As sleep seizeth only upon the body, and the outward senses, but doth not seize upon the soul, the soul of man is many times most busy, when the man is asleep; And God hath heretofore revealed most glorious things to his children in dreams, when they have been asleep; God appeared unto *Abraham* and many others in dreams, the body sleeps, but the soul awakes. So it is with the sleep of death, the body, that dies, but the soul doth not die. There are some men that are not afraid to teach you, That the soul sleeps as well as the body, and that when the body dies and falls asleep, the soul likewise continues in a dull Lethargy *veternoso somno correptus*, neither capable of joy nor sorrow, until the resurrection.

Beloved, this is a very uncomfortable, and a very false Doctrine. They endeavour to prove it from my Text, they say, That *Stephen* when he died fell asleep; It is true in regard of his body, he fell asleep, but his soul did not fall asleep, that which was stoned fell asleep, which was his body only; for when he was stoning, he saw Jesus Christ standing ready to receive his soul into heaven; *Lord Jesus* faith he, *receive my spirit*. *Stephen's* soul could not be stoned, though his body was stoned. So when Jesus Christ was crucified, his soul was not crucified, I mean, when his body was killed, his soul was not killed; indeed he did endure torments in his soul, which made him cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* But yet his soul did not die. So when *Stephen* died, his soul went to Christ. It is true, when a child of God dies, the soul goes to sleep, How is that? The soul goes to sleep in a Scripture-sense, that is, it goes to rest in *Abrahams* bosom (O blessed sleep!) it goes to rest in the embraces of God, it goes into the arms of its Redeemer, it goes to the heavenly Paradise, it goes to be always present with the Lord. But take heed of that wicked opinion, to say, that the soul sleeps in an Anabaptistical sense, that is, That it lies in a strange kind of lethargy, neither dead, nor alive, neither capable of joy nor sorrow, until the resurrection. Though *Stephen's* body fell asleep, yet his soul did not fall asleep, but immediately went unto Jesus Christ in heaven. Thus I have given the Explication of the words.

Now give me leave to make some Application of all unto ourselves.

*If the death of Gods children be nothing else but a falling asleep, then let this comfort us against the deaths of our godly friends, though they die unnatural and violent deaths, though they be stoned to death, though they be burnt to ashes, though they be sawn asunder, &c. Here is a message of rich consolation, which as a Minister of Christ I hold out unto you this day, viz. That the death of a child of God, let it be after what manner soever it will, it is nothing else but a falling asleep, he goes to his grave, as to his bed; and therefore our burying places are called *< in non-Latin alphabet >*, *dormitoria*, our sleeping-house. A child of God, when he dies he lies down in peace, and enters into his rest. And, as a man, when he is asleep, is free from all the cares and troubles that he hath in the day time; So the people of God, when they are fallen asleep, they are free from all the miseries and calamities, crosses, losses and afflictions that we are troubled with all; Therefore give me leave to say to you, as Christ did to the women that followed him to the Crosse, bewailing and lamenting of him, *O daughters of Jerusalem,* weep not for me, but weep for your selves, and for your children.* So say I, ô weep not for those that are dead in the Lord, that are fallen asleep in Jesus Christ, they are at their rests, they do not know the troubles that we are troubled with all, *Abraham* remembers us not; They are not sensible of our miseries and afflictions, let us weep for ourselves, and for the miseries that are coming upon us; and let us know, that when Gods children die they do but lie in their beds until the morning of the resurrection, and then they shall put on *Stolam immortalitatis*, the garment of

immortality, and their bodies shall be made like unto the glorious body of Jesus Christ. And know one thing more, which is all in all, viz. That when the body of a child of God falls asleep, his soul immediately goes into the arms of Christ, and there lives forever in the embraces of Jesus Christ; though the body falls asleep, yet the soul is received into *Abraham's* bosom. I beseech you, comfort one another with these words.

*- Let me beseech the people of God that they would look upon death, not as it is presented unto us in Nature's Looking-glass, but as it is set down in a Scripture-dress. Nature presents death in a very terrible manner; and it is true, death is very terrible to a man out of Christ; but to you that are in Christ, the sting of death is taken away, death is nothing else but a quiet and placid sleep, putting off of our clothes, and a going to bed till we awake in the morning of the resurrection. Death to a child of God is nothing else but a putting off his earthly tabernacle. A going from an earthly prison into an heavenly palace, a hoisting up sail for Heaven. The letting of the soul out of prison, as a bird out of the cage, that it may flee to Heaven: A change from a temporary hell to an eternal heaven. A going out of *Egypt* into *Canaan*, and therefore called 〈 in non-Latin alphabet 〉 2 Pet. 1.15. is not *mors hominis*, but *mors peccati*, not the death of the man, but the death of his sins. It is *Sepultura vitiorum*. It is the pilgrim's journeys-end, the sea-man's haven; an absence from the body, and a presence with the Lord. Let all Gods people look upon death through Scripture-spectacles, and consider it as it is sweetly represented in this Text!

Remember blessed *Stephen* stoned to death, and yet falling asleep. And remember also that excellent saying of *Austin*, *That a childe of God should be as willing to die as to put off his clothes, because death is nothing else to him but a sleep, and a departure from misery to everlasting happiness.*

* To beseech you all every night when ye go to bed, to remember this text, and especially to remember these four things.

First, When you are putting off your clothes, remember that you must shortly put off your bodies. And

Secondly, When you go into your beds, remember that it will not be long before you must go down into your graves. And

Thirdly, When you close your eyes to sleep, remember that it will not be long before death ⟨◇⟩ close your eyes. And

Fourthly, When you awake in the morning, remember that at the resurrection you must all arise out of the grave, and that the just shall arise to everlasting happiness, but the wicked to everlasting misery.

It is a saying of an Heathen man, That the whole life of a man should be nothing else but *Meditatio mortis*, but a meditation of death. And it is the saying of *Moses*, Deut.

32.29. *O that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.* Beloved, it is the greatest part of wisdom every day to remember our later end; That man is the only wise man, and happy man in life and death, that is ever mindful of his death.

* But before I make an end, I must answer one Question, viz. *Whether the death of the wicked be not in Scripture compared to a sleep, as well the death of the godly?*

* I answer, That wicked men in Scripture are said to fall asleep when they die. It is said of idolatrous *Jeroboam*, That he *slept with his fathers*. Of *Baasha* and *Omri*, those wicked Kings,* That they *slept with their fathers*.

* But then the Question will be, *In what respect is the death of the wicked compared to a sleep?*

* Even as a man which is asleep, sometimes hath no benefit, rest nor ease thereby; when the sick man awakes he is many times more sick then he was before he went to sleep: Some men are much disquieted in their sleeps by hideous and fearful dreams; *Nebuchadnezzar* when he was asleep, had a most scaring dream, and when he awoke he was amazed there with. So it is with a wicked man; Death to a wicked man is a sleep, but it is a terrifying sleep, the soul that goes immediately to hell, where it is burned with fire that never shall be quenched, and where the worm that never dies is always gnawing upon it. The body that indeed lies in the grave asleep, but how? even as a malefactor that sleeps in prison the night

before he is executed, but when he awakes he is hurried and dragged to execution; so the wicked man falls asleep in death, but when he awakes, he awakes to everlasting damnation. But now a child of God, when he sleeps the sleep of death, he sleeps in his Father's house, and when he awakes, he awakes to everlasting happiness.

* And this makes way for the fourth and last Use, which is a Use of very great consequence. And it is to beseech you all, that you would labour so to live, that when you fall asleep, you may sleep an happy sleep. There is the sleep that the wicked man sleeps when he dies, and there is the sleep that the godly man sleeps when he dies. Now I beseech you, labour so to live, that when you fall asleep, your sleep may be an happy sleep unto you, that when you awake in the morning of the resurrection, it may be an awakening unto you.

* But then the great Question will be, *How shall I do this?*

* I shall give you four or five helps for this,

First, If you would sleep an happy sleep at death, then you must labour *to sleep in Jesus Christ*; It is said, 1 Cor.15.18. *Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ.* And 1 Thes 4 14. *If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.* What is it to sleep in Jesus? To sleep in Jesus is to die in the faith of Jesus Christ.

2. To sleep in Jesus, is to die with an interest in Jesus Christ, to die as a member of Christ united to him, as our head For you must know, that the dust of a Saint is part of that man who is a member of Jesus Christ, and every believer when he sleeps in the dust, he sleeps in Jesus Christ, that is, he lies in the grave, and his dust is part of Christ mystical, and Christ as an head will raise it up, and cannot be complete without it. Now then, if ever you would sleep an happy sleep, labour to get a real interest in Christ, labour to live in Christ while you live. And then, when you fall asleep, you shall be sure to sleep in Jesus. There are many would have Christ to receive their souls at death, and that say with dying *Stephen, Lord Jesus receive my Spirit*: But if ever you would have Christ to receive your souls when you die, you must be sure to receive him into your souls whilst you live, if ever you would have him to receive you into heaven, you must receive him into your hearts. No man makes a will, but he saith, *Imprimis*, I bequeath my soul unto Jesus Christ my Redeemer. But how dost thou know that Jesus Christ will accept of this Legacy? If thy soul hath not Christ's image upon it, if it be not regenerated and renewed, Jesus Christ will never own it; Thou mayest bequeath it unto Christ, but the devil will claim it, if thy soul hath the devils image upon it, if it be a swinish, polluted, unbelieving, unregenerate soul, thou mayest bestow it upon God, but the devil will recover it out of God's hands, pardon this expression, it is not mine, but *S^t Austins*. Beloved, if ever you would reign with Christ when you die, he must reign in you whilst you live: and

if ever you would sleep an happy sleep, you must live in Jesus that you may sleep in Jesus.

Secondly, In the second place, If ever you would sleep an happy sleep at death, then you must take heed of overcharging your selves with worldly cares. A man that is full of cares cannot sleep, therefore when men would sleep, they lay (as the Proverb is) all their cares under their pillow, they labour to shut all cares out of their mind: O take heed that you do not murder your souls by the cares of the world; Beloved, a man that eats out his heart with worldly cares, will never sleep an happy sleep, the cares of the world will choke all the good seed of the Word of God; and therefore, as men when they sleep lay aside all worldly thoughts; So if ever you would sleep an happy sleep, take heed of overmuch carking and caring for the things of this world; and remember what you have heard this day, and that will regulate and moderate all your cares, *Naked you came into the world, And naked you must go out of the world;* Why should we take care for that we know not who shall enjoy after us?

Thirdly, If ever you would sleep an happy sleep when you die, you must take heed of sucking too much of the pleasures of this life; A man that eats a full supper, will sleep very disquietly, therefore they that would sleep quietly use to eat but light suppers; for when a man's stomach is over-charged, it takes away his sweet sleep from him. So if ever you would sleep an happy sleep when you come to die, O take heed of sucking too much of the pleasures of this life; take heed of eating too large

a meal of worldly delights, and of creature comforts, these worldly pleasures will make the sleep of death unquiet unto you. Oh let not *Dalilah's* lap, deprive you of *Abrahams* bosom! Remember that *David* by *Bathsheba's* embraces, lost the embraces of God, I mean, the sense of the embraces of God, the joy and comfort of them.

Fourthly, If ever you would sleep an happy sleep in death, then labour to work hard for Heaven while you live. Oh how delightful is sleep to a weary man? When a man hath taken pains all the day, as the traveller that hath travelled all the day, or the Ploughman that hath been at work all the day, how quietly, how soundly doth he sleep in the night? O Beloved! If ever you would sleep an happy sleep at death, then labour to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, and give all diligence to make your Calling and Election sure. The more you labour for Heaven the better, the sweeter will your sleep be when you come to die. And remember this, That as much sleeping in the day time, will hinder a mans sleep at night; So you that idle away the time of your providing for Heaven in this your day, you that sleep away the minute upon which eternity doth depend, Oh you will have a sad sleep when death seizeth upon you. Take heed therefore of sleeping whilst you live, that so your sleep in the night of death may be comfortable unto you.

Fifthly, Lastly, If ever you would sleep an happy sleep when you die, then take heed of the sleep of sin; Sin in Scripture is compared to a sleep, *Awake thou that*

sleepest, that is, thou that finnest. Sinne is such a sleep as brings the sleep of death. Sin brings the first death, and sin brings the second death; All miseries whatsoever are the daughters of sin. If you would sleep an happy sleep, and have an happy awakening at the Resurrection, then take heed of the sleep of sin, Awake thou that sleepest, arise from the dead, and Jesus Christ shall give thee life, Ephes.5. 14. So Rom. 13.11, 12, 13. with which I will conclude; and I pray you mark it well, for it was a Text that converted Saint Augustine, Knowing the time, Beloved, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer then when we believed: The night is far spent, the day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light; Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

FINIS.