

# SERMON X.\*

THE

## LABOURING SAINT'S DISMISSION TO REST.

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE FUNERAL

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE HENRY IRETON.

LORD DEPUTY OF IRELAND.

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\* This sermon was preached in the abbey church at Westminster, Feb. 6, 1651.

THE HONOURABLE AND MY VERY WORTHY FRIEND

COLONEL HENRY CROMWELL.

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SIR,

THE ensuing sermon was preached upon as sad an occasion, as on any particular account hath been given to this nation in this our generation. It is now published, as at the desire of very many who love the savour of that perfume, which is diffused with the memory of the noble person peculiarly mentioned therein; so also upon the requests of such others, as enables me justly to entitle the doing of it obedience. Being come abroad, it was in my thoughts to have directed it immediately in the first place to her, who of any individual person was most nearly concerned in him. But having observed how near she hath been to be swallowed up of sorrow, and what slow progress he, who took care to seal up instruction to her soul by all dispensations, hath given her hitherto towards a conquest thereof; I was not willing to offer directly a new occasion unto the multitude of her perplexed thoughts about this thing. No doubt, her loss being as great as it could be, upon the account of one subject to the law of mortality, as many grains of grief and sorrow are to be allowed her in the balance of the sanctuary, as God doth permit to be laid out and dispended about any of the sons of men. He who is able to make sweet the bitterest waters, and to give a gracious issue to the most grievous trial, will certainly, in due time, eminently bring forth that good upon her spirit, which

he is causing all these things to work together for. In the mean time, sir, these lines are to you : your near relation to that rare example of righteousness, faith, holiness, zeal, courage, self-denial, love to his country, wisdom, and industry, mentioned in the ensuing sermon ; the mutual tender affection between you, whilst he was living ; your presence with him in his last trial and conflict ; the deserved regard you bear to his worth and memory ; your design of looking into, and following after his steps and purpose in the work of God in his generation, as such an accomplished pattern as few ages have produced the like ; with many other reasons of the like nature, did easily induce me hereunto. That which is here printed is but the notes I first took, not having had leisure since to give them a serious perusal, and upon that account must beg a candid interpretation, unto any thing that may appear not so well digested therein, as might be expected. I have not any thing to express concerning yourself, but only my desire that your heart may be fixed to the Lord God of your fathers, and that in the midst of all your temptations and oppositions, wherewith your pilgrimage will be attended, you may be carried on and established in your inward subjection unto, and outward contending for, the kingdom of the dearly beloved of our souls, not fainting, or waxing weary, until you receive your dismission to rest, for your lot in the end of the days.

Sir,

Your most humble and affectionate servant,

J. OWEN.

Oxon, Ch. Ch. April 2.

## SERMON X.

*But go thou thy way till the end be, for thou shalt rest, and stand in the lot at the end of the days.—Dan. xii. 13.*

THE words of my text having no dependance (as to their sense and meaning, but only as to the occasion of them) on the verses foregoing; I shall not at all look backward into the chapter, but fall immediately upon them, that I be not hindered from my principal intendment: being unwilling to detain you long, though willing to speak a word from the Lord to such a congregation gathered together by such an eminent act of the providence of God.

The words are the Lord's dismissal given to a most eminent servant, from a most eminent employment, wherein these four things are observable:

First, The dismissal itself in the first words: 'Go thou thy ways.'

Secondly, The term allotted for his continuance under that dismissal: 'Until the end be.'

Thirdly, His state and condition under that dismissal: 'For thou shalt rest.'

Fourthly, The utmost issue of all this dispensation, both as to his foregoing labour, his dismissal, and rest following: 'Stand in thy lot at the end of the days.'

First, In the first, I shall consider two things.

1. The person dismissed; 'Thou.'

2. The dismissal itself; 'Go thou thy ways.'

1. The person dismissed is Daniel, the writer of this prophecy, who received all the great visions of God mentioned therein, and I desire to observe concerning him as to our purpose in hand, two things.

(1.) His qualifications; (2.) His employment.

(1.) For the first, I shall only name some of them that were most eminent in him, and they are three.

[1.] Wisdom; [2.] Love to his people; [3.] Uprightness and righteousness in the discharge of that high place, whereunto he was advanced.

[1.] For the first, the Holy Ghost beareth ample testimony thereunto, Dan i. 17. 20. 'As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers, that were in all his realm.' In all matters of wisdom and understanding none in the whole Babylonian empire, full of wise men and artists, were to be compared unto Daniel and his companions; and Ezekiel, chap. xxviii. 3. rebuking the pride and arrogancy of Tyrus with a bitter scorn, he says, 'Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel,' or thou thinkest thyself so, intimating that none in wisdom was to be compared unto him.

[2.] Love to his people. On this account was his most diligent inquiry into the time of their deliverance, and his earnest contending with God upon the discovery of the season when it was to be accomplished, chap. ix. 1—4. Hence he is reckoned amongst them who in their generation stood in the gap, in the behalf of others, Noah, Daniel, and Job. Hence God calls the people of the Jews, 'his people,' chap. ix. 24. 'Seventy weeks are determined on thy people;' the people of thy affections and desires, the people of whom thou art, and who are so dear unto thee.

[3.] For his righteousness in discharging of his trust and office, you have the joint testimony of God and man: his high place and preferment you have, chap. vi. 2. He was the first of the three presidents who were set over the hundred and twenty other princes of the provinces; and the Holy Ghost tells you, that in the discharge of this high trust and great employment he was faithful to the utmost, ver. 4. 'Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find none occasion nor fault: forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.' Which also his enemies confessed, ver. 3. 'Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.'

These qualifications, I say, amongst others, were most eminent in this person, who here received his dismissal from his employment.

(2.) There is his employment itself, from which he is dismissed, and herein I shall observe these two things:

[1.] The nature of the employment itself.

[2.] Some considerable circumstances of it.

[1.] For the first, it consisted in receiving from God, and holding out to others, clear and express visions concerning God's wonderful providential alterations in kingdoms, and nations, which were to be accomplished, from the days wherein he lived, to the end of the world. All the prophets together had not so many clear discoveries, as this one Daniel concerning these things.

[2.] For the latter, this is observable, that all his visions still close with some eminent exaltation of the kingdom of Christ; that is the centre where all the lines of his visions do meet, as is to be seen in the close almost of every chapter, and this was the great intendment of the Spirit in all those glorious revelations unto Daniel, to manifest the subserviency of all civil revolutions unto the interest of the kingdom of the Lord Christ.

This then is the person concerning whom these words were used, and this was his employment.

2. There is his dismission itself; 'Go thou thy ways.' Now this may be considered two ways.

(1.) Singly, relating to his employment only.

(2.) In reference to his life also.

(1.) In the first sense, the Lord dischargeth Daniel from his farther attendance on him in this way of receiving visions and revelations, concerning things that were shortly to come to pass, although haply his portion might yet be continued in the land of the living: as if the Lord should say, Thou art an inquiring man, thou art still seeking for farther acquaintance with my mind in these things, but content thyself, thou shalt receive no more visions; I will now employ Haggai, Zechariah, and others; thou shalt receive no more: but I cannot close with this sense, for,

[1.] This is not the manner of God to lay aside those whom he hath found faithful in his service; men indeed do so, but God changeth not: whom he hath begun to honour with any employment, he continueth them in it, whilst they are faithful to him.

[2.] Daniel was now above a hundred years old, as may

be easily demonstrated by comparing the time of his captivity, which was in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, chap. i. 1. with the time of his writing this prophecy, which is expressly said to be in the reign of Cyrus, the king of Persia; chap. x. 1. and therefore probably his end was very nigh; and after this you hear of him no more; who had he lived many days, it had been his sin not to have gone up to Jerusalem, the decree of Cyrus giving liberty for a return being passed.

(2.) It is not then God's laying him aside from his office simply, but also his intimation that he must shortly lay down his mortality, and so come into the condition wherein he was 'to rest' until the end. This then is his dismissal, he died in his work, life and employment go together. 'Go thou thy ways.'

*Observation I.* There is an appointed season wherein the saints of the most eminent abilities, in the most useful employments, must receive their dismissal: be their work of never so great importance, be their abilities never so choice and eminent, they must in their season receive their dismissal.

Before I handle this proposition, or proceed to open the following words, I shall crave leave to bring the work of God, and the word of God, a little close together, and lay the parallel between the persons dismissed, the one in our text, the other in a present providence, which is very near, only that the one lived not out half the days of the other.

1. Three personal qualifications we observed in Daniel, all which were very eminent in the person of our desires.

(1.) Wisdom. There is a manifold wisdom which God imparteth to the sons of men; there is spiritual wisdom, that by the way of eminency is said to be 'from above,' James iii. 17. which is nothing but the gracious acquaintance of the soul, with the hidden wisdom of God in Christ; 1 Cor. ii. 7. And there is a civil wisdom, or a sound ability of mind for the management of the affairs of men in subordination to the providence and righteousness of God. Though both these were in Daniel, yet it is in respect of the latter that his wisdom is so peculiarly extolled. And though I am very far from assuming to myself the skill of judging of the

abilities of men, and would be far from holding forth things of mere common report, yet, upon assured grounds, I suppose this gift of God, ability of mind, and dexterous industry for the management of human affairs, may be ascribed to our departed friend.

There are sundry things that distinguish this wisdom from that policy which God abhors, which is ‘carnal, sensual, and devilish;’ James iii. 15. though it be the great darling of the men of the world; I shall name one or two of them.

[1.] A gracious discerning of the mind of God, according to his appearance in the affairs wherein men are employed; Micah vi. 9. ‘The Lord’s voice crieth unto the city, the man of wisdom shall see thy name, hear the rod, and who hath appointed it.’ It is the wisdom of a man, to see the name of God, to be acquainted with his will, his mind, his aim in things, when his providential voice crieth to the city. All the works of God have their voice, have their instruction: those of signal providences speak aloud, they cry to the city; Here is the wisdom of a man, he is a man of substance, a substantial man, that can see his name in such dispensations. This carnal policy inquires not into, but is wholly swallowed up in the concatenation of things among themselves, applying secondary causes unto events, without once looking to the name of God, like swine following acorns under the tree, not at all looking up to the tree from whence they fall.

[2.] Such acquaintance with the seasons of providence, as to know the duty of the people of God in them; 1 Chron. xii. 32. the children of Issachar, men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do: this it is indeed to be a man of understanding, to know in any season the duty of Israel, that they may walk up to acceptation with God in the performance thereof. A thing which is neither prescribed in the rules, nor followed in the practice of men, wise only with that cursed policy which God abhors: to have a mind suited unto all seasons and tempers, so as to compass their own selfish ends, is the utmost of their aim.

Now in both these did this gift of God shine in this deceased saint.

1. He ever counted it his wisdom to look after the name of God, and the testification of his will, in every dispensa-



tion of providence, wherein he was called to serve: for this were his wakings, watchings, inquiries; when that was made out, he counted not his business half done, but even accomplished, and that the issue was ready at the door; not what saith this man, or what saith that man, but what saith the Lord? that being evident; he consulted not with flesh and blood, and the wisdom of it, whereof perhaps, would he have leaned to it, he was as little destitute as any in his generation, I mean the whole wisdom of a man. The name of God was as land in every storm, in the discovery whereof, he had as happy an eye at the greatest seeming distance when the clouds were blackest, and the waves highest, as any.

2. Neither did he rest here: what Israel ought to do in every season, was also his inquiry; some men have a wisdom to know things, but not seasons in any measure; surely a thing in season is no less beautiful, than a word in season: 'as apples of gold in pictures of silver:' there are two things that belong to civil affairs, but are alterable upon the incomprehensible variety of circumstances. These alter and change the very nature of them, and make them good or bad, that is, useful or destructive. He that will have the garment that was made for him one year, serve and fit him the next, must be sure that he neither increase nor wane. Importune insisting on the most useful things, without respect to alterations of seasons, is a sad sign of a narrow heart. He of whom we speak, was wise to 'discern the seasons,' and performed things, when both themselves, and the ways of carrying them on were excellently suited unto all coincidences of their season. And indeed, what is most wisely proposed in one season, may be most foolishly pursued in another. It had been wisdom in Joshua not to have made any compact, but to have slain all the Gibeonites; but it was a folly sorely revenged in Saul, who attempted to do the same. He who thinks the most righteous and suitable proposals or principles, that ever were in the world (setting aside general rules of unchangeable righteousness and equity compassing all times, places, ways, and forms of government) must be performed as desirable, because once they were so, is certainly a stranger to the affairs of human kind.

Some things are unchangeable and indispensable amongst men, supposing them to live answerable to the general prin-

ciples of their kind : as that a government must be ; without which every one is the enemy of every one, and all tend to mutual destruction, which are appointed of God for mutual preservation ; that in government some do rule, and some be in subjection ; that all rule be for the good of them that are ruled ; and the like principles that flow necessarily from the very nature of political society.

Some things again are alterable and dispensable, merely upon the account of preserving the former principles, or the like : if any of them are out of course, it is a ‘ vacuum ’ in nature politic, for which all particular elements instantly dislodge and transpose themselves to supply ; and such are all forms of governments amongst men, which if either they so degenerate of themselves that they become directly opposite, or are so shattered by providential revolutions as to become useless to their proper end, may and ought to be changed, and not upon other accounts : but now for other things in government, as the particular way, whereby persons shall be designed unto it, the continuance of the same persons in it, for a less or greater proportion of time, the exercise of more or less power by some sorts, or the whole body of them that are ruled, the uniting of men for some particular end by bonds and engagements, and the like occasional emergencies, the universal disposal of them is rolled on prudence to act according to present circumstances.

(2.) Love to his people. This was the second qualification, wherein Daniel was so eminent. And our deceased friend, not to enter into comparison with them that went before, had clearly such a proportion, as we may heartily desire that those who follow after, may drink but equal draughts of the same cup ; that as his pains, labour, travail, jeopards of his life, and all that was dear to him, relinquishment of relations and contentments, had sweetness and life from this motive, even intenseness of affection to his people, the people of whom he was, and whose prosperity he did desire, needs no farther demonstration, than the great neglect of self and all self-concernments which dwelt upon him in all his tremendous undertakings : ‘ vicit amor patriæ,’ or certainly he who had upon his breast and all his undertakings self-contempt so eminently engraven, could not have persisted wrestling with so many difficulties to the end of his days :

it was Jerusalem, and the prosperity thereof, which was preferred to his chief joy. Neither,

(3.) Did he come short in righteousness in the administration of that high place whereto he was called? nay than this, there was not a more eminent stone in that diadem which he had in the earth. If he lay not at the bottom, yet at least he had a signal concurrence in such acts of justice, as antiquity hath not known, and posterity will admire. Neither was it this or that particular act that did in this bespeak his praise, but a constant will and purpose of rendering to every one his due.

I shall not insist upon particulars, in these and sundry other personal qualifications, between the persons mentioned a parallel may lie.

2. As to employment, that of Daniel was mentioned before: it was the receiving, and holding out from God, visions of providential alterations, disposing and transposing of states, nations, kingdoms, and dominions; what he had in speculation, was this man's part to follow in action; he was an eminent instrument in the hand of God in as tremendous providential alterations, as such a spot of the world hath at any time received, since Daniel foresaw in general them all: and this, not as many have been carried along with the stream, or led by outward motives, and considerations far above their own principles and desires, but seeingly and knowingly, he closed with the mind of God with full purpose of heart, to serve the will of the Lord in his generation. And on this account did he see every mountain made a plain beforehand, by the Spirit of the Lord, and staggered not at the greatest difficulties 'through unbelief, but being steadfast in faith, he gave glory to God.' And to complete the parallel, as Daniel's visions were still terminated in the kingdom of Christ; so all his actions had the same aim and intendment. This was that which gave life and sweetness to all the most dismal and black engagements that at any any time he was called out unto. All made way to the coming in of the promised glory. It was all the 'vengeance of the Lord and his temple.' A Davidical preparation of his paths in blood, that he might for ever reign in righteousness and peace; but be he so or so, the truth of our proposition is confirmed towards him: That there is an appointed sea-

son when the saints of the most eminent abilities in the most useful employments shall receive their dismission, &c.

I shall briefly open the rest of the words, and so take up the proposition again, which was first laid down.

Secondly, Then, there is the term allotted to him in this state of his dismission: 'Until the end be.'

Three things may be here intended in this word 'end.'

1. The end of his life: 'Go thou thy ways to the end of thy life,' and days. But this we before disallowed, not consenting that Daniel received a dismission from his employment before the end of his life and pilgrimage.

2. The end of the world: 'Go thy ways to the end of the world:' till then thou shalt rest in thy grave. But neither yet doth this seem to be particularly intended in these words. The words in the close of the text do expressly mention that, calling it 'the end of days;' and in so few words, the same thing is not needlessly repeated: besides, had this expression held out the whole time of his abode in the state of rest here signified, it must have been, 'Go thou thy ways, for thou shalt rest until the end be:' So that,

3. The 'end' here is to be accommodated unto the things, whereof the Holy Ghost is peculiarly dealing with Daniel; and that is, the accomplishment of the great visions which he had received, in breaking the kingdoms of the world, and setting up the kingdom of the holy one of God: Daniel is dismissed from farther attendance in this service, he shall not see the actual accomplishment of the things mentioned, but is dismissed and laid aside unto the end of them. The word 'until,' in the Scripture, is not such a limitation of time, as to assert the contrary to what is excepted, upon its accomplishment: 'Until the end,' doth not signify that he should not rest after the end of the things intimated, no more than it is affirmed that Michal had children after her death, because it is said, that until her death she had none; 2 Sam. vi. 23. this then is that end that he is dismissed unto; the appointed season for the accomplishment of those glorious things which he had foreshewn.

*Observation II.* God oftentimes suffers not his choicest servants to see the issue and accomplishment of these glo-

rious things, wherein themselves have been most eminently engaged.

Thirdly, The third thing (that we may make haste) is his state and condition, during the time which he lies under this dismissal, in these words: 'For thou shalt rest.'

There is nothing of difficulty in these words, but what will naturally fall under consideration in the opening of the proposition which they hold out: which is,

*Observation III.* The condition of a dismissed saint is a condition of rest: 'Thou shalt rest until the end be.'

What this rest is, and from what, with wherein it consists, shall be afterward explained.

Fourthly, The last thing in the text is the utmost issue of all these dispensations, both as to his foregoing labour, and his present dismissal, and following rest: 'Thou shalt stand in thy lot,' &c.

Here are two things considerable in these words.

1. The season of the accomplishment of what is here foretold, and promised unto Daniel; and that is 'in the end of the days:' that is, when time shall be no more, when a period shall be put to the days of the world: called the last day, the great day, the day of judgment; that is the season of the accomplishment of this promise, 'The day wherein God will judge the world, by the man whom he hath ordained.'

*Observation IV.* There is an appointed determinate season, wherein all things and persons according to the will of God will run into their utmost issue and everlasting condition.

2. The thing foretold and promised, that is, 'That he should stand in his lot.'

*Observation V.* There is an appointed lot for every one to stand in, and measured portion, which in the end they shall receive.

*Observation VI.* There is an eminent lot hereafter, for men of eminent employment for God here.

I shall not be able to handle all these several truths which lie in the words; those only which are of most importance, and most suitable, may briefly be handled unto you. And the first is,

*Observation I.* There is an appointed season wherein the

saints of the most eminent abilities, in the most useful employments, must receive their dismission.

Zech. i. 5. ‘Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?’ Fathers and prophets have but their season, and they are not: they have their dismission; so old Simeon professeth, ‘Nunc Dimittis,’ Luke ii. 29. Now thou givest me a dismission: they are placed of God in their station, as a centinel in his watch-tower, and they have their appointed season, and are then dismissed from their watch. The great Captain of their salvation comes, and saith, ‘Go thou thy ways,’ thou hast faithfully discharged thy duty; go now unto thy rest. Some have harder service; some have harder duty than others; some keep guard in the winter, a time of storms and temptations, trials and great pressures: others in the sunshine, the summer of a more flourishing estate and condition; yet duty they all do; all attend in the service; all endure some hardship, and have their appointed season for their dismission: and be they never so excellent at the discharging of their duty, they shall not abide one moment beyond the bounds which he hath set them, who saith to all his creatures, ‘Thus far shall you go, and no farther.’ Oftentimes this dismission is in the midst of their work, for which they seem to be most eminently qualified.

The three most eminent works of God, in and about his children, in the days of old, were his giving his people the law, and settling them in the land of Canaan: his recovering them from the Babylonish captivity; and, his promulgation of the gospel unto them. In these three works, he employed three most eminent persons; Moses in the first, Daniel in the second, and John Baptist in the third, and neither of them saw the work accomplished, wherein they were so eminently employed. Moses died the year before the people entered Canaan: Daniel, some few years before the foundation of the temple, and John Baptist in the first year of the baptism of our Saviour, when the gospel which he began to preach, was to be published in its beauty and glory. They had all but their appointed seasons, though their abilities were eminent: who like unto them? and their employment excellent, what like it in the earth? Yet at their seasons, they must go their ways to rest, and lie down, ‘till

they stand in their lot at the end of the days.' The reasons of which are,

1. The general condition of their mortality doth require that it should be so: 'It is appointed to all men once to die;' Heb. ix. 27. There is a stable law fixed concerning the sons of men, that is not upon the account of any usefulness here to be dispensed withal, 'The number of our months are with God; he hath fixed our bounds, which we shall not pass:' our days are as the days of an hireling, that have a certain, prefixed, and determinate end: their strength is not the strength of stones, neither is their flesh of brass, that they should endure for ever: See Job xiv. 10—12. This, I say, requires that there should be an appointed season for their employment, for it is so for their lives: and yet there is more in it than this: for in the course of five thousand years, God hath exempted two persons by his sovereignty from the condition of mortality, who walked with him in their generations. So that the bounds fixed to them were not upon the account of their lives, but merely of the work they had in hand.

2. God doth it, that he may be the more eminently seen in the carrying on his own works, which in their season he commits to them. Should he leave his work always on one hand, it would seem at length to be the work of the instrument only. Though the people opposed Moses at the first, yet it is thought they would have worshipped him at the last: and therefore God buried him where his body could not be found. Yet indeed he had but the lot of most, who faithfully serve God in their generations: despised whilst they are present, idolized when they are gone. I do not know of any great work, that the Lord carried out the same persons to be the beginners and enders of. He gave them all their seasons, that his power and wisdom might the more evidently appear in carrying it from one hand to another.

3. God makes room as it were in his vineyard, for the budding, flourishing, and fruit-bearing of other plants which he hath planted. Great employments call for great exercise of graces. Even in employments in and about providential things, there is the exercise of spiritual grace; as much faith and prayer, as much communion with God, walking before him, and wrestling with him, may be used in casting

down of armies, as in setting up of churches: God exerciseth all the graces of his, in the work he calleth them out unto. He principles them by faith and fellowship with himself for their employment; and therefore he gives each individual but his appointed season, that others in whose hearts he hath lodged the same spirit wherewith they are endued, may come forth, and shew the fruits thereof. Daniel lieth down in the dust, in rest and peace, and why so? The spirit of prophecy is poured out on Haggai and Zechariah, &c. they must also carry on this work, and 'bear my name before my people.' Consider the use of this.

*Use 1.* Of exhortation unto all that are employed in the work of God, especially such as with eminent abilities are engaged in eminent employments, you have but your allotted season for your work: your day hath its close, its evening; your night cometh, wherein none can work: 'The grave cannot praise the Lord; death cannot celebrate him; it is the living, the living that are fitted for that work;' Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19. It is true, men may allot you your season, and all in vain, but your times are in the hand of God; that which he hath appointed out unto you shall stand; be you never so excellent, never so useful, yet the days of your service 'are as the days of an hireling,' that will expire at the appointed season: be wise then to improve the time that is in your hands; this is the praise of a man, the only praise whereof in this world he is partaker, that he doth the will of God, before he fall asleep; that he faithfully serves his generation, until he be no more. For a dying man to wrestle with the rebukes of God, and the complaints of his own conscience, for meeting with the end of his days, before he hath attained the midst of his duty, is a sad condition. You have your season, and you have but your season, neither can you lie down in peace, until you have some persuasion that your work as well as your life is at an end; whatever then you find to do, do it with all your strength, for there is neither wisdom nor power in the grave whither you are going; Eccles. ix. 10.

Some particular rules may direct you herein:

(1.) Compare yourselves with the saints of God, who were faithful in their generations, and are now fallen asleep; what a deal of work did Josiah do in a short season? what



a light did John set up in a few years? with what unwearied pains and industry did our deceased friend serve his generation? It is said of Cæsar, that he was ashamed of his own sloth, when he found that Alexander had conquered the eastern world, at the age wherein he had done nothing. Behold here, one receiving his dismissal about the age of forty years, and what a world of work for God, and the interest of the Lord Christ did he in that season? and how well in the close, hath he parted with a temporal life for him, who by his death procured for him an eternal life, and now rest is sweet unto this labouring man. Provoke one another by examples.

(2.) Be diligent to pass through your work, and let it not too long hang upon your hands. Your appointed season may come before you bring it to the close; yea, search out work for God. You that are intrusted in power, trifle not away your season. Is there no oppressed person that with diligence you might relieve? is there no poor distressed widow or orphan, whose righteous requests you might expedite and dispatch? are there no stout offenders against God and man that might be chastised? are there no slack and slow counties and cities in the execution of justice, that might be quickened by your example? No places destitute of the gospel that might be furnished and supplied by your industry and wisdom? can you not find out something of this or the like nature to be dispatched with vigour and diligence? nay do not innumerable particulars in each kind lie upon your hands? and is not your non-performance of them such a sacrifice as wherewith God is not well pleased? Your time is limited and appointed, you know not how soon you may be overtaken with it; and would it not be desirable unto you, that you had done these things? will it be bitterness in the end, that you so laid out your endeavours?

*Use 2.* All men have but their seasons in any work, only God abideth in it for ever: in every undertaking let your eye still be on him, with whom is the fulness and the residue of the Spirit. Jeremiah's great bewailing of Josiah's death was doubtless made upon the account of his discerning that none would come after him to carry on the work which he had begun, but the wickedness of that people was to come

to their height; else God can raise up yet more Josiah's; let him be eyed as the principal and only abiding agent in any great undertaking.

In the residue of the observations I shall be very brief. The next is,

*Observation II.* God oftentimes suffers not the choicest of his servants to see the accomplishment of those glorious things, wherein themselves have been most eminently engaged.

The case of Moses is most eminently known, he had a large share in suffering the persecutions which were allotted to the people: forty years' banishment he endured in the wilderness, under the reproach of Christ; forty years more spent in wrestling with innumerable difficulties, dangerous perils, mutinies, wars, and contentions. At the close, when he comes to look upon the land, when the end of all that dispensation was to be wound up, and the rest and reward of all his toil and labour to be had, which formerly he had undergone for twice forty years; 'Go thou thy ways,' saith the Lord, 'thou shalt rest,' take thy dismission, thou shalt not enter into the good land, lie down here in the wilderness in peace.

John Baptist goes and preaches the drawing nigh of the kingdom of God, but lived only to point out Christ with his finger, cries, 'Behold the Lamb of God,' I must decrease, and is cut off. David makes the great preparation for the temple, but he shall not see so much as the foundation laid. Men must take their appointed lot. 'God will send by the hand of him whom he will send. Daniel must rest until the end be.' It is said of some they began to deliver Israel. The case of Zerubbabel was very rare, who saw the foundation, and also the top-stone of the temple laid, and yet the work of Jerusalem was not half finished in his days, as you may see, Zech. i. And this because,

1. God oftentimes receives secret provocations from the choicest of his servants which moves him to take them short of their desires. Those of his own whom he employs in great works, have great and close communion with him. God usually exercises their spirits in near acts of fellowship with himself: they receive much from him, and are constrained to unburden themselves frequently upon him; now

when men are brought into an intimacy with God, and have received great engagements from him, the Lord takes notice of every working and acting of their souls in an especial manner, and is oftentimes grieved and provoked with that in them which others can take no notice of: let a man read the story of that action of Moses, upon which the Lord told him directly he should not see the finishing of the work he had in hand, nor enter into Canaan; Numb. xx. 7, 8. 11. It will be a hard matter to find out wherein the failing was: he smote the rock with the rod, with some words of impatience, when he should only have spoken to it, and this with some secret unbelief, as to the thing he had in hand. God deals with others visibly, according to their outward actions, but in his own he takes notice of all their unbelief, fears, withdrawals, as proceeding from a frame in no measure answering those gracious discoveries of himself, which he hath made unto them, and on this account it is, that some are taken off in the midst of their work.

2. To manifest that he hath better things in store for his saints than the best and utmost of what they can desire or aim at here below. He had a heaven for Moses, and therefore might in love and mercy deny him Canaan. He employeth some eminently, their work is great, their end glorious, at the very last step almost of their journey, he takes off one and another, lets them not see the things aimed at: this may be thought hard measure, strict severity, exact justice, yea, as Job complains, 'taking advantages against them;' see but what he calls them to, in calling them off from their greatest glories and excellences on the earth and all this will appear to be love, tenderness, and favour in the highest. Whilst you are labouring for a handful of first-fruits, he gives you the full harvest; whilst you are labouring for the figure here below, he gives you the substance above. Should you see the greatest work, wherein any of you were ever engaged, brought to perfection, yet all were but a few drops compared with that fulness which he hath prepared for you. The Lord then doth it to witness to the children of men, that the things which are seen, the best of them, are not to be compared with the things that are not seen; yea, the least of them, inasmuch as he takes them whom he will honour, from the very door of the one, to bear

them into the other. The meanest enjoyment in heaven is to be preferred before the richest on earth, even then when the kingdom of Christ shall come in most beauty and glory.

*Use 1.* You that are engaged in the work of God, seek for a reward of your service in the service itself. Few of you may live to see that beauty and glory which perhaps you aim at as the end of all your great undertakings for God, whereinto you have been engaged. God will proceed his own pace, and calls on us to go along with him, and in the mean time, until the determinate end come, to wait in faith, and not make haste. Those whose minds are so fixed on, and swallowed up with some end (though good) which they have proposed to themselves, do seldom see good days, and serene in their own souls; they have bitterness, wrath, and trouble all their days; are still pressing to the end proposed, and commonly are dismissed from their station before it be attained. There is a sweetness, there is wages to be found in the work of God itself: men who have learned to hold communion with God in every work he calls them out unto, though they never see the main harvest they aim at in general, yet such will rest satisfied, and submit to the Lord's limitation of their time: they bear their own sheaves in their bosoms. Seeing God oftentimes dismisses his choicest servants, before they see, or taste of the main fruits of their endeavours; I see not upon what account consolation can be had in following the Lord in difficult dispensations, but only in that reward which every duty bringeth along with it, by communion with God in its performance. Make then this your aim, that in sincerity of heart, you do the work of God in your generation: find his presence with you, his Spirit guiding you, his love accepting you, in the Lord Christ, and whenever you receive your dismission, it will be rest and peace, in the mean time, you will not make haste.

*Use 2.* See a bottom and ground of consolation, when such eminent instruments as this departed worthy, are called off from their station when ready to enter upon the harvest of all their labours, watchings, toilings, and expense of blood. God hath better things for them in store, abiding things, that they shall not enjoy for a day or two, which is the best of what they could hope for here, had they lived to

see all their desires accomplished ; but such as in the fulness whereof, they may lie down in peace to eternity. Why do we complain ? for our own loss ? is not the residue and fulness of the Spirit with him, who gave him his dismissal ? for his loss, he lived not to see Ireland in peace, but enjoys the glory of that eternal kingdom that was prepared for him before the foundation of the world, which is the condition held out in the third observation.

*Observation III.* The condition of a dismissed saint is a condition of rest, 'Go thy way until the end be; for thou shalt rest.'

The apostle gives it in as the issue of a discourse from a passage in the Psalms, 'There remaineth therefore a rest unto the people of God;' Heb. iv. 9. it remains, and is reserved for them, this the Lord hath solemnly proclaimed from heaven; Rev. xiv. 13. 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth, yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them:' they go into a blessed condition of rest; there is not any notion under which the state of a dismissed saint is so frequently described as this 'of rest,' which indeed is the proper end and tendency of all things; their happiness is their rest; their rest is all the happiness they can be partakers of: 'Fecisti nos ad te, Domine, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec veniat ad te.'

Now 'rest' holds out two things unto us: A freedom from what is opposite thereunto, wherein those that are at rest have been exercised, in reference whereunto they are said to be at rest; and something which suits them, and satisfies their nature in the condition wherein they are; and therefore they are at rest, which they could not be, were it not so with them; for nothing can rest, but in the full fruition and enjoyment of that which satiates the whole nature of it in all its extent and capacity. We must briefly inquire,

(1.) What it is that the saints are at rest from: and

(2.) What it is that they are at rest in. Which I shall do very speedily.

(1.) The many particulars which they are at rest from may be referred unto two general heads: [1.] Sin; [2.] Labour and travail.

[1.] Sin ; this, on all consideration whatever, is the main disquietness of the soul ; temptations to it, actings in it, troubles for it, they are the very Egypt of the soul, its house and place of bondage and vexation ; either the power of it indwelling, or the guilt of it pressing, are here still disquieting the soul. For the first, how doth Paul complain, lament, yea cry out concerning it ; Rom. vii. 24. ‘ O wretched man that I am ! ’ and what a sad, restless, and tumultuating condition upon this account doth he describe in the verses foregoing ? The best, the wisest, the holiest of the saints on this account, are in a restless condition. Suppose a man a conqueror in every battle, in every combat that he is engaged in, yet whilst he hath any fighting, though he be never foiled, yet he hath not peace. Though the saints should have success in every engagement against sin, yet because it will still be rebelling, still be fighting, it will disturb their peace. So also doth the guilt of it ; our Saviour testifieth, that a sense of it will make a man to be ‘ weary and heavy laden ; ’ Matt. xi. 28. This oftentimes makes the inhabitants of Zion say they are sick ; for though an end be made of sin as to the guilt of it in the blood of Christ, yet by reason of our darkness, folly, and unbelief, and the hiding of the countenance of God, the conscience is oftentimes pressed with it, no less than if it lay indeed under the whole weight and burden of it.

I shall not instance in more particulars concerning this cause of want of rest, and disquietness ; the perplexity of temptations, buffetings, and winnowings of Satan, allurements and affrightments of the world, darkness and sorrows of unbelief, and the like, do all set in against us upon this account.

This in general is the first thing that the dismissed saints are at rest from : they sin no more, they wound the Lord Jesus no more, they trouble their own souls no more, they grieve the Spirit no more, they dishonour the gospel no more, they are troubled no more with Satan’s temptations without, no more with their own corruption within, but lie down in a constant enjoyment of one everlasting victory over sin, with all its attendants : saith the Spirit, ‘ They rest from their labours ; ’ Rev. xiv. those labours which make them faint and weary, their contending with sin to the utter-

most ; they are no more cold in communion, they have not one thought that wanders off from God to eternity : they lose him no more, but always lie down in his bosom without the least possibility of disturbance. Even the very remembrance of sin is sweet unto them, when they see God infinitely exalted, and admired in the pardon thereof. They are free from trouble, and that both as to doing, and suffering : few of the saints but are called out in one kind or another to both these. Every one is either doing for God, or suffering for God, some both do and suffer great things for him : in either of them there is pain, weariness, travail, labour, trouble, sorrow, and anxiety of spirit ; neither is there any eminent doing or working for God, but is carried on with much suffering to the outward man.

What a life of labour and trouble did our deceased friend lead for many years in the flesh ? how were his days consumed in travail ? God calling him to his foot, and exercising him to understand the sweetness of that promise, that they that die in him, shall have rest : many spend their days deliciously, with so much contentment to the flesh, that it is impossible they should have any foretaste and sweet relish of their rest that is to come.

The apostle tells us that there remains a rest for the people of God ; and yet withal, that they who believe are entered into that rest ; those who in their labours, in their travails do take in the sweetness of that promise of rest, do even in their labour make an entrance thereinto.

[2.] They rest from all trouble and anxiety that attend them in their pilgrimage, either in doing or suffering for God. Heb. iv. 10. 'They enter into rest, and cease from their work ;' God wipes all tears from their eyes, there is no more watching, no more fasting, no more wrestling, no more fighting, no more blood, no more sorrow, the ransomed of the Lord do return with everlasting joy on their heads, and sorrow and sighing fly away. There tyrants pretend no more title to their kingdom ; rebels lie not in wait for their blood ; they are no more awakened by the sound of the trumpet, nor the noise of the instruments of death : they fear not for their relations, they weep not for their friends, the Lamb is their temple, and God is all in all unto them. Yet,

(2.) This will not complete their rest, something farther is required thereto : even something to satisfy, everlastingly content, and fill them in the state and condition wherein they are. Free them in your thoughts from what you please, without this they are not at rest. This then you have in the second place, God is the rest of their souls ; Psal. cxvi. ‘ Return to thy rest, O my soul.’ Dismissed saints rest in the bosom of God, because in the fruition and enjoyment of him they are everlastingly satisfied, as having attained the utmost end whereto they were created, all the blessedness whereof they are capable. I could almost beg for liberty a little to expatiate in this meditation of the sweet, gracious, glorious, satisfied condition of a dismissed saint. But the time is spent, and therefore without holding out one drop of water to quench the feigned fire of purgatory, or drawing forth any thing to discover the vanity of their assertion, who affirm the soul to sleep, or to be nothing until the resurrection ; or theirs who assigning to them a state of subsistence and perception, do yet exclude them from the fruition of God, without which there is no rest, until the end of all, with such other by-persuasions, as would disquiet the condition, or abridge the glory of those blessed souls, which yet were a facile undertaking, I shall draw towards a close.

There are three points yet remaining. I shall speak only to the first of them, and that as an use of the doctrine last proposed, and I have done.

*Observation IV.* There is an appointed determinate season, wherein all things and persons, according to the will of God, will run into their utmost issue and everlasting condition.

Thou art going, whoever thou art, into an abiding condition, and there is a lot appointed for thee, wherein lies an estate everlastingly unchangeable. It is the utmost end whereunto thou art designed, and when once thou art entered into that lot, thou art everlastingly engaged : no more change, no more alteration, if it be well with thee, it will abide ; if otherwise, expect not any relief. In our few days we live for eternity, in our mutable estate we deal for an unchangeable condition. It is not thus only in respect of particulars, but God hath ‘ appointed a day, wherein he will judge all the world by the man whom he hath ordained.’



An end is coming unto all that whole dispensation under which we are. To you who by the riches of free grace have obtained union and communion with the Lord Jesus, rest and peace, when God shall everlastingly rain snares, fire and brimstone upon the workers of iniquity. Some mock indeed, and say, 'Where is the promise of his coming?' But we know, the 'Lord is not slack, as some men count slackness,' but exerciseth patience until the appointed season for the bringing about of his own glorious ends, which he hath determined concerning his creatures. Why should we then complain, when any one, perhaps before our expectation, but yet according to God's determination, makes an entrance into the end of all? All things work to that season. This state of things is not for continuance. That which is incumbent, is in this uncertain space of time allotted to us, to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure, as also to serve the Lord faithfully in our generations, wherein we cannot be surprised: we have an example in him who is gone before; it is true, the Lord Jesus is our primitive pattern and example: but those also who have followed him, wherein they have followed him, are to be eyed and marked as provocations to the same labour of faith and love, wherein they were exercised. And that this use may be made by this assembly, I shall add one word concerning him from whom is the occasion thereof.

Every man stands in a threefold capacity: natural; civil; religious. And there are distinct qualifications that are suited unto these several capacities.

1. To the first, as the ornaments and perfections of nature, are suited some seeds of those heroical virtues, as courage, permanency in business, &c. which being in themselves morally indifferent, have their foundations eminently laid in the natures of some persons, which yet hinders not, but that their good improvement is of grace.

2. To the second, or man's civil capacity, there are many eminencies relating as peculiar endowments, which may be referred unto the three heads of ability, faithfulness, and industry, that through them neither by weakness, treachery, nor sloth, the works and employments incumbent on men in their civil state and condition may suffer.

3. Men's peculiar ornament and improvement in their re-

ligious capacity, lies in those fruits of the Spirit which we call Christian graces: of these in respect of usefulness, there are three most eminent, viz. faith, love, and self-denial. I speak of them upon another account than the apostle doth, where he placeth hope amongst the first three of Christian graces. Now all these in their several kinds were as eminent in the person deceased in his several capacities, as perhaps is usually found in any one in a generation. My business is not to make a funeral oration, only I suppose that without offence I may desire, that in courage and permanency in business (which I name in opposition to that unsettled, pragmatistical, shuffling disposition which is in some men), in ability for wisdom and counsel, in faithfulness to his trust, and in his trust, in indefatigable industry in the pursuit of the work committed to him, in faith on the promises of God, and acquaintance with his mind in his mighty works of providence, in love to the Lord Jesus and all his saints, in a tender regard to their interest, delight in their society, contempt of himself and all his for the gospel's sake, with eminent self-denial in all his concernments, in impartiality and sincerity in the execution of justice, that in these and the like things we may have many raised up in the power and spirit wherein he walked before the Lord, and the inhabitants of this nation. This (I say) I hope I may speak without offence here upon such an occasion as this; my business being occasionally to preach the word, not to carry on a part of a funeral ceremony. I shall add no more, but commit you to him, who is able to prepare you for your eternal condition.