

Excerpts from *The Saints Everlasting Rest* by Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

Hebrews 4:9: “*There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.*”

Christian, if thou be once in heaven, thou shalt *sin* no more. Is not this glad news to thee, who hast prayed and watched against it so long? I know, if it were offered to thy choice, thou wouldst rather choose to be freed from sin, than have all the world. Thou shalt have thy desire. That hard heart, those vile thoughts which accompanied thee to every duty, shall be left behind for ever. Thy understanding shall never more be troubled with darkness. O that happy day, when error shall vanish for ever! when our understanding shall be filled with God himself, whose light will leave no darkness in us! We shall also rest from all the sin of our will, affections, and conversation. No more will we be oppressed with the power of our corruptions, nor vexed with their presence: no pride, passion, slothfulness, insensibility, shall enter with us; no strangeness to God, and the things of God; no coldness of affections, nor imperfection in our love; no inconstant walking, nor grieving of the Spirit; no scandalous action, nor unholy conversation: we shall rest from all these for ever. Then shall our will correspond to the divine will, as face answers face in a glass, and from which, as our law and rule, we shall never swerve. “For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.”

We shall rest from all our *doubts* of God’s love. It shall no more be said that “doubts are like the thistle, a bad weed, but growing in good ground.” They shall now be weeded out, and trouble the gracious soul no more. We shall hear that kind of language no more,

“What shall I do to know my state? How shall I know that God is my Father? that my heart is upright? that my conversion is true? that faith is sincere? I am afraid my sins are unpardoned; that all I do is hypocrisy; that God will reject me; that he does not hear my prayers. All this is there turned into praise.

We shall rest from all sense of *God’s displeasure*. Hell shall not be mixed with heaven. At times the gracious soul remembered God, and was troubled; complained, and was overwhelmed, and refused to be comforted; divine wrath lay hard upon him, and God afflicted him with all his waves. But that blessed day shall convince us, that though God hid his face from us for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on us.

We shall rest from all the *temptations of Satan*. What a grief is it to a Christian, though he yield not to the temptation, yet to be solicited to deny his Lord! What a torment to have such horrid suggestions made to his soul! such blasphemous ideas presented to his imagination! sometimes cruel thoughts of God, undervaluing thoughts of Christ, unbelieving thoughts of Scripture, or injurious thoughts of Providence! Satan hath power here to tempt us in the wilderness, but he entereth not the holy city; he may set us on a pinnacle of the temple in the earthly Jerusalem, but the New Jerusalem he may not approach; he may take us up into an exceeding high mountain, but the mount Sion he cannot ascend...

All our temptations from *the world and the flesh* shall also cease. Oh the hourly dangers that we here walk in! Every sense and member is a snare; every creature, every mercy, and every duty is a snare to us. We can scarce open our eyes but we are in danger of envying those above us, or despising those below us; of coveting the honors and riches of some, or beholding the rags and beggary of others with pride and unmercifulness. If we see beauty, it is a bait to lust; if we see deformity, it tempts us to loathing and disdain. How soon do slanderous reports, vain jests, wanton speeches, creep into the heart!

How constant and strong a watch does our appetite require! Have we comeliness and beauty? What fuel for pride! Are we deformed? What an occasion of repining! Have we strength of reason and gifts of learning? O how prone to be puffed up, hunt after applause, and despise our brethren! Are we unlearned? How apt then to despise what we have not! Ourselves are the greatest snares to ourselves. This is our comfort: our rest will free us from all these.

As we rest from the temptations, so shall we rest from the *abuses and persecutions* of the world. The prayers of the souls under the altar will then be answered, and God will avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth. This is the time for crowning with thorns; that is the time for crowning with glory. Now, “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;” then, they that suffered with him shall be glorified with him. Now, we must be hated of all men for Christ’s sake; then, Christ will be admired in his saints that were thus hated. We are here made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men: as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, men separate us from their company, and reproach us, and cast out our names as evil; but we shall then be as much gazed at for our glory, and they will be shut out of the church of the saints, and separated from us. We can now scarce pray in our families, or sing praises to God, but our voice is a vexation to them: how must it torment them, then, to see us praising and rejoicing while they are howling and lamenting! You, brethren, who can now attempt no work of God without losing the love of the world, consider, you shall have none in heaven but will further your work, and join heart and voice with you in your everlasting joy and praise. Till then, possess ye your souls in patience. Bind all reproaches as a crown to your heads. Esteem them greater riches than the world’s treasures. “It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with Christ.”

We shall then rest from all our sad *divisions* and unChristian quarrels with one another. Is it not enough that all the world is against us, but we must also be against one another? O happy days of persecution, which drove us together in love, whom the sunshine of liberty and prosperity crumbles into dust by our contentions! O happy day of the saints’ rest in glory, when, as there is one God, one Christ, one Spirit, so we shall have one heart, one church, one employment for ever.

Then we shall rest from all our own *personal sufferings*. This may seem a small thing to those that live in ease and prosperity; but to the daily afflicted soul it makes the thoughts of heaven delightful. O the dying life we now live! as full of sufferings as of days and hours! Our Redeemer now leaves this measure of misery upon us... But sin and flesh, dust and pain, will all be left behind together. O the blessed tranquillity of that region, where there is nothing but sweet continued peace! The poor man shall no more be tired with his labors: no more hunger or thirst, cold or nakedness: no pinching frosts or scorching heats. Our faces shall no more be pale or sad; no more breaches in friendship, nor parting of friends asunder; no more trouble accompanying our relations, nor voice of lamentation heard in our dwellings: God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. O my soul, bear with the infirmities of thine earthly tabernacle; it will be thus but a little while; the sound of thy Redeemer’s feet is even at the door.

And the last jewel of our crown is, that it will be an *everlasting rest*. Mortality is the disgrace of all earthly delights. How it spoils our pleasure to see it dying in our hands! But, O blessed eternity! where our lives are perplexed with no such thoughts, nor our joys interrupted with any such fears! Study frequently, study thoroughly this one word—eternity. What! To live and never die! To rejoice, and ever rejoice!”