

SERMON I.*

Acts 1. 7.

And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

X **T**HESSE words are part of our Saviour's reply unto an impertinent question that was put to him by his disciples; after he had some time conversed with them since his resurrection, and immediately before he ascended, and went up into glory from them. They inquire of him, saying in the 6th. verse, "Lord wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answers, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." And then it follows, "when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight."

It is obvious to the observation of any, that read the Evangelical history, what it was that the minds, even of Christ's more immediate followers, were intent upon, during the time

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of his abode in the flesh among them ; and great was the expectation they had of a time when the Roman yoke should be shaken off, and when Israel, that had now been tributary long to that power, should be restored to its liberty. And when they found that they had now got among them one that manifestly appeared to be an extraordinary person, who could heal the sick, raise the dead, and do all other wonders with a word, they little doubted but now was the time of this great turn and revolution, which they so much hoped for. He that could feed multitudes as with miracles, they doubted not could easily maintain an army strong enough to do the business, upon very easy and unexpensive terms.

But see at length now what this great expectation of theirs came to ! Which expectation, you must know too, had a private aspect even towards themselves, and their own concerns ; for they doubted not if their Head and Lord became so great, they that were immediately related to him, must share proportionably in his greatness : and some of them, as the gospel tells you, thought of nothing less than sitting at his right hand, and left hand, in this his temporal kingdom which they thought he was about to set up. But see, I say, what this expectation came to ! Him, whom they expected to be a potent glorious king, they had seen apprehended, and haled to judgment, and to death, as a most ignominious malefactor. They had beheld the end of him, and seen him expire, and die upon a bloody reproachful cross ; and now all these great hopes of theirs were vanished. "We trusted," say they, "that this was he that should have redeemed Israel." Great hopes we had, that the so long expected work would now, without any possibility of frustration or disappointment, have received its accomplishment and be brought to a glorious period. But they saw their hope laid in the dust ; and now they reckon there was nothing more to be looked for from him ; there was an end of him, and all their expectations from him. We hoped this was he ; but we are fain now to think we know not what, or to think other thoughts of him.

Well, but at length he revives, and rises again ; and now their hopes revive, and rise too. But their hopes are still of the same carnal, and low alloy ; still their minds run the same way they had done, and they take up the matter afresh where they had left it. "Come Lord, what sayest thou now to this great business ? Wilt thou now at this time restore the kingdom to Israel ? Now that thou hast conquered this same death that hath befallen thee, what canst thou not conquer ? Shall the business be yet done ?" See what he tells them in this reply of his ; "It is not for you to know the

times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." What kindness (as if he had said) God hath for Israel, in that respect you intimate, it belongs not to you to know; it becomes you not to inquire. In the mean time there is another work for you to do. "You shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem," &c. He answers them first with a rebuke, and then with a promise. With a rebuke of that curiosity and carnality, which they betrayed in their question. As if he had said, "You meddle with things that concern you not; you too busily pry, and with an eye too daring and adventurous, into matters which God hath purposed to reserve and hide from you." But unto this mild rebuke he adds also a gracious promise. "There is a work for you to do that is properly yours, and which you have been designed to, and you shall be fitted and qualified for it; and pray let that content you, and serve your turn. Your work and business must be to be witness bearers to me, to my name and truth; to be my agents to carry on the business and design of that spiritual kingdom, which I am intent to establish, and promote, and spread through the whole world. And in order thereunto, you shall have a power come upon you which you shall little understand till you feel it, and which shall furnish you for this great work. "You shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

You see then the occasion and drift of the words, which I have designed at present to speak to; and these two things, (that we may not lose more time in any thing previous) we may observe from them,

I. That there are times and seasons respecting the church of God in the world, which the Father doth reserve and conceal in his own hand and power from men. And

II. That they are not concerned to be solicitous or make inquiry touching those times and seasons, but are to be patient of ignorance in reference thereunto. These I shall briefly open, and assert severally. And then,

III. Apply them jointly together.

I. That there are such times and seasons, that have reference to the state of the church of God upon earth, which the Father doth reserve and hide from men, in his own power. Now here concerning this we are to inquire, what these times and seasons are; and then what the hiding of them in God's own power doth import, which will serve for the explication of this

truth. And then we shall let you see upon what accounts the blessed God is thus reserved towards men in this matter, hiding the events of such times and seasons in his own hand and power ; and therein you may have some account of the reasons of what is asserted in this point.

As to the explication of it, two things are to be spoken to, namely, what these times and seasons are ; and, what the hiding of them in God's hand and power is, or the putting them there, as it is here expressed. As to the former :

1. The times and seasons which he doth so hide, we may say concerning them that he doth conceal, first the final and concluding season of time, the period and upshot of time ; and then, of each man's own particular time. He hides

(1.) The period of all time from men. We know not when the season shall be, that shall shut up time. It is a thing determined, that there shall be such a season, beyond which time shall be no more. As that great Angel is brought in swearing by him that liveth for ever and ever, " that there should be time no longer." Rev. 10. 6. But we are elsewhere told, that " of that day knoweth no man, no, not the Son" (as man we must understand it) " but the Father." Matth. 24. 36. And,

(2.) The period of our own times also he hides, and keeps in reserve, as a thing put in his own power, and not into ours. " No man hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit, nor hath he power in death ; and there is no discharge in that war." Eccles. 8. 8. The measure of our own days he hath not put in our power. If any would hold the spirit in that day, or detain the soul in the body in which they live, they cannot do it. No man hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit ; he must resign it when God commands it away ; and that time is a thing he hath kept in his own power. You have that expression of Isaac remarkable to this purpose ; " I am old, and know not the day of my death." Gen 27. 2. Though he was grown a very old man, and very near to death, yet he could not know the time : though it were so very near that he might be sure it could not be very far off, yet he professeth ignorance concerning the time still. " My times are in thy hand," saith David. And into his hands he commits his spirit, as you have in the fifth verse of the same psalm. That life which he knew he could not command, he very willingly commits ; he is well pleased that the measuring of it should be in the hands wherein it was. As if he had said, " I desire not to have it in mine own hand ; I commit my spirit into thy hand ; let it lodge here in this tabernacle as long as thou wilt, and let it go

forth when thou wilt ; this power is better lodged in thy hands than mine." Moreover,

There are contained within this compass of time in general, or of our own time, the seasons of good or evil unto the church in general, and the especial members of it in particular ; which are for the most part unknown, and reserved in the hand and power of God.

The good seasons seem to be more especially referred to here ; for it was a certain good to the church of God that the apostles were inquisitive about. "It is not for you to know the times." God hath his set time, an appointed time, wherein to favour Zion, that may seem instant and at hand now and then ; as they speak in the 102 psalm (we may well suppose as they would have it) The time to favour Zion, yea the set time is come. Ps. 102. 13. Methinks it should be come ; why should not the full time be accomplished ? If one may make an estimate from the affections of the well-wishers of Zion, it should be come. "Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." But this could not be peremptorily said ; he had stated the time of it with himself ; the appointment of it was a matter in his own hand and power. And by consequence

The ill times, the more afflictive times of the people of God are hid, and put in his own hand and power too. For supposing that a good season be determined by him, a calm, and more serene, or halcyon season, it must be by consequence in his hand and power too to measure all the intervals : how long the intervening ill seasons shall last, how long it shall be that his people shall feed upon the bread of affliction, and have their own tears for drink, and have men riding over their heads, and they be themselves even as the street to them that pass over. All that time must come under the same mensuration, the mensuration of the same hand. So that to determine when the church of God shall enjoy better days, and how long worse times shall last, this they were to account and reckon upon that he had put it into his own hand and power. It is that which we have an interdict upon us to know. "It concerns not you to know, trouble not yourselves to inquire, the matter is in good hands." But then we are to consider too,

2. What its being in the power of God and being put there doth signify ; which last we are to consider chiefly as leading to the other. The force and emphasis of the expression, seems to set forth more, than that it should barely import they are in his power ; the phrase signifieth withal a positive act that is

put forth in reference to their being so ; that is, an act of the divine will which hath determined with itself that it will have the matter so, that such times and seasons shall remain in his own hand and power. As for those expressions in Scripture (hand and power) they explain one another. The hand of God is nothing else, but his power ; his active power by which he ruleth the world, and changeth times and seasons, as to him seemeth good. But if you inquire for a more distinct explication of this matter, How this power and hand of God exerts itself, in reference to such times and seasons ? Why, it doth so, in reference to the existence of them, and to the discovery of them.

(1.) In reference to their existence : his power doth effect, and bring it to pass, that there should be such times and seasons, as he hath stated and determined with himself. And so more particularly his power orders, or effects such things as these, in reference to the existence of the times and seasons. As,

[1.] The commencement of them : that is, when such a state of things, good or evil, shall take its beginning ; when such a cloud shall first begin to arise and spread itself over the horizon ; when it shall scatter and be dispersed, and a bright and cheerful light spring up ; “the day-spring from on high” to visit the desolate. This, his hand or power hath determined. And then,

[2.] How long such or such a state of things shall continue. The duration of it, its bounds and limits, are the work of his hand and power. So long my people shall be afflicted ; as he did determine concerning the people of Israel, from the time that he spoke to Abraham about that matter, namely, four hundred and thirty years ; and then ensued that blessed peaceful calm, and the glorious and wonderful works of providence, which did make way for that and introduce it, whereof the history afterwards gives an account. And again,

[3.] His own hand or power exactly measures all the degrees of good and evil, that shall be within such a compass of time ; so as that there shall be nothing, more or less, than what his power orders. For we are not to take times and seasons here abstractedly ; but so as to take in the events of such times and seasons : all those events which such times and seasons go pregnant with. All the births of those times, of what kind soever they be ; his power orders every one so to come forth, even as it doth come forth. He works all things according to the counsel of his own will. Dan. 4. 35. And,

[4.] That hand or power doth order all the occasions and

methods by which such and such seasons, with all that they are laden and burdened with, shall be brought about. Nothing comes to pass but as that hand or power doth direct and order : not only the effects, the things that are produced ; but all their causes, or whatsoever is productive of them. And we may add,

[5.] That the hand or power of God doth also order all the consequences and dependencies, of any such times and seasons. For there is still a concatenation in providences ; and nothing falls out in the world but somewhat else depends upon it : this and that is doné which is preparatory, and leads the way to something else that is to be done, till the end and the folding up of all things ; till that season come, when it is determined, that time shall be no more. But,

(2.) This hand or power of the Father hath its exercise not only in reference to the existence, but also to the discovery and notification of those times and seasons which he hath reserved in his own power. That is, either to make them known before-hand or not, as he pleaseth ; or else to make them known more or less clearly as he pleaseth, with greater or less degrees of obscurity or perspicuity, according as seems to him good. This is that he hath in his own hand and power, either to reveal or not reveal them, what seasons shall be as seemeth him good ; or if he let any light break out before-hand into the heads or hearts of those that are in covenant with him, then to let out so much and no more as seemeth him good.

And this may suffice for the explication of the first point. And would you now have some reason of it, why he doth thus put future times and seasons in his own power, and keep them there ; why it is always his will and pleasure, while such things remain hid and reserved, that it should be so ; the reasons will partly respect him, partly ourselves.

[1.] Respecting him there is a great reason for it on his part ; that is, this twofold reason : it is his right, and it is his glory.

First. It is his right to have futurity thus in his own hand and power, it belongs to him as he is Ruler of the world, the great Disposer and Orderer of all things. For is it not inconsistent with sovereignty, to be accountable for every thing one means to do ? should there be no *arcana imperii*, *nothing kept hid and secret* ? It cannot stand with the absoluteness, at least, of his dominion, and that power which rightfully belongs to him over the whole creation, that there should be nothing determined or done, but there must be previous notice of it given to his creatures. He gives no account of any of his matters unto any. And then

Secondly : It is his glory, and his honour : it is the peculiar honour of his Godhead, to have the prospect of all his works in view, even from the beginning to the end. A glory that he cannot share nor communicate. It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, to hide things, to have his way in the dark, so as that his footsteps shall not be known ; and so to steer the course, and manage the whole administration of his government, that none shall be able to trace him, or know what he will do next ; neither make any certain collection from what is done, what shall be done. As the wise man says, "He hath made every thing beautiful in its time," (hath ordered all things in the aptest and fittest seasons for the same,) "also he hath set the world in their hearts, so that no man can find the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." He hath set the world in their hearts, so as that the very world itself, that is, the stage on which are acted so many successive parts, doth become a blind to them, that they cannot see his way ; nor from the beginning or former things conjecture, or make any collection what will ensue. As, you know, the eye that sees all things, sees not itself. He hath set the world in their heart, the seat of prudence, understanding, wisdom and knowledge ; but the object is so close to the faculty that it cannot see. They cannot see what is done in the world so near them, so as to be able to discern and make inferences from any former things, to any future things yet to be done, at leastwise as to the timing of them, which our text refereth chiefly to. "Such a thing was done such a time, therefore such a thing will be done such a time."

This then is his peculiar and singular glory, that he can outdo apprehension ; and counterwork the conjectures and guesses even of all men. Sometimes such a state of things according to all visible human appearances seems instant ; it may be nothing but gloominess, darkness and horror is to be looked for at such a time, according to all the prognostics we can have ; and lo ! by a quick turn of providence, most unexpectedly a bright lightsome season is brought forth in view. Sometimes, on the other hand, external appearances are fair and pleasing ; men are ready to cry nothing but peace, peace ; and then a sudden cloud arises, and spreads itself over all, out of which nothing but storms and tempests ensue. And so doth the providence of God, as was aptly expressed by the poet, seem to sport with men ; *ludere in humanis rebus*. God doth, as it were, glory over men in this kind, by giving them to see, how by letting such appearances come into view he can raise fears and scatter them ; or excite such and such probabilities to make persons

full of hopes, and presently dash them, that men may know the Lord omnipotent reigneth. There is no searching his understanding; he is not capable of being prescribed unto. None can direct the Spirit of the Lord; it runs the most unthought-of ways in its disposal and management of things. This then is reason enough as to God; it is his right to have the disposal of times and seasons; and then it is his glory wherein his excellency doth shine and discover itself, and shews how far he transcends all the thoughts and apprehensions of men: how far his thoughts are above our thoughts, and his ways above our ways.

And

[2.] There is reason too, in reference to his people, why it should be so; that is, it is their great advantage that thus it should be. As

First, That they may not be diverted from their proper work and business, the work they have to do from day to day, and from hour to hour; which certainly they would be, if they had the range of all future times open to them. They would be taken off from minding their present business; and spend their time in continual profitless ranges, to and fro, in the futurities that should lie open, and present a vast prospect to them. And again,

Secondly, That they may not be disquieted; for certainly it would be a very great disquietment to the mind of a good man, if he did know all things that should fall out in the compass of time, even his own time. But I hasten to the other thing, and therefore enlarge not further here.

II. The second point was this; We are not concerned, and therefore should not be solicitous to inquire, or know much of these reserved times and seasons, which he hath so put and hid in his own hand and power: "It is not for you to know the times, &c." And here we may reckon it is not for us,

1. As being none of our right, it belongs not unto us; we can claim no such thing. And,

2. As being no way for our advantage. It can profit us nothing. What should we get by it? It is therefore not for us. God hath so disposed the state of things, and the way of his dispensation towards us men, over whom he is Governor, as not to please and gratify our humour; but to do, in reference to his own, what may make for their real advantage. But what shall we be the better for knowing what God will do, what times or seasons shall come either of good or evil? I add further,

3. It would be our great disadvantage, and a prejudice to us. For,

(1.) It would multiply our troubles. For do not we know how apt we are to forecast troubles to ourselves? When we are not sure they will come, yet our minds will not be withheld from a most tormenting anticipation of evil, and possible troubles; (we do not know they are certainly future, but we apprehend them possible) and so that which God would have us suffer but once, we suffer a thousand times. We ought to admire here the divine wisdom and mercy in conjunction, upon this occasion; that he doth not let us have any more knowledge than what will suit with our power in such things. What a dreadful concurrence would it be in us between infinite knowledge and finite power! Could we know all things, and yet do but this or that; if a man should have the knowledge of such and such things to come, but no power to prevent it (as alas! what can our impotency do?) how dreadful, I say would this be!

There is a great deal of compassion in this: that since it belongs to our state as creatures to be able to do but little, to be mere dependencies, impotent things, that therefore we should not have a fore-knowledge of what it would be afflictive to us to foreknow. We are therefore put under a restriction that comes so close to us, as to stand betwixt us and to-morrow. "Take no thought for the morrow; sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." We are not to range with afflicting thoughts so far as to the next day. Thou wilt have enough in this day to trouble thee with, never let thy solicitude be conversant about the accessions of time. We foolish creatures should fetch the troubles of all our days into every day, if we could foreknow what is to come. Take then no thought for to-morrow! it is enough for you that you have One to think of you, and care for you. And it will make most for your advantage to be looked upon by him every day; who will make your strength to be sufficient for each day when it comes. And then,

(2.) As it would be a prejudice to us in the multiplication of afflictions, so in the diminution of mercies. For there is a great accent of pleasure and delightfulness certainly added to them by the surprisingness of them, when they come most unexpectedly. How grateful is a bright, warm, refreshing sun, shining all on a sudden out of a thick dismal cloud! Memorable things have been done for the church of God that they looked not for: such things as eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had it entered into their hearts to conceive, or which they could form no conception of before-hand. "Who would have looked, said they, for such a day as this is?" How sweet is a mercy that comes unknown, unlooked for! "When the Lord

turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." Ps. 126. 1, 2. God so provides in this matter, that nothing of the gust and sweetness of mercy shall be lost to his people; they shall have it with the best and highest set off or advantage. Now,

III. To make some brief use of all that we have observed, taken together; we may learn hence,

1. That there is an aptness in the spirits of men, even of good men, to be very inquisitively prying into futurity, beyond what God hath thought fit to reveal and put out of his own hand and power, as to the discovery thereof. "Lord wilt thou," (say his disciples,) "at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" wilt thou do it now? It would not, it seems, satisfy them or serve their turn, to have some understanding, such as they might collect from the prophets, whom they had in their hands, that God had a kind thought towards Israel, had not utterly cast off his people: they cannot be content to know only so much; but, Lord! shall it be now? Wilt thou now restore the kingdom to Israel?

That disposition of spirit, since it is so natural, ought to be watched and repressed; and as we find any hankering in our own spirits this way, we should see to it that they meet with their seasonable, and due rebukes, even from our own animadversions. We are, when a suffering time is upon us, very impatiently set upon it to know when it shall be over. If we have any expectation of a good time, oh! but when shall it be? Thus we would bring God to our punctilio, and to our very *now*. Upon such niceties would we be with him, so apt are we to dodge with the great Lord of heaven and earth. "That which I would have, shall it be now? or when shall it be? This is that I would be rid or freed of, but when? How long must I bear? how long must I wait?" This now is undutiful, and stands not with that creaturely submission, that is belonging and proper to our state: much less with the spirit of a child; that tractableness, resignation, yielding in all things to the Father's pleasure and wisdom, which is most agreeable to that relation. And again,

2. We may learn hence, that times or seasons whether they be good or evil to a people, fall not out to them casually, or by chance; but they remain in the hand and power of God. We are too apt to let our spirits work many times as if we thought such and such things came to pass by casualty. For if any ill state of things come upon us, how apt are we to aggravate the evil of it to ourselves, saying; "Had it not been for such a

thing, this had not come; this might have been kept off: if it had not been for the miscarriage of this instrument, our case had not been so bad. If it were not for this or that unhappy accident, all had been well enough." Alas! we forget, these things are in his hand and power that over-rules and orders all, that it is not blind chance that regulates the world, but the counsel and wisdom of God, that run through the compass of all events, and hath the conduct of all things.

3. We may also learn, that men have it not in their hand and power to order times and seasons of good and evil, to God's people, as they please. We may sometimes seem to have that apprehension ourselves; and if we have not, some may have an apprehension, that it is in their hand and power to dispose and measure out good and evil, to the children of God, as they will. No, God hath not let the reins go yet, he hath the times and seasons in his own power. Say they sometimes, "We will pursue, we will overtake, and we will divide the spoil, we shall have our will over them," when God hath not said so: and his will and work shall stand against and above theirs. And take we heed of our attributing too much to creatures, that what men have a mind to, shall be; or what they have no mind to, shall not be. There is a God in heaven that changeth the times and seasons, as he seeth good. And, for the shutting up of all, let us in reference to this matter, and upon what hath been spoken to you, take in the close these few counsels.

(1.) Let us labour to trust in him, who hath all the times and seasons which concern us, and his people, and the world, in his own hand and power. Have we not reason enough to do so, and encouragement enough? And so though we be blind and cannot see the product of to-morrow; know not what a day will bring forth; we shall have him to be eyes to us. He will be eyes to the blind, if they will but trust in him. As when a blind person is led by another he useth that person's eyes, who leads him. Let him lead us on from day to day, time to time, season to season. We cannot see with our own eyes, but is it not better for us that we have better eyes to see with? For we have one to see for us, who seeth infinitely better than we. We know not the product of the next day, or week; but is it not enough that he knoweth the event of all future times, and that he orders all things with exact judgment. "He is the rock his work is perfect, all his ways are judgment," (Deut. 32. 4.) or reason: the most exquisite reason, that is, the result of deliberation, and the most concocted thoughts. Deliberation, it is true, can have no place with him, who is the most absolutely perfect Being; but that which is equivalent is intended to be signified

by the applying it to him. He sees with one view all the connexions of things; and so is able to outdo them who reason but by degrees, and by recollecting of things after things, so as to make a judgment at last. "Our God is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him." Isai. 30. 18. To every thing there is time and judgment. He doth particularly state the time and season, and applieth to every thing its proper time when it is most fit it should fall out; and then it will so do to the best purpose. Trust in him, I say, who hath all future times and seasons in his own hand and power. The Father hath put them all in his own hand and power. Father! that is an expression of love, tenderness, compassion, and care. Is he not fit to be trusted then?

(2.) Submit to him, who hath all things and seasons in his power; resign, I say, and yield the matter to him. Subdue an unquiet, turbulent heart; beat down all wayward and perverse reasonings. Father is a name of authority, as well as love. The Father hath put all things in his hand and power; he who is the Head of the family, that great family, which is made up of heaven and earth. And are you children of that family, and will you not allow that he orders the timing of things as to him seemeth meet.

(3.) Since you cannot know his times and seasons, pray labour to know your own. Since you cannot know the times and seasons which he hath put in his own hand and power, know those that he hath appointed to you. Though he hath hid from you those seasons of future events, in the contingencies of the world, yet he hath not hid from you the duty of all seasons and events. This is our time. "Your time is alway ready," saith Christ; (John 7. 6.) that is, the present time is ours, that he hath put as a prize into our hands; the present time for present work, if we have wisdom and hearts to make use of it.

It is a dreadful thing not to know our own time. "For man," says the preacher, "also knoweth not his time." Eccles. 9. 12. That was the miserable state of Jerusalem; they knew not the time of their visitation. For our Saviour beheld the city, and wept over it, considering what was coming upon it. Enemies should begirt it round about, such and such ruins should befall it, and all because they did not know in their day the things that did belong to their peace; but now they were hid from their eyes. Thou hadst a good time, as if he had said, if thou wouldst have known it. We are barred up as to future time; but we are bid to know the present time, and what God calls for at our hands therein. We may know when

it is a time to mourn, and when to rejoice; when to weep, and when to be merry and pleasant.

He points out to us our more extraordinary praying seasons, if we would but observe the finger of providence, and take notice of his indications. It is a lamentable case, when we cannot understand the time of such a thing; when we cannot know this is a time for such work, and this for such work. The present time points out such and such work that we should be intent upon. We cannot indeed know these reserved times and seasons; let us then know the times, that are left open to our view. As now this present time is come, but do we know what ought to be the work of this time? God hath ordered for us this time, this season to be waiting for him, humbling ourselves before him. The season tells us what the working of our souls should be now at this time; what there should be of humiliation; what of striving and wrestling with God; what endeavours to take hold of him, that we may yet keep him with us, while we have him. It is a happy thing to be able to know a praying day, when it comes; to know it so as to answer it by a suitable frame and temper of spirit.

So also you are expecting shortly another good time, a season of drawing nigh unto God, and to converse with him and with your great Redeemer, even at his own table. If God do order for you that season, that will tell you what disposition of spirit there must be; and you ought to be forecasting, that you may have a temper and disposition of spirit, suitable to such a season, and the work of it. If you have the season, it will then prove a blessed season; and if you should be deprived of it, yet all these sweet gracious workings of spirit will not be lost, they will be a rich advantage to you even in reference to a future holy course. Oh then if you cannot know God's time, labour to know your own! the present time for present work, that he seems to call you to. And then I add in the

(4.) And last place; Since you cannot look far into future time, look more into eternity, over and beyond all time. For it is only future time that God hath shut up from you, while he leaves eternity open to you. He would have you look over time into a vast and boundless eternity. Look then not to the things that are seen and temporal, (things measured by time) but to the things unseen and eternal! And doing so, this will be your great advantage and gain; you will find that though the outward man should perish (as there will come a crash upon all our earthly tabernacles, and down they must) the inward man will be renewed day by day. If then, the outward

man will perish, let it perish ; if it will go down, let it go ; there is somewhat we shall gain by that loss. In the mean while we shall in our souls be renewing strength day by day, if we keep our eye open to eternity ; to that unseen state of things within the vail, whither he hath led the way, who is our great Forerunner to the glory that is to be revealed ; with which glory the sufferings of the present time, this *now*, are not to be compared ; not to be named in the same day, with that felicity which accrues to us hereafter. In a word, what we now suffer, within the compass of time, cannot bear any parallel with that glory and blessedness, which is to come after time is done. Let us therefore in the mean while seriously mind these things.
