

Time and the End of Time

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Discourses on Redeeming the Time
and Considering Our Latter End

John Fox



Soli Deo Gloria Publications
. . . for instruction in righteousness . . .

Time and the End of Time

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Publisher's Preface

Little is known about the author of this small volume. He is often confused with John Foxe, the famous author of the *Acts and Monuments* (known commonly as *The Book of Martyrs*), yet the preacher of the following discourse lived in a subsequent era of English history.

This latter Fox received a bachelor's degree from Cambridge in 1624. During the Puritan commonwealth, he was a vicar at Pucklechurch, Gloucestershire. After the Great Ejection in 1662, Fox became pastor of a Nonconformist congregation at Nailsworth.

In 1665, England was struck by a rampant plague, followed by the Great Fire of London in 1666. The death toll was staggering, and the events left sobering impressions on the population generally, as well as faithful pastors such as Fox. His sermons ring with the urgency of a watchman who sees death approaching as the common lot of sinful mankind. Thus it behooves us all to contemplate the tremendous value of time that we might heed the apostolic admonition to redeem the time (Eph. 5:16)—for “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

This reprint of the sermons is based on an early edition, issued around 1670. May this small volume prompt readers to “number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps. 90:12).

Redeeming the Time

Introduction

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

—EPHESIANS 5:16

In the beginning of this chapter, the apostle exhorts Christians to holiness in general by setting before them a perfect pattern: “Be ye...followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love” (Eph. 5:1–2). The favorites of heaven must imitate their Father and, like Gideon’s brethren, resemble the children of a king. The precept is, “Be ye holy, be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” [Matt. 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15–16]. Then he goes on to press this great duty more particularly on all in their several relations, which he urges by many arguments. And in the text he seems to point out the opportunity to put those and all other Christian duties into practice. “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time” [Eph. 5:15–16].

[Regarding the] explication of the words, time is taken under a double notion. There is a space of time, and there is the opportunity of time: *tempus longum* and *tempus commodum*.¹ Time and opportunity differ. Time is the duration or succession of so many minutes, hours, days, or years, one after the

1. Marginal note: Χρονος, *tempus, spatium temporis* [time, the space of time]. Καιρος *est opportunitas* [is opportunity].

other, from the beginning of a man's life to the end thereof: "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?" (Job 7:1, 14–15). Opportunity is the time apted² and fitted in order to this or that work or business—namely, a meeting of time and means together to effect the end. This is called the season or tempestivity³ of time, when time, tide, and wind meet and clasp together. "To every thing there is a season," or, opportunity of doing (3:1).

Time may be continued when the season of time is ended. The sails of time may be aloft when the gale of opportunity is lost. Every time is not a springtime, a seed time, a gaining time. Manna was not to be had but in the morning. The beauty of time is the opportunity of time. "He hath made every thing beautiful in his time" (Eccl. 3:11). This part of time we are to redeem.

Redeeming denotes the excellent worth and preciousness of time, a commodity to be valued above the gold of Ophir. Solomon bids us to "buy the truth" (Prov. 23:23). Our Lord counseled a miserable church to buy gold and white raiment (Rev. 3:18). And Paul exhorts us to buy the time, a jewel of that price, which must be redeemed at any rate. Base and vile things are not wont⁴ to be redeemed, but things of worth—namely, men's liberties, estates, lives, etc. So our precious time: "redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

The words contain two general parts: (1) an exhortation to duty, "redeem the time"; (2) the reason of it, "because the days are evil."

From the words, we may observe this doctrine, which will be the subject of my ensuing discourse:

2. *Apted*: made fit.

3. *Tempestivity*: timeliness.

4. *Wont*: accustomed or fitted.

Doctrine: The best of saints, or, the redeemed of God, have need to redeem the time.

This epistle was written to a very famous, flourishing church in the purest of times of the gospel, among whom there were rare and singular Christians. They were called “saints” and “faithful in Christ Jesus” ([Eph.] 1:1) and chosen of God in Christ “before the foundation of the world” (v. 4) and really converted and brought to a state of life. Moreover, they had learned the duty of mortification, one of the hardest lessons in Christianity (4:22), and were so sealed until the day of redemption (1:13–14) and had the earnest of their heavenly inheritance (4:30)—and yet they, whose attainments were so high, must redeem the time. The same thing is pressed in different terms (Eccl. 9:10). It is called working “while it is day” (John 9:4). In the handling of this proposition, I will show you:

1. When time may be said to be redeemed.
2. What time must be redeemed.
3. How time must be redeemed.
4. Why time must be redeemed.
5. Motives and [6.] directions to help you.

CHAPTER 1

When Is Time to Be Redeemed?

Answer: When time and duty, like those two twins Jacob and Esau, take hold one of another or, as two loving yoke-fellows, go hand in hand—when duty attends time, as the shadow the body or as the maiden her mistress.

This is to fill up time with duty and to take opportunity by the forelock or, in the scriptur[al] phrase, to do the work of the day in the day [John 9:4]. And to this end, opportunities or seasons are to be desired as they offer an occasion of service and of doing our duty. This we may see in holy David: “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD” (Ps. 122:1). When there was a way open to worship God in the beauty of holiness, David rejoiced to see the true worshippers improve their opportunity to go to that city, the name of which is Jehovah Shammah, “the LORD is there” (Ezek. 48:35). And the prophet Zechariah brings in the saints of God, rejoicing in the same things: “Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of Hosts: I will go also” (Zech. 8:21–22). The saints of old were wont to rejoice when the Sabbath came because of the holy and heavenly duties of that day. Opportunities and duty are always to be joined (Gal. 6:10). This is to live according to the will of God

(1 Peter 4:2) and to walk circumspectly, redeeming the time (Eph. 5:15–17).

When we are truly careful to make up former negligence with double diligence, redeeming the time, we recover our loss. Time, according to this phrase, seems to be taken captive, and we must redeem it.¹ Redemptions are made by purchase; to redeem a thing is to buy it for a price. The price we redeem it with is labor, travail, faithful and serious diligence, and greater activity and vigor in the prosecutions of our duty. When what of time or seriousness has been wanting in one day or duty is made up and supplied in the next, this is the way to repair our sad soul-damages. “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles” (1 Peter 4:3).

Christians, our sins have been many and mighty, but our services few and mean. Therefore, put the best leg before. Be not as the sluggard, like the door on the hinges, but as the sun in the heavens that rejoices to run his race. “The hand of the diligent maketh rich” (Prov. 10:4). I heard of one who, being a prisoner in a dark dungeon, when the light was brought to him for a little time to eat his diet would pull out his Bible and read a chapter, saying he could find his mouth in the dark but not read in the dark—an argument that he made, conscience of redeeming his time.

Sirs, to be watchful, diligent, laborious in the faithful improvement of all your time, talents, gifts, and graces is the thing here intended. The precept is for labor (Luke 13:24; 2 Peter 1:10). And the diligent in duty has the promise of glory (Heb. 11:6). “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life” (Rom. 2:7).

1. Marginal note: *Quicquid aetatis retro est, mors tenet* [Whatever of life is behind, death holds]. *Seneca in Epistle to Lucilius*.

CHAPTER 2

What Time Must Be Redeemed?

Answer: All time.

Time is so precious that not any of it must be lost. The whole time of our life must be employed either about our souls in the service of God or in the works of our callings, in order thereto. Particularly, (1) the time of youth; (2) the time of health and strength; (3) the time of affliction; (4) the time of the gospel; (5) the time of the Sabbath or the Lord's Day especially must be redeemed.

The Time of Youth Must Be Redeemed

The great God stands much on priority to have the first and the best: the first ripe fruits, the first that opens the womb. Oh then offer the Isaac of your youth, the spring and flower of your age to God, and stay not until the evil day. Begin first with Him from whom you had your beginning. Go about the grand affair and work of your dear and never-dying soul before you do engulf yourself in the cares of this world. Resolve to present the first ripe fruits to that good and gracious God, who desires the first ripe fruits. In the bright morning of your life, match yourself to the King of Glory and become His bride before you are deflowered and defiled by sin and the world. If the celestial seeds of grace are sown in the morning, the pleasant

and sweet flowers springing out of those seeds will invite the Lord Jesus to come and walk in His garden (Song 5:1). If you would be the temple of the Holy Spirit, let Him that made the house be the first and chief inhabitant. And suffer not your heart to be a habitation for dragons and devils, which will be your undoing to all eternity.

You young men and young women, know that the infinitely gracious God holds out the golden scepter and invites you to come to Him. The ruddy David, the child Samuel, and young Timothy, God calls (1 Sam. 1:11; 3:10; 1 Tim. 4:12). And the sooner you come, the better it will be. Say then, this instant, “Behold, we come. Thine we are; Thine we will be. Come now and take Thine own.” And God will accept you and take it kindly. His arms and bosom are open to you. “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals,” when the first fruits was holiness to the Lord (Jer. 2:2–3). If you would have the respect and kindness of God, offer to Him the firstlings of the flock (Gen. 4:4)—namely, your youthful days.

If a company of aged, feeble persons or cripples were tendered to the king for service, he would not accept them (1 Sam. 14:52; Mal. 1:8, 13–14). David from his youth and Josiah while he was young began to seek the Lord (Ps. 71:17; 2 Chron. 34:3). Young men, if you receive the seed of grace in the morning of your age, it will take the deepest root and impression on your hearts and cause you to bring forth fruit in old age. Cloth will keep color best that is dyed in the wool, and the vessel will scent longest of that liquor with which it is first seasoned. Oh, then, remember your Creator in the days of your youth (Prov. 22:6; Eccl. 12:1).

The Time of Health and Strength Is to Be Improved

You that are now strong and lively must not expect to be so always. You as well as others must count on disease, sickness,

weaknesses, which will confine you to your houses, chambers, and beds. Now then, while your strength and health of body and natural vigor are continued, be mindful of your work and time. The greatest duties and difficulties in heaven's way are set forth by striving, wrestling, fighting, running, which require the best of our time and most of our strength (Luke 13:24; 1 Cor. 9:24–25; Eph. 6:12; 1 Tim. 6:12). Can a sick and weak man run so fast as to obtain or so strive and conflict as to overcome, judge you? King Saul chose the strong and the valiant for his service. 'Tis the strong [who] must run the race (Ps. 19:5), and the young must overcome the evil one (1 John 2:14).

If a man had a business of great concernment or [a] matter of life and death requiring time, strength, and diligence for the doing of it, and [he] should omit it until he was stricken in years or till sickness or weakness invade him, everyone would be ready to charge him with folly. If a carrier among many stout, strong horses had one poor, lame, sick horse and should lay the burden of the greatest weight and worth on that poor, weak jade, we would conclude that either he was cruel or that he wanted the understanding of a man. This is our case. The great affair of immortal souls requires time, strength, diligence, and all little enough. And will we charge the whole stress of our everlasting state on a few days of sickness and weakness before our death? God forbid (Eccl. 12:3–4).

The Time of Affliction Must Be Redeemed

Christians, in the day of adversity we must consider Ecclesiastes 7:14. It was the time of Jacob's trouble when the apostle exhorted believers to redeem the time. God speaks by His rod as well as by His Word, to both which we must have an ear. God sometimes teaches His, as Gideon the men of Succoth (Judg. 8:16), with thorns and briars of the wilderness. Let the affliction be of whatever kind or degree—either on our persons, names,

estates, families, church, or kingdom—indeed, and of long continuance, we are to look on it as from God and for our good; for every affliction speaks to us in the language of Ehud to Eglon, “I have a message from God unto thee” [Judg. 3:20], and God will reckon with us for the rods He lays on us.¹ I will speak more to this in another place.

The Time of the Gospel Must Be Redeemed

Gospel time is our spiritual harvest, and it is notorious folly to sleep or loiter in harvest. The time of the gospel is a time indeed—namely, a time of light, a time of love, a time of life, a time of liberty (Matt. 4:16; 2 Tim. 1:10; Ezek. 16:8; Rom. 5:8; Isa. 61:1; John 8:36). Now, the trumpet of jubilee sounds, and all debts and mortgages may be taken up and released. Here is liberty for the poor captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. ’Tis now an “accepted time,” a “day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2), a time to accept or a time to be accepted,² a golden and glorious time indeed. Behold, now there is a broad and clear way to His mercy seat. The flaming sword is gone; the partition wall is down; all bars and gates are removed; an act of indemnity is proclaimed; and there is a free admission for all to come and be saved. Pardons are ready (Isa. 55:6–7).

Sinners, your dear Lord Jesus, the great peacemaker, is now an important suitor to your perishing souls—namely, an inviting, knocking, waiting, promising Christ (Prov. 1:22; 9:4; Isa. 65:2; Matt. 11:28; Rev. 3:20; Song 5:2; John 6:37).³

1. Marginal note: *Schola crucis est Schola lucis* [The school of the cross is a school of light]. *Luther, Psalm 94:12*.

2. Marginal note: *Tempus acceptum, or, tempus acceptabile* [A time accepted, or, an acceptable time]. *Beza in loc.* [on the same passage].

3. Marginal note: *Quod offertur gratia ex gratia Dei est, qui sua contuit rebus omnibus momenta, ut oblatam occasionum arripiamus* [What is offered is

The treasures of grace are opened and offered for sale on easy terms without money and without price (Isa. 55:1; Rev. 3:18). Oh make speed and come. Make the purchase. Buy the pearl of price that is better than rubies, and you will have a treasure in heaven. The favor of God, precious blood, white raiment, tried gold, and the eternal life of your never-dying souls are worth the having. Consider also that now the Holy Spirit calls and offers His assistance to close the bargain, to tie the marriage knot between Christ and your souls (Hebrews 3). If you lose this opportunity, you may never have the like. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Rev. 22:17).

The Time of the Sabbath or Lord’s Day Must Be Redeemed

We must have a special care of sanctifying that day, it being the Sabbath of the Lord our God. This golden day from morning to night must be spent in the service and worship of our Lord either in public, private, or secret duties; and no part of it must be lost. Take no liberty on that day for frothy, vain, and unprofitable discourse or recreations or to ride, buy, sell, or work. This dreadful, God-provoking sin of Sabbath-breaking is a sin in fashion. Hundreds in this nation serve the devil more on the Lord’s Day than any other day.⁴ Then, men are at leisure to serve the devil and satisfy their lusts and go to the alehouse or to exercise themselves in sports and pastimes. Oh that magistrates, ministers, masters of families, and parents would look to it (Neh. 13:17)! The Lord of the Sabbath commanded you that you and your son, your daughter, your manservant, and all within your gates keep that day holy [Ex. 20:8–10].

grace from the grace of God, who establishes his own moments in all things, that we might seize the offered occasion].

4. Marginal note: The youth that lately was hanged for murdering his fellow servant confessed that his Sabbath-breaking made way for all his other prodigious sins.

The Sabbath is called a holy convocation (Lev. 23:2), and the Lord of the day is an infinitely holy, just, and jealous God. The Sabbath heretofore was called the queen of days.⁵ In the New Testament, it is called the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10), a day in which we commemorate the greatest mercy—namely, the glorious resurrection of our crucified Lord—and that which the purest Christians in the purest times did carefully observe.

In the primitive times, a serious and strict observation of the Lord's Day was a trial or badge of Christianity. When the question was propounded, "Have you kept the Lord's Day?," the answer returned, "I am a Christian and cannot intermit it."⁶ It was a saying of an eminent divine that he would judge of a man's religion according to the reverence and care he had in keeping the Sabbath. Christians, you are to keep your Lord's rest and perform the holy duties of His worship cheerfully, reverently, spiritually (John 4:24). If ever you think to celebrate an eternal sabbath with God in glory, be careful of this duty. To enforce it, consider:

How strictly the holy God imposes it and to what end it is: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). This blessed day for communion with God is to be premeditated on before it comes. Therefore, in the evening before the Sabbath, let all your necessary occasions be done up that you may have nothing but what becomes the work of that day. Be like David's good man, ordering your affairs "with discretion" (Ps. 112:5), especially your spiritual affairs. If you expected the company of some worthy friend, would you be found in a sluttish⁷ posture or sweeping and cleaning your houses on that day and all out of order? On the Lord's Day, you should

5. Original: *regina dierum*.

6. Original: *Servasti Dominicum?...Christianus sum, intermittare non possum*.

7. *Sluttish*: lazy.

vehemently expect the approach and presence of the King of Glory. Therefore, make all ready to entertain Him.

Remember the excellent epithets and titles of this blessed day. It is called a high day, a holy day, “the holy of the LORD, honourable” (Isa. 58:13). Therefore, let it be redeemed. Lose no more Sabbaths.

Consider the blessings and soul benefits of that day if it be rightly observed. It is your Lord’s market day in the which you have the precious oil, the golden mines, and treasure of grace opened that day. There are spiritual dainties for your hungry souls to which you are by Christ invited that day (Isa. 55:1). The Holy Spirit does breathe and blow that day by the secret and sweet gales whereof saints mount up toward heaven. The great God comes down, and gracious souls ascend that day (Rev. 1:10). And the eunuchs that keep God’s Sabbaths have the promise of a name in His house forever (Isa. 56:4–5). I might add the severe threatenings and God’s singular judgments [are] on the profaners of the Sabbath or Lord’s Day. The man that was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day by an immediate command from God was stoned to death (Num. 15:32, 34–36).

CHAPTER 3

How Time Must Be Redeemed

1. By taking and improving all opportunities for the glorifying of God.
2. By laying hold on the present time, and now a day of grace, for settling and securing your everlasting state.
3. By improving the present means of grace for your speedy growth in grace.
4. By doing all the good you can to others while you may.
5. By laboring to keep up constant communion with God in holy duties.
6. By improving every providence and outward cross for inward and spiritual advantages.
7. By casting up your accounts every day that you may make even with God.
8. By laboring to order every day's work in reference to your last day that, having finished your work, you may be fit to leave this world.

By Taking and Improving All Occasions for the Glorifying of God

Dear Christians, this is your Father's business and the great errand for which you had your being. You were born and new born to serve the interest of the holy and blessed God

in the world. This is that glorious end for which you should spend your strength and time and lay out yourselves to the very utmost.¹ That which is the chief end of your life—namely, to display and propagate God’s glory in the world—must not be neglected. Other things are infinitely inferior and must be subordinated to this. For the thoughts and designs of serving the interest of your Lord is that which you must be always driving on in this evil world. God expects it. “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3).

God will be exalted in heart and in our life too. “I will be glorified,” says the Lord, “before all the people” (Lev. 10:3). One way or other, the great Creator will have glory by all His creatures. God made all things for Himself [Prov. 16:4]: the world to be a visible and wonderful declaration of His excellent glory so that it is His due debt—“Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name” (Ps. 29:1–2; 96:8). To walk with God in our whole course, to design His glory is the prime mark of our saintship and sincerity. This is the white in the mark we should aim at, the thing we should pursue resolutely, vigorously, with all our might. Whether we pray or preach or read or hear or celebrate Sabbaths or converse, exhort, or reprove, or indeed buy, sell, plow, sow, eat, drink—let it not be done for the world or the interest of the flesh. We should have such a high esteem of God and such strong desires and strong affections to Him that the pleasing, praising, and magnifying of God in all our ways might be our main endeavor.

Christians, you are chosen out of the world to be God’s witnesses. If you do not appear for God, His honor and interest, none will. “All,” says the holy apostle, “seek their own”

1. Marginal note: *Tempus non potest Deo consecrari, nisi quo modo redemptum* [Time cannot be consecrated to God, except the way it is redeemed]. *Calvin in loc.* [on the same passage].

(Phil. 2:21). But you are to deny and keep under self, which is directly opposite to the honor of your God. Wicked men are bold and resolute in a way of sin to bear up the interest of the prince of darkness, and will not you be as active for the interest of your Lord? The martyrs would rather die than dishonor God, who, burning with zeal to God's glory, would glorify Him in the very fire. God has made you honorable (Isa. 43:4), being kings and priests, and enrolled you among the firstborn that are written in heaven. You have a place in His heart and a name in His house. You are vessels of honor and will be honored that we might be to "the glory of his grace" [Eph. 1:6]. Your everlasting Father has marked you and set His stamp and seal on you and put a principle of life within you that you might love Him and live to Him. The man that refused to bear up his deceased brother's name was to have his face spit on in the face of the congregation (Deut. 25:9). But shame and everlasting contempt will be on their faces that will not stand up for the honor of the holy God (Dan. 12:2). Christians, 'tis the sin that reflects dishonor on God's name. Therefore, allow it not in yourselves and prevent it what you can in others. Remember your time and redeem God's glory. Your days are evil, and you have but a few days for this work. Do it, and God will own you and advance you to a kingdom.

Beloved in the Lord, though you differ in other things, agree in this to glorify God on earth "that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God" (Rom. 15:6), everyone that is godly crying out with holy David, "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together" (Ps. 34:3; see John 17; 1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 1:6). As many as are perfect will be thus minded (Phil. 3:15).

By Laying Hold on the Present Time, or Now-Day of Grace, for the Settling and Securing Your Everlasting State or Blessed Eternity

Your soul's concerns are the greatest, indeed, of infinite moment²; and the things of eternity claim a superiority. If you purpose to do your soul good, you must first seek the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33) and take the kingdom of heaven with violence (11:12). "Let me die the death of the righteous" or a "Lord have mercy on me" when you die will not do (Num. 23:10; Matt. 25:11). And know, sinner, it must be done in this day, now or never (Luke 19:42). While the door of grace is open, before the bridge is drawn and mercy gone (Isa. 55:6), this must be done.

By Complying with the Present Call of the Gospel in Closing Immediately with Jesus Christ and in Giving and in Resigning Yourselves Wholly to Him

This is that one thing necessary that must be done speedily to secure your soul, to provide for your everlasting welfare. Therefore, do not procrastinate or delay it for a world. 'Tis your grand affair that must make you or mar you to eternity. He that believes will be saved. He that believes not is condemned already (John 1:12; 3:36; 8:24). If you do not now embrace the Lord Jesus on the great and glorious terms of the gospel, you will as certainly be damned as if you were in hell among the devils already (2 Thess. 1:8–9; Heb. 2:3, 18). You that want Christ, will you welcome Christ, saying with your soul, "Come in Thou blessed of the Lord; enter Thou King of Glory" (Ps. 24:7)? "Thine is the kingdom. Take the throne. Sit on the chiefest chariot. Take up Thy lodging in my heart forever and suffer not the dead child to lie in the place of the living child

2. *Moment*: weight or importance.

and a dead world and damnable lusts, where my Lord should lodge.” Oh blessed day and happy hour in which the Heir of heaven and perishing sinners meet and are married! Here is the match for you! Will you renounce all others, sin, the devil, and carnal companions, and join yourself to the Prince of Life? Speak the word, and the work is done. Open the door, and He will certainly come in and take up His abode forever. All that the Father has given Him will come to Him, and him that comes He will in no wise cast out (Isa. 26:13; 44:5; John 6:37; Acts 16:30; 2 Cor. 8:5; Rev. 3:20).

By Repenting without Delay

This is the second great work in which you must make speed, for until this is done you are in danger every moment of dropping down to hell. Remember the sad story of the woman who, when her house was on fire, had her child burned while she was saving some of her goods. Sinners, your danger is great; your opportunities are flying; fly you as fast. Let me say to you as the angel to Lot when in danger of being burned: “Escape for your life. Stay not lest you be consumed” (Gen. 19:16–17). The life and salvation of your soul cannot be secured without this (Luke 13:3; Acts 11:18; 2 Cor. 7:10). Therefore, labor to know the plague of your heart (1 Kings 8:38) and plow up the fallow ground (Jer. 4:3–4). Sow in tears and set about it this instant before this day be ended, this sermon ended, lest it should be said of you as of that woman Jezebel: “I gave her space to repent, and she repented not” (Rev. 2:21). And so God’s fury “come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it” [Jer. 4:4].

*By Making It Your Great Business to Secure an Interest in Christ,
Getting Your Evidences for Heaven Bright and Clear*

Christians, till you have gotten pledges and tokens of God’s love to your souls, till you are assured of the truth of your faith

and the sincerity of your repentance and hereby of the pardon of your sin and of your interest in the Lord Jesus, you can have little comfort in your souls or boldness toward God. Therefore, with might and main, work out your salvation (Phil. 2:12). Make your calling and election sure [2 Peter 1:10] that on certain grounds you may say as the church, “The LORD is my portion, saith my soul” (Lam. 3:24). “Doubtless thou art our father” (Isa. 63:16). Or, as holy Job in his deep affliction, “I know that my redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25). “I am thine, save me” (Ps. 119:94). “Truly I am thy servant” [116:16]. “I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine” (Song 2:16).

Christians, this assuring faith is attainable. Pray for it and vigorously press after it that you may be sealed up to the day of redemption, that so an entrance may be ministered to you into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:10–11). And oh how well have they redeemed their precious time that have secured their never-dying souls. Know this: that assurance requires both diligence and perseverance. Therefore, you must be constant in the use of means and lay hold on every opportunity of enjoying the gospel. This our Lord commends in Mary, calling her attendance on the word preached a choosing the “good part” (Luke 10:42). There, you will taste the crystal streams and view the golden mines of sound doctrine and wells of salvation. This is the place of spiritual wonders where the dead are raised, the lepers cleansed, the eyes of the blind opened, and the devils ejected. Gospel ordinances are the golden galleries where the King of Glory walks, the bed where immortal souls are begotten unto God, and in which the broken hearts do travail till Christ is formed in them [Gal. 4:19]. Through these golden pipes, the water of life is poured out on thirsty, panting souls for the cheering of their spirits. Here is the doctrine preached and words whereby you must be saved (Acts 10). Here, Christ’s mother found Him,

it being the place where the Bridegroom and the bride meet and solace themselves together. Do not forsake the solemn assemblies. Remember what Thomas lost by being absent when Christ came. Oh come to the posts of Wisdom's doors and with empty pitchers set yourselves under the spouts of the sanctuary. 'Tis on these waters the angel moves, and souls are healed [John 5:4]. This is the school where all God's children are taught of God and instructed unto the kingdom of God.

By Improving the Present Means of Grace for Your Speedy Growth in Grace

[This is] so the grain of mustard seed might become a great tree (Matt. 13:32). The Christian's course is compared to a race, a walk, to the morning light (1 Cor. 9:24; Rom. 8:1). And therefore you must go on and be progressive while you live. Believers should be as greedy of grace as the men of the world are of gain, because one grain of grace is worth more than a house full of gold, indeed, better than rubies. You are compared to stars, to fruitful trees planted by the rivers of water. And you should glitter and shine in this dark night of hellish profaneness and live down and convince this accusing, debauched generation. The trees of the Lord should be "full of sap" (Ps. 104:16), being grafted into the true Olive. And under the sweet dews of heaven you should flourish in the courts of the Lord and bring forth fruits in old age (92:12-14).

Christians, keep your lamps burning and hold on your way that the day of grace may wax stronger and stronger. Make no stop, but strain to get and keep before, that you may win the prize. Growth in grace is required of the highest giant as well as of the lowest dwarf in grace. They say of the crocodile [that] he grows as long as he lives, and, where he ceases to grow, he ceases to live. How many poor, creeping Christians are there who can hardly keep life and soul together, being like the door on the

hinges (Prov. 26:14)? And why, but because they are come to a pitch, and past growth, as soon as sprung up above ground. If there be the truth of grace, there will be an endeavor after the strength of grace. Where there is life, there is growth (1 Peter 2:2). “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18).

Sirs, up and be doing. Press toward the mark. Add to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; to patience, godliness, that you be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Be you therefore steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. And if you do these things, you will never fall (1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Peter 1:5–8, 10).

By Doing All the Good We Can to Others While We Have the Opportunity

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men” [Gal. 6:10]. Hereby we imitate that character of divine goodness. “Thou art good, and doest good” (Ps. 119:68). “Let every one...please his neighbour for his good to edification” (Rom. 15:2). These four ways we must do good to others:

This Must Be Done Especially in Your Families

[It is] to them that are more immediately under your charge and for whom you must shortly give an account to the dreadful Judge of [the] quick and dead. If Christ be come to your heart, let religion be set up in your house without delay. If you are really gracious, be relatively good, seeking the profit of many “that they may be saved” (1 Cor. 10:33). Sirs, if you would not be guilty of soul-blood, soul-murder, resolve to set up the worship of God in your families and let family work stoop to family worship. Endeavor to teach your children and servants to know, obey, and serve the Lord, who is a rewarder of them

that diligently seek Him. If you are the children of faithful Abraham, do as he did and walk in his path (John 8:39). The holy heart-searching God witnesses of Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD" (Gen. 18:19).

'Tis a great trust to have the charge and trust of souls. Therefore, let not your children and servants live as they list³ but command them out of the ways of sin, which will certainly bring them to hell. Oh that parents and masters of families would take up holy Joshua's resolution: "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15). But on the contrary, many seem, as it were, to have banished God and the practice of piety out of their houses, as if parents and children, masters and servants were resolved to serve the devil and to go to hell (John 8:44). The neglect of family duties is a dreadful and provoking sin, and that (as a godly minister said) which will untile⁴ the house and cause God to rain curses on the table. Read and tremble at the prophet's imprecation: "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name" (Jer. 10:25). How many prayerless husbands do give occasion to their wives to say to them, as Zipporah to her husband, "A bloody husband art thou to me" (Ex. 4:25)? Your wives, children, servants will sadly bewail it and cry out, living or dying, "Oh that ever we were married to such husbands or born to such parents, bound to such masters that had no regard to serve God or care of souls!" If you are Christians indeed, let a constant course of reading the Word, catechism, and prayer be kept up in your houses; for when death has separated you and your relations, it will

3. *List*: wish.

4. *Untile*: raze.

grieve you to the heart that you did no more to further the good of their precious souls (Acts 10:2, 30).

By Taking All Occasions Wherever You Are or Come to Further the Conversion of Perishing Sinners

If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious and are taken out of the iron furnace as fire brands, out of the burning, where, where are your pity and bowels to souls in peril? Can you be contented to be happy and to go to heaven alone and not endeavor by your prayers, counsels, and examples to persuade and draw others into heaven's way (Jude 22–23)? Wicked men are active for the devil, who, like snails, leave their slime behind them wherever they come and are emptying the poison of sin one into the other and so furthering their damnation. What multitudes do you see weltering in their blood and making posthaste to hell, whose desperate and deplorable case should excite your compassion and cause you to speak a word in season for their salvation?

Your dear Lord, whom you would imitate, went about doing good (Acts 10:38). He improved His opportunity to convert a notorious sinner (John 4). Though weary and thirsty, [He] was not careful of hasting⁵ the meat because He preferred the opportunity to bring her soul out of Satan's snare and to save her. When at your tables or buying and selling or travelling, opportunity may be taken to speak of God and the things of God and to leave some conviction on the company. Thus, Philip, falling in with the eunuch while he was riding on his way homeward from Jerusalem, closed with him and was an instrument to save the soul of him he never saw before (Acts 8). And by the heavenly discourse which dropped from the mouth of Mr. Carter, pastor of Brainford in Suffolk,

5. *Hasting*: rushing.

a gentlewoman was converted while she was waiting on him in his chamber, warming his bed. A word spoken in season through God's blessing may save a soul. And it is our duty to endeavor it. Mr. Ignatius Jordan of Exeter was exceedingly instrumental this way, who would go from house to house to put his neighbors in mind of their souls' concerns. Holy David was not afraid or ashamed to speak of God before kings and to tell what God had done for his soul. And, said he, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Ps. 51:13). For "he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death" (James 5:20).

When at any time your neighbors are sick and under the hand of God, take that opportunity to visit them, to put them in mind of death and judgment, and to make them sensible of the necessity of faith and repentance, without which there can be no hope of heaven. Our proverb is to strike while the iron is hot. On a bed of languishing, when death looks men in the face, they seem serious and fit to receive the impression of faithful counsel for their soul. To which, join serious prayer, for "the prayer of faith," says the apostle, "will save the sick" and may save your soul (James 5:15).

*By Provoking and Encouraging Our Fellow Brethren
in the Way to Heaven*

We must "exhort one another daily, while it is called To day" (Heb. 3:13). And provoke one another "unto love and to good works...and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (10:24-25). Wicked men and the children of the devil have their go with us and do stir up one another in the way to hell. And will not saints edify and build up one another in their most holy faith (Rom. 14:15, 19; 1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:29; 1 John 3:11; Jude 20)? "They that feared the LORD spake often one to another" (Mal. 3:16). Christians ought and should spend

that time in serious and profitable discourse. Say with the man after God's own heart, "Come...all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul" [Ps. 66:16]. That which you have seen and heard, you must declare one to another (1 John 1:3). Hereby be helping forward toward heaven and comforting one another by the comfort wherewith [we] ourselves are comforted of God (2 Cor. 1:4). "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32).

*We Must Do Good to Others by Distributing to Their
Outward Wants and Necessities*

And hereby [we must] lay up a treasure in heaven before our treasure in earth fail, and we lose both (Matt. 19:21). This is to honor the Lord with your substance (Prov. 3:9). This is to make friends with the unrighteous mammon and to "provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not" (Luke 12:33; [16:9]). This duty must not be forgotten (Heb. 13:16), because 'tis a sowing of seed (2 Cor. 9:6). And it will spring and bring forth a crop or harvest in this or the other world (Eccl. 11:1, 6). God will not forget it (Heb. 6:10). The Lord Jesus will certainly reward it (Matt. 25:40). A "well done" from Christ hereafter will compensate all the service of well-doers here (v. 21).

**By Laboring to Keep Up Constant Communion
with God in All Holy Duties**

Christians, you may lose time in the very service of God if you are not careful therein to converse with Him. Take heed of a slight spirit in serious performances. God looks on the heart, and most there. Some serious preparation is necessary before you approach the presence of the high and holy God. Joseph shaved himself before he would come into Pharaoh's presence. Let your heaven-born souls in every duty with the

lovesick spouse go out to meet your Lord and take up with nothing else. 'Tis not the picture of the husband but the presence of the husband that can satiate the truly loving spouse. It is a blessed sight to see souls working toward God, gasping and panting after the Lord Jesus Christ (Ps. 42:1–2).

Oh labor for such a frame of heart and bewail a narrow and contracted spirit! Do not perform duties for duties' sake so as to make duties the end of duties, but as a medium, by which your soul may draw near to God and meet with Him. The countenance and presence of God in a duty are the very suburbs of glory, indeed, the very "gate of heaven" (Gen. 28:17). Let this be in your thoughts and the very purpose of your heart and expect it vehemently in every access to God. Let your soul follow hard after God and say, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life" (Ps. 27:4; 84:2).

Duties are only the outward court, but the form, shell, and carcass of religion, as pipes without water, breasts without milk, as sails without wind, or as a body without a soul that has no life. The increase of your grace and holiness depends on your acquaintance and communion with the God of grace. It was Moses's being on the mount that made his face to shine, and the king's being at the table that caused the church's spikenard to send forth the smell thereof (Song 1:12). The presence of the glorious God on a Sabbath, the presence of God in prayer or at a sacrament will be to your soul as marrow and fatness and that which will make your hands to drop with myrrh and your fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh. Thus it was with the spouse when her beloved put in "his hand by the hole of the door" (Song 5:4–5).

By Improving Every Providence, Every Comfort, Every Cross for God's Glory and Our Own Spiritual Advantage

God does nothing in vain, for He has a peculiar respect to the good of His people in all His dispensations. He does time and measure and order every dark and afflicting providence for His church's advantage (Jer. 24:5; Rom. 8:28; Heb. 12:10–11). God's chastening and teaching commonly go together. Therefore, it is we [who] must hear the rod, "and who hath appointed it" (Mic. 6:9). The rod has a voice. Beasts may feel the rod, but the believer hears the rod. God's rod should make us, like Aaron's rod, bud, blossom, and bring forth the "peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11). Now, if you would be bettered by affliction, endeavor to do three things:

1. To understand the meaning or mind of God in them, for what sins committed or duties neglected they are sent. Afflictions are God's messengers, and we should never be at quiet till we know their errand (Job 10:2).

2. See the hand of God in all those afflictions. So did David and holy Job (Ps. 39:10; Job 1:21; Hos. 6:1).

3. Labor to answer the end of God in your straits and troubles that you might be made more humble, more holy, more heavenly than before, that we may say and find that it has been good for us to be afflicted. We have as much reason to seek unto God for a blessing on our daily rod as on our daily bread.

Time Must Be Redeemed by Casting Up Your Accounts Every Day and So to Make Even with God and Not Get Further into His Debt

This will be the way to get acquaintance, to procure a pardon before you are called and forced to an account. Secret duties, if well done, are the sweetest duties and yet sadly neglected by saints themselves. You should retire every night and spend a little time in self-examination. And when you sit alone,

commune with your hearts and call over the passages and actions of the day past. We read (Gen. 24:63) that Isaac went out in the evening-tide to meditate—a precious duty, but rarely practiced. Christians should spend void spaces of time in ejaculatory⁶ prayer and holy meditation. And oh how hard it is to ascend this mount of heavenly meditation! 'Tis very easy and delightsome to think of the world, the pleasures of sin, friends, riches, worldly business. But to meditate on God, heaven, eternity, the insufficiency and vanity of the creature, the bitterness of sin, the certainty of death and judgment (the very inwards of religion) is very difficult. Before you lie down on your beds at night, call yourselves to an account by such questions as these:

1. I have lived many years in this world. What have I been doing all my days? Have I answered the end of my being?
2. Have I had a holy awe of God in the midst of the worldly business of this day? What thoughts of death and judgment have I had? Where has my heart been?
3. How have I performed duties this day? What have been the sins of this day, the mercies of this day, that I may beg the pardon of the one and bless God for the other?
4. What assistance and communion with God have I had this day in the duties of His worship? Have not God and my soul been strangers this day and many days together?

6. *Ejaculatory*: spontaneous.

5. What have I done or spoken for God and His glory this day in my family or elsewhere? Have I demeaned⁷ myself like a child of God this day?

This is to make religion our business or to walk in the fear of the Lord all the day.

Improve Your Time by Endeavoring to Order Every Day's Work with Reference to Your Last Day

The end of every duty and the great reason of redeeming time lies here—namely, that we may be fit to die and stand before God. Therefore must we glorify the infinite, holy God and make Him our friend. Hence it is that we must secure our souls and speedily get into Jesus Christ and grow in grace, do good to others, call ourselves to an account, and clear our title unto heaven, that all our work may be done up while it is day, and none left to do, let death call when it will.

7. *Demeaned*: conducted.

CHAPTER 4

Why Time Must Be Redeemed

The reasons why our precious time must be redeemed are (1) because the days are evil [and] (2) because it is a considerable part of our Christian wisdom.

Reason 1: Because the Days Are Evil [Eph. 5:16]

This is the apostle's argument to enforce the duty. Precious time and evil days run parallel. Therefore, no part of a little time must be lost. I will instance in a few particulars to make it appear.

The tares of false doctrine, or, diabolical, blasphemous, damnable opinions do abound. How do the devil's agents endeavor to raze and undermine the very foundations and the principles of the Christian faith? Those old and damnable heresies that have been condemned and expunged out of the church of God are greedily embraced and swallowed down by more than a few (2 Tim. 3:1; 4:3; 2 Peter 1:12). "Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness" (2 Peter 3:17; 2 Tim. 1:13).

Men's flagitious¹ lives and most prodigious sins make the day still evil. What execrable abominations are there

1. *Flagitious*: criminal.

committed on the stage of this evil world? Iniquity abounds; wickedness is in credit; and religion, under disgrace. Many hate the power of godliness but are not ashamed to wear the devil's livery. May we not complain with the prophet and say, as Hosea 4:1–3, "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying and killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break out, and blood touches blood. Therefore will the land mourn." And, as Isaiah 59:12, 15, "For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us... truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey." And Amos 5:10, 13, "They hate him that rebuketh in the gate...it is an evil time."

Many are backslidden and apostatize. How are the mighty fallen! The falling-sickness has been an epidemical disease. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt. 24:12; Jer. 2:2; 2 Tim. 1:15; Rev. 2:4).

Does not God frown and threaten to remove the candlestick and leave us in darkness (Amos 8:9, 11; Rev. 2:5)?

How are the family of God and friends of Christ divided and subdivided one from another! Moab and Ammon, Herod and Pilate can unite against Christ and His interest, when Christ's little flock are at a distance one to the other (1 Cor. 3:3–4). And when it thus comes to pass, the days are evil, and our time had need be redeemed.

Reason 2: Redeeming the Time Will Render Us Truly Wise

"See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time" (Eph. 5:15–16; Eccl. 6:4). The wise man's heart, says Solomon, discerns both time and judgment [8:5]. To work while it is day and to do a great deal of work in a little time commends the wisdom of the agent. Whatever learning, parts, endowments men have, they are not wise unless they redeem the time. The men of Issachar were of great account with David

because they had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do (1 Chron. 12:32). The wise God, in whose hands is our time, taxes the Jews for fools, “not observing the time” (Jer. 8:7–8). And so does our Lord Jesus the Pharisees (Matt. 16:2–3). Therefore, redeeming of time is called “walking in wisdom,” as the apostle expresses it (Col. 4:5).

The Application

Use 1: Meditation

First, if time must be redeemed, we must infer that surely:

There is an eternity. Let all the wasters of time count on it. It is as certain as anything in this world that there is another world. You may venture your lives, your souls, and all on the truth of it. Why should the blessed apostle Paul press believers so strictly to redeem time but in order to their everlasting welfare? Assure yourself of it and believe it as firmly as if both eternities did now present themselves to your bodily eyes and you did see the devils and reprobates in their chains of darkness and hear them cry and roar in those eternal flames. And also see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the saints departed on the throne, singing the song of Moses and the Lamb. This is that which is either believed or feared by the best and worst of men. Oh that it might have a deep and lasting impression on all your hearts!

The opportunity of time is a very precious privilege. To have a gale of opportunity to convey us to glory or the white flag on the wall, inviting us to our work to sue out our pardon before 'tis too late—time is a rich, invaluable treasure, and yet a transient treasure.² Time (God's post) runs apace, indeed, flies as it were on eagles' wings, and will be gone. Time is compared

2. Marginal note: *Punctum est quod vivimus, et puncto minus* [A moment is what we live, and less than a moment].

to golden sands running between two eternities, and 'tis an infinite mercy they are still running, that you have a day to work out your salvation, to agree with your adversary while he is in the way [Matt. 5:25; Phil. 2:12]—namely, to make up the breach between God and your soul (Rev. 2:21). The continuance of time is very uncertain. The time is short (1 Cor. 7:29). The whole is but a span, a very little space [Ezra 9:8]. 'Tis but a few days more, and then the last day; a few hours more, and then your departing hour; a few breathings more, and then your last breath.

Time, as precious as it is, and which should be redeemed at any rate, is often let slip. “What will we do to pass away the time?” is common in some men’s mouths. It is a commodity that lies on their hands. They know not what to do with it. How profuse and prodigal are most of this treasure who make not improvement of it?³ How often has opportunity come to us and waited on us, but very few are found to lay hold on it? To how many time wasters may that killing text, Luke 19:41–42, be applied? “And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept”—He could not speak it without tears, saying—“If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

Spiritual sloth, whereby we lose so much of our precious time—it is a sore evil and very dangerous. “Slothfulness,” Solomon says, “casteth into a deep sleep” (Prov. 19:15). The slothful man is like the door on the hinges (26:14). The slothful is brother to the great waster (18:9). Therefore, be not slothful (Rom. 12:11; Heb. 6:12). We read that Joshua said to the sun, “Stand still” [Josh. 10:12], but God never said to the soul, “Stand still.” Religion requires action, labor, diligence; for it does not consist

3. Marginal note: *Non exiguum temporis habemus, sed multum perdimus* [We do not have a lack of time, but we waste much]. *Seneca*.

in airy, empty notions and speculations of the head but in the exercise of the mind and heart.⁴ Habits must be exerted; grace, improved. Heaven (that is, all uphill) must be strived for and gotten, as it were, by force and victory. 'Tis a shameful and deformed sight to see a man professing godliness in a lethargy and not prosecuting his duty. Cast off your lazy and dull spirit and temper, lest you be found that wicked, slothful, and unprofitable servant, who must be cast into utter darkness (Matt. 25:26, 30). Let me say to them as the Danites to their brethren, having spied out a good land, "Are you still? Arise and be not slothful to go and possess the land!" (Judg. 18:9). The heavenly country is before you. Arise and work and lose it not for want of labor. Let not spiritual sloth by eating out your time hinder your work and rob you of your wages (Rev. 3:11).

If the best of saints should redeem their time, what have sinners need to do? You that have been slumbering and sleeping all your time and not gone one step in the way to heaven but in the way to hell—[you] had need be up and doing, or else you will be eternally undone. While it is called today, "if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" [Heb. 3:7–8]. Do not spend so freely of this swift and precious stream of time, every drop of which has an influence on eternity. "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.... The night is far spent, the day is at hand...cast off the works of darkness, and... put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13:11–14).

4. Marginal note: *Exigua pars est vitae, quem nos vivimus* [The part of life that we live is short].

If time and every part and moment of it must be improved, this serves to confute those that reproach serious diligence in duty as a needless thing. If the business of our immortal souls did not require great care and diligence, why does Paul here enjoin us to walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise? Christians, 'tis your wisdom to know your work and the time to do it. There is no trifling about eternity. Now is the day for the things of your peace. Let it not be hid from your eyes. It will be very sad when you are passing into the other world to see that all your lifetime you have been sowing the wind.

Use 2: Examination

Try whether you are redeemers of time or not. Reflect on what I have said, and your conscience will tell you [whether or not] you have spent most of your time in sin and vanity. How fruitful are your duties? Are your hours for God? Do time and duty go hand in hand? May you not cry out many a time, "Daily, I lose a day"? Examine yourselves. Do not silence or stop the mouth of conscience. If so, it will cry aloud another day.

Let me ask you these few questions:

1. Have you seriously bewailed the loss of time and begged the pardon of it?

2. Have your souls sincerely closed with Jesus Christ and freely and fully given up and resigned yourselves to Him to be His forever?

3. Do the great concerns of God's glory and your salvation bear down all before them? Can you say, "Though I follow my calling and take care for my family, yet I am most solicitous about my everlasting condition"? Whether they are pleasures or profits, I can say, "Pleasures of sin be gone; world stand by. There is a God to serve and honor. I have a soul. [I] must be sanctified and saved. I have a short time to redeem. I have a debt to pay, an account to give, a sentence to receive, an

eternity to live. This is not to be slighted. I must and will save my soul. Hell is most intolerable and eternal.”

4. Will you now promise and stand to it that for the future you will trade more for eternity and get better evidences for heaven? Go about the work of faith and repentance speedily, lest death should call, and you not be ready.

Use 3: Of Lamentation

That professors should be so far from redeeming of time or of doubling their diligence that they neglect their duty—I may cry out with the prophet, “Call for the mourning women,” for who is not guilty in this land (Jer. 9:17; Amos 5:16)? Sirs, for this should our souls mourn in secret places, the serious consideration of which is enough to fetch blood from our hearts and floods of tears from our eyes. How little care is taken in spending that well which, when it is gone, we have no hope it can be restored to us again? Do you not complain of the want of time, seeing you waste time?

There are many frivolous excuses. The servant will say that he has a hard, cruel master. The wife complains of her wicked husband; the child, of his ungodly father; another, of the poverty of his family. He can spare no time. Whoever pretends the want of time, let me tell you: you have a carnal, dead, sinful, slothful heart, the cause of all. Have you not time for every other thing—namely, a time for eating, drinking, sleeping, potting, piping, playing—and none for heaven? Can you rise early, go to bed late, and eat the bread of carefulness to get the meat that perishes, and find no time for God and your souls? Will this excuse you another day, you careless, ignorant, deluded soul? Your corn, your cattle, your sheep, your swine, your hawks, your horses and dogs are cared for; but for the better part, there is no care at all. Will you tell the great and terrible Judge at the last day, “I would have been saved,

but I had not time"? There are many that eat their bread by the sweat of their brows, that take time for their souls who will be brought in as witnesses against you at the last day. Will you squander away your time and the day's evil, and opportunity for your souls hardly come at? Oh consider it is high time to awake out of sleep.

Use 4: Exhortation to Redeem Time

You have heard what it is to redeem time, and how time must be redeemed. Now let all resolve without delay to put this so necessary duty into practice. Let young ones resolve on it, and the middle aged with the hoary heads. Tender to your God the cream and flower of your age and time and think it not too soon. In things of far less moment, you are for haste and speed.

If you were starving for want of bread, you would think every hour long till you had a supply. If your bodies were tortured and tormented with pain and sickness, would you think that ease and health might come too soon? If a man were in the sea near sinking, can a boat come too soon? Or can a condemned malefactor have his pardon too soon? Have you lived without God as Satan's slave and in danger of dropping into hell fifteen or twenty years? And can you get into Christ to secure your immortal soul too soon? Have you not been the devil's too long already? Suppose you had died in your Christless state—where had your soul been? Is it not better to be the Lord's servant than Satan's slave?

Ask the godly man that has made trial, and he will tell you. The sooner you are in a state of grace, the fitter you will be for glory. Make speed in your work. Do your spiritual business. Your wages are sure, and you will be blessed. Consider [that] there was never anyone [who] repented (living or dying) [but] that they were the Lord's and converted betimes.

And for you that have passed the time of youth in the satisfying [of] youthful lusts and lived, it may be, thirty, forty, or fifty years in a course of sin and vanity—is it not more than time for you to bethink yourselves? In so many years you have made sad work. Who can tell how often you have offended, that have been profane swearers, drunkards, liars, Sabbath-breakers, so long? If you were certain of having so many years to come, yet the devil, the world, and your hellish lusts have had half your time. Oh let the time past suffice. Know your times are in God’s hands (Ps. 31:15), so that you are not certain of a day to come. Therefore, begin and make speed in your work.

And for the gray headed, against whom death has raised his batteries, you can have but a few sands in your glass. Your departing hour cannot be far. Your candle is within the socket, and it may be is come to a stinking snuff. Do you not see the keepers of the old rotten house begin to tremble, and the strong men bow themselves? Expect [with] the next blast the house to fall. If you that are leaning on your staves⁵ and looking through your spectacles, being ready to enter on eternity, do not mind your work immediately—woe, woe be to you forever. If God should work a spiritual miracle in converting and pardoning an old grey-headed sinner that has been idle till the eleventh hour (Matt. 20:6), would it not be matter of amazement and wonder to men and angels? For the devil to be cast out of possession after he has been an inhabitant three-score years and more, for such a one to be born again would be strange indeed. I have heard of an old man who, being really converted not long before his death, caused this to be written on his tomb: “Here lies a very aged man of THREE YEARS OLD.” He reckoned his time and life before as lost and worth nothing.

5. *Staves*: staffs.

CHAPTER 5

Motives to Redeem Time

Now that you who have put off God and hazarded your souls so long already might lose no more time, consider these motives:

1. The present time is God's time and must be yours.
2. God the righteous Judge will reckon with you for your times.
3. You have solemnly promised to redeem it.
4. Men take and improve opportunity for other things.
5. Satan, your deadly enemy, is always busy and will lose no time.
6. Saving grace is an active and springing principle.
7. Time once had and lost cannot be recalled.
8. Consider how they prize time that have lost it.
9. God has joined time and duty together.
10. On this moment of time, eternity depends.

Motive 1

Consider the present time is God's, and it must be yours. Do you not hear the Holy Spirit say, "It is now high time to seek the Lord" (Hos. 10:12), and calling to you? Delays and laziness are the two great gulfs in which multitudes of souls are drowned and perish. How many are now in hell that purposed

and promised to turn to God (as you do) hereafter? Oh fear and tremble, lest it should be your case. To enforce this, take these few hints:

The present time has most precepts. And God's commands, like warrants in the king's name, must be obeyed on sight thereof. We say, "Must is for the king." If you are young, read Ecclesiastes 12:1, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." "To day if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart" [Ps. 95:7–8]. First seek the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33). "You must not stay long" (Hos. 13:13). Bless God and wonder the golden thread of precious time is spun out so long.

It has most promises, and they are great and precious. "I will receive you," says the Lord (2 Cor. 6:17). "They that seek me early shall find me" [Prov. 8:17]. The present time is an accepted time, in which God may be found (Ps. 32:6). Now God calls (Heb. 3:7), and you may come and [be] welcome (John 6:37). And it will be a matter of unspeakable comfort to a man, dying and looking into eternity, to know he has done the work for which he had his life and time.

You have the best examples, and 'tis your duty to imitate and follow them who are gone to heaven before. Your dear Lord would lose no time: "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day" [John 9:4]. When faithful Abraham was to offer his son Isaac, he made haste. He rose early in the morning (Gen. 22:3). Mary Magdalene came early in the morning to inquire after and to see the Lord Jesus, whom her soul loved (Mark 16:2).

Motive 2

God the righteous Judge will reckon with you for your time, not only for your health, wealth, strength, parts, graces, memories, but for every minute of your time. If at the Day of Judgment we must give an account for every idle word, much more for so

great a talent, so rich a treasure as time. A heathen could say that every wise man must give an account of his business and of his idleness.¹ You may, like fools, waste your time, neglect your duty, and stand out against the call of God; but it will cost you dearly. “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee unto judgment” (Eccl. 11:9).

The great Landlord of your time is at great expense to continue it. Those luminaries of heaven over your heads (and, principally, the prince of all the lights of heaven, the sun, that glorious and mighty giant, the prince and crown of all corporeal creatures) do tire and waste, as it were, their celestial vigor to beget and give time. Time is so rich a jewel that God would have no man value it to another. If one man had hurt another, he was to pay both for his cure and loss of time (Ex. 21:18–19). So must you [pay] at the great day of account for all your time, for every sermon you have heard, for every Sabbath and sacrament you have had all your days.

Motive 3

You have all promised to redeem your time. The vows of Jehovah are on you. Say with David, “I will pay my vows” [Ps. 116:14, 18]. If the godly man will perform his promise to his hurt (Ps. 15:4), much more should you for your profit. Take the counsel of the wise man: “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it...pay that which thou hast vowed. Better it is that thou shouldst not vow, than...vow and not pay” [Eccl. 5:4–5]. How often you have engaged yourselves to leave your known sins and to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world, let conscience witness. If you that have resolved

1. Original: *Tam otii, quam negotii, rationem reddere.*

to read, pray, sanctify the Sabbath, etc., should still waste and trifle away the time, it will not only be a breach of promise but a sin against life, for which your heart will reproach you. And if your heart condemn you, “God is greater than [your] heart, and knoweth all things” (1 John 3:20). Remember the promises you did make at such a sacrament, or when struck at heart by such and such a sermon, or when death was in the family, or yourself near to it. And defer not to perform your covenant. God, who is a God of truth, will not be mocked; and you will know ’ere it be long. Jephthah would perform his vow to God. “I have,” said he, “opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back” (Judg. 11:35). Herod, for his oath’s sake, murdered John the Baptist (Matt. 14:9–10). How many times have you engaged to dedicate and devote yourself to God and His service? Therefore, say, “Lord, for my promise sake I will sacrifice myself and become Thine, redeeming my time for Thy glory and mine own salvation.”

Motive 4

Consider [that] men take and improve opportunities for other things. The fittest and best time is taken for buying, selling, plowing, sowing, and gathering into barns, and especially in evil and hard times. Men will rise early, run, ride, and “labor in the very fire,” as the prophet speaks [Hab. 2:13]. Redeeming the time—’tis a metaphor taken from merchants that will be early in the market, lest the opportunity of buying the best commodities should be lost. The proverb is that time and tide stays for no man, and that we must make hay while the sun shines. There is none but the sluggard [who] will sleep in harvest. The diligent husbandman will not lose a day then. Christians, in this great affair of your precious, immortal, and never-dying souls, do as men about other things. Millers and mariners observe and improve every gale of wind. “Yea, the

stork in the heaven, the turtle, the crane, and the swallow, know and observe the time of their coming” (Jer. 8:7). They that say, “Today or tomorrow, we will go into such a city and buy and sell and get gain” (James 4:13), will, as we say, turn every stone and lose no time to buy a good bargain, to make a rich purchase. And will not we redeem our time and make the best of our spiritual markets to make provision for our souls that are worth more than all the world?

Motive 5

Satan, that enemy and grand soul-deluder, is always busy. He is an active devil, and he loves to find us idle. Christians, this old serpent is never more at work than when we are idle, for idleness lays a man open to all his hellish snares and temptations. And then if temptations come, you are out of God’s way; and if Satan finds you on his ground, he will be too hard for you. The apostle tells us he goes about and still offers temptations for the wasting of our time. This roaring lion has a large circuit, for ever since he was cast out of heaven he has been going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it (Job 1:7). His grand design is to devour (1 Peter 5:8). This black prince loves to prey on precious souls, the soul being that sweet morsel he is still gaping at. This adversary has his several walks. He is in the shop, in the market, in the street, in the chamber, in the closet, and everywhere where sin is. And he is also in the congregation among the assemblies of the saints, when they are about spiritual service. When Joshua the high priest stood before the Lord, Satan was standing at his right hand to resist him (Zech. 3:1). This deadly enemy was with Christ and His disciples at the Passover, for there he entered into Judas (John 13:26–27). Therefore, Christians, we have need to work and watch too.

The devil that hates you and all mankind does bestir himself. He goes forth into the broad way of profaneness, and there he tenders and tempts men with sensual objects. And he enters into the bypath of error, appearing as an angel of light, and entices wanton wits to suck down the poison of his damnable doctrine. And when once he has injected his poison into the head, how much time is spent in writing and disputing to defend his delusions? We read that it was while men slept [that] this enemy (Satan) came and sowed tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:25, 39). He is a working, busy devil, never at leisure but is always spreading his baits and casting his snares and nets to catch souls. Therefore, “be sober, be vigilant” [1 Peter 5:8], and watch unto prayer and employ this talent of precious time well. Idleness is Satan’s shop and the mother of mischief. David was at leisure and on the roof of his house when Satan prevailed by that sad temptation (2 Sam. 11:2–3). Therefore, set God always before you. Keep in His way and be doing your duty that you may be kept from his fiery darts. The flying bird is seldom shot. The cautious, diligent, active soul is most secure.

Motive 6

Time once gone cannot be recalled. Time past is gone forever. Time present (if we may so call it) is going. Future time is most uncertain. Neither men nor angels can hinder or stop it, turn or bring it back again. If opportunities are not now taken, they may never be had. Be good husbands of your time and work now, or you may never work. Time’s redemption may be your salvation. Therefore, follow and improve the light before darkness overtakes you. You all know that yesterday or the last hour will never come again. If you had as much treasure in your custody or power as the whole world is worth, it cannot purchase one minute of time past. You that are old may as

easily call back your youth or become young again as recover any part of this precious time (Luke 19:42).

Motive 7

The nature of saving grace is working and springing up, which turns all the powers and faculties of the soul heavenward. Such is the activity and vigor of this gracious nature that it will bring a man to a "What wilt thou have me do?" (Acts 9:6; Eph. 2:10). 'Tis not a lazy and languid thing but full of life and power. The state of sin in Scripture is described by death and darkness, which are a cessation and privation of life and light and motion. And the state of grace is described by life (Ephesians 2), which is powerful and most vivacious, like the sword of the Lord and Gideon, doing great things.

It is no wonder to see the men of the world that are born after the flesh to be dull, sluggish, inactive. But you who have a divine nature and a spirit of life and power in your hearts should be diligent and laborious (Rom. 8:2; 2 Tim. 1:6). This living principle of grace made the holy apostle, who excited others to redeem their time, so to employ his talent. The grace of God in him made him labor more than they all (1 Cor. 15:10). The streams of grace that flow into the soul are called "rivers of living water" (John 7:38) and a "well of water springing up unto eternal life" (4:14), so that Christians have greater advantage of doing good and living to God's glory. Therefore, stir up the grace of God that is in you. Cast off your slothfulness and put on diligence. And, laying aside every weight, rejoice as the sun to run the race that is set before you.

Motive 8

Consider how highly they prize time that have lost it and are come to the end of it, and who, with the loss of time, have lost themselves. We have many dreadful examples that stand as so many sea marks to warn us to take heed.

The poor Jews were utterly undone by it. The Lord only knows how many of them are now in flames, that suffer the vengeance of eternal fire for not improving the day of grace (Matt. 23:37; Luke 19:42). The foolish virgins, having lost the opportunity of buying oil, came too late to the door. And Esau stayed too long to get the blessing. Most do things when it is too late. Men go to bed late, rise late, go to market late, come to church late, and make peace with God when it is too late. The old Israelites marched toward Canaan when it was too late and so lost that good land. Oh how dreadful will mercy slighted and time lost be to the awakened soul when it comes to die, seeing itself in a Christless state!

It was a speech once of a woman in terror of conscience, when divers ministers and others came to her in a way of comforting her. She looked with ghastly countenance on them and gave them this answer: "Call back time again. If you can call back time again, then there may be hope for me; but time is gone." Another great lady on her deathbed cried out, "All too late, all too late. A world of wealth for an inch of time."

Another gentlewoman (of whom I have heard), who was wont to employ this precious talent of time in playing at cards and such like games, coming from her sport late in the night, finding her waiting maid (that was religious) reading in a good book, and casting her eyes in the book over the maid's shoulder, spoke these words (or to this effect): "You poor melancholy soul! What, always reading and spending your time thus! Will you take no comfort in life?" The gentlewoman, retiring to her chamber, went to bed. The maid, lodging in the same room, perceived her mistress under great disquiet and perturbation of spirit, fighting and groaning bitterly. The servant, hearing of it, several times called to her to know the reason she could not sleep. The maid urging her, at last she cried out, "I read the word *eternity* in your book, which has so

pierced my heart that I believe I will never sleep more till I have better assurance of my eternity.”

Another wanton lady that had wasted her time in sensuality, who died not many weeks past, told her vicious mother, standing by her bedside, that “it was not too late to speak of God to her; for you have undone me, and I am going to hell before, and you will certainly come after.”

It is common with many dying and going into the other world sadly to bewail the loss of time. When they fear mercy is going, patience expiring, and the time respited for repentance over, then they prize opportunities at another rate. And oh! What would the damned in hell give to be admitted into the world, if they might but enjoy one day or hour to deliver themselves from that dreadful place of torment (Luke 16:27–28)!

Motive 9

Consider [that] God has joined time and duty together, and that in two respects: (1) in respect of assistance; (2) in respect of acceptance.

1. God has joined time and duty together in respect of assistance, and what infinite majesty has joined must not by any means be separated. Work and time, opportunity and duty must go together. Adam had his work in Paradise before the fall. And the second Adam was always in action to the end of His days. His meat and drink was to do the will of His Father. “I have no day for idleness” was the language of a heathen.²

Christians, do your work in season, and you will have assistance. God’s opportunity is as wind to the sails or as oil to the wheels, which will make you glide through difficult duties with much facility. If we work in God’s time, God will work with us; and we will be workers together with Him. Gospel time is in order to gospel work. Spiritual opportunities are appointed

2. Original: *Nullus mihi per otium dies exit.*

and continued for spiritual duties. The work of faith, repentance, mortification of sin, the plucking out [of] right eyes, the chopping off [of] right arms, fighting and wrestling with the powers and Prince of Darkness are exceedingly difficult. But God, whose arm is potent, will give power. And how easily will great work or service be done when there is great assistance in the doing of it!

A burden that is too heavy for one to lift by the help of another will come up easily. This Paul witnesses, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). The feeble Jews by the help of Jehovah raised up the walls of Jerusalem from its very rubbish, and that in spite of opposition (Neh. 4:2-3; 6:15). They plying the work, the Lord was with them by His great power and strong hand. They made their prayer to God when strength was almost decayed and labored in the work from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared, and so the wall was finished. Let time be redeemed, and then a great deal of work may be done in a little time. God's opportunity will make believing and repenting easy (Luke 19:6; Acts 2:37, 41; 16:14, 43). Oh, therefore, while it is day, work out your salvation, for it is "God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13).

2. God has joined time and duty in respect of acceptance. Every time is not an "accepted time" (2 Cor. 6:2). The Israelites that refused to march up to Canaan at God's command lost their opportunity, and afterward He would neither assist them nor accept them. If you stay till God's time is past and gone, are you sure God will accept you hereafter? There is a time when God will not be found, will not be spoken with (Isa. 55:6). Esau sought the blessing with tears, and it was denied him (Heb. 12:17; Prov. 1:29). Do not say, "What need so much speed? What need so much improving of time, so much reading, hearing, praying, preaching?" But resolve on your duty now, or never.

Motive 10

Lastly, consider that on the present moment of time eternity depends. This deep and heart-affecting meditation should even swallow us up and cause us to hasten to our work. Let go time's opportunity, and you will certainly be ruined to all eternity. The painter, being asked why he was so exact in drawing his lines, answered, "I paint for eternity." Consider that you must believe and repent for eternity, hear and pray for eternity, fear, love, obey for eternity. A work of *infinite moment* depends on a *moment of time*. This day you may throw your last cast for eternity. This swift post will not stop, no, not for a moment.

Secure soul! Do you see eternity before you, even at your door, and that there is but a step between you and an endless state? And will you not be more industrious for your soul and heaven? If a man were to run, to wrestle for his life or for a crown or kingdom, how would he strain and strive, and that with all his might? If a man were to go over sea for his life and had but one gale of wind in his lifetime, would he come to the waterside and lose it? If a malefactor had but a day appointed to him to sue out his pardon, would he not improve it? This is all our cases. God has given us but a day to work. When the day is ended, it will be night forever (Luke 19:12, 42; John 9:4). *Now*, it may be, Christ is at the door, offering you help. Open to Him, lest He withdraw and come no more. It is probable the Spirit of life and power strives to turn [you] to God. Oh refuse not to comply with it, lest the Spirit serve you, as Samuel did Saul, that came no more to him (1 Sam. 15:35).

I will conclude the motives with the words of the psalmist: "To day, if you will hear his voice, harden not your heart," lest God swear in His wrath that you will "not enter into [His] rest" (Ps. 95:7-11).

CHAPTER 6

Directions for Redeeming Time

Now, if you are resolved to put this duty into practice, through the help of heaven, speedily and diligently observe these directions:

1. Take heed and beware of those things which rob you of your time.
2. Labor to convince yourselves of the worth of time and value it accordingly.
3. Set apart a considerable portion of time for the most secret duties.
4. Cast up and compute your time.
5. Maintain a holy fear on your heart of coming to the end of time before your work is done.

Direction 1:

Take Heed of Those Things Which Rob You of Your Time

Now the thieves that will rob you of this exceedingly rich jewel are these six, against which, watch for your life: vain thoughts; worldly cares; unnecessary visits; unprofitable discourse; excessive[ly] indulging the outward man; unlawful or immoderate recreations.

Vain Thoughts

These are secret and subtle thieves that insensibly rob us of our time every day and in every duty. Vain, impertinent, and wicked thoughts, like Pharaoh's frogs, creep and crowd in on us and thrust out good thoughts so that we cannot keep our mind steady and composed. Solomon says, "The eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth" (Prov. 17:24). So are our thoughts, gadding, wandering up and down, here and there, and everywhere. These evil thoughts spring and rise from within us as naturally as sparks from the fire. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts (Gen. 6:5; Matt. 15:19). And they follow us continually in every place and in every service, as the birds on Abraham's sacrifice which Abraham did drive away. They must not lodge (Jer. 4:14). Though we cannot hinder the fowls from flying in the air or over our heads, we may hinder them from pitching on our heads.

Holy David had vain thoughts but hated them (Ps. 119:113). There is not a minute, but many thoughts pass from us, as in a minute sands do in an hour glass (94:19). Christians, consider how much of that time is lost which you spend in holy duties by vain thoughts. When we should draw near to God, our hearts, by our thoughts, steal away. And there are but a few awakened tender spirits, truly sensible of this intrinsic, secret evil, though much of a Christian's duty (and the very inwards of religion) lies in observing the thoughts and in watching the heart. Therefore, above all keeping, keep your heart (Prov. 4:23) and take heed of your spirit (Mal. 2:25-26).

Worldly Cares

[These] are great wasters of our precious time. The most do mind earthly things (Phil. 3:19). Men's heads, hearts, and thoughts are so intent about the things that perish that they do hardly entertain a serious thought of God and eternity all

the day. God is not in all their thoughts. “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh” (Rom. 8:5). And not only the children of this world but professors themselves are so eager and vehement in the pursuit of this poor earth that almost all their time and strength is spent about it. And while men are so careful and solicitous about many things and in a very crowd and hurry of business, it is impossible for them to redeem time for God and their souls. As soon as their eyes are open, the things of the world stand as so many suitors to invite and draw them. Some have their heart so overcharged and surfeited with cares and fears of this evil world that their abundance will not suffer them to sleep (Eccl. 5:12; Luke 21:4). Now, when it is thus, opportunities are lost; souls are neglected; holy duties, omitted—or, if used, they are very unsuccessful (Ezek. 33:31; Matt. 13:22). Therefore, take heed of the world, so great a devourer of time.

Unnecessary Visits

[These] are great wasters of our time, of which you must take heed, it being no mark of godliness but the contrary. The wise man, speaking of the vicious and virtuous woman, gives them this different character—namely, the one, “her feet abide not in her house” (Prov. 7:11); the other, “looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness” (31:27). And we read of some that wandered about from house to house being idle “tattlers...and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not” (1 Tim. 5:13). How men do trifle about the time in going from house to house, to whom it may be said as Pharaoh to the oppressed Israelites, “Ye are idle, ye are idle” [Ex. 5:17]! Let that time you have to spare from your callings and families be spent in reading, prayer, or other religious exercises. And, in all your visits, intend and design the doing of good or the receiving of good, not the passing away of this

precious time. When your friends or neighbors are sick and under the hand of God, go to them and give them counsel for their souls (Rom. 15:2).

Unprofitable Discourse

[This] robs us of much time. Some employ their tongues in telling fabulous and filthy stories; others, in discoursing of parties and opinions and in talking of the faults and miscarriages of other men; some, about the times and inquiring after news. Thus did the men of Athens, who “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). And they most when they come together pass away the time in discoursing of the world and the concerns of it. But let Christians when they converse imitate their Lord. The words that proceeded out of His mouth were gracious words. “Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Col. 4:5–6).

Excessive[ly] Indulging the Outward Man

Much of our time is spent in making provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). Some hours every day are taken up in providing for the belly, to please the palate. And some at their tables take up much time; others, to gratify a proud fancy. Much time is wasted in decking and trimming the body. There are those that spend more time in looking into a glass¹ than on their knees in praying to God. A godly minister, coming to a gentlewoman’s house to dinner, where he waited from ten of the clock till one, all the while she was dressing, burst out into weeping to think that she should spend so much time in trimming, and he so little in praying.

1. *Glass*: mirror.

Also, excessive sleep does devour [a] great part of our short time and life. When we should be on our knees in our closet, we are in our beds or on our couches. Others waste their precious time in ale houses and taverns and brothel houses from day to day, God's day being not exempted. Against such there is a dreadful woe: "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night, till wine inflame them" (Isa. 5:11-12).

Unlawful and Immoderate Recreations

[These] are the occasion of great expense of time. Recreation (not to be used but as physic² in case of need) is an engrosser and waster of our time that is dear and precious. Many are so excessive in it as if they were sent into the world to do nothing but sport. What time is spent in carding, dicing, dancing, interludes, stage plays, bear and bull baitings, hunting, hawking, and in reading romantic books, which for men and women professing the gospel are not of good report (Phil. 4:8)? The turning of the Bible or some good book is more becoming [of] a Christian than turning a pair of cards, a game so much accustomed by the profane and an occasion of much sin.

These things will cause bitterness and horror at last. They are honey to the fancy but a sting to the conscience. Consider which will afford most comfort [when you are] dying: so many days in recreation, or so many days in humiliation; so many hours of prayer, or so many hours in playing at cards; so many hours in vain, filthy discourse, or so many hours in serious and heavenly conference? Or, so many Sabbaths in reading, hearing, and singing of psalms, or so many Sabbaths spent in eating, drinking, walking, or worse? Holy Bradford accounted

2. *Physic*: medicine.

that hour lost wherein he had not done some good. Titus Vespasian was wont to say, "I have lost a day."

Direction 2:**Set a Due Estimate on This Precious Jewel of Time**

[This is so] that your hearts may be so truly tender as to make conscience of wasting it. A godly minister was wont to say, when he saw the morning clear and serene, "'Tis pity this day should be lost." Oh value your time! Reckon more of one Sabbath than of the best fair or market that ever you were at in all your life. Set on the now day of grace, the price of eternity. I have told you already: the damned in hell (if it might be) would give a world for an opportunity to make peace with God.

Direction 3:**Set Apart Some Considerable Portion of Time
for the Most Secret Duties**

For Ordinary Secret Prayer and Meditation

Set some time apart in the morning and evening of every day, and do not catch and snatch at praying times. Many serve the world and the flesh all day and put off God with a few words or sleepy prayers at night. Prayer is the breath of the new creature and the sign of a spiritual life (Acts 9:6). Christians, let your prayers be secret, sincere, fervent, constant. The way to heaven, said a good man, is through the closet, and they that have been eminent in piety have been excellent in prayer. Holy David would not let a morning pass without prayer (Ps. 5:3). Indeed, three times a day he was at this blessed duty (55:17). It was his element and constant employment (109:4).

Your prayer must be frequent, if it be effectual. Prayer without fervency is as a bullet without powder or as a bird without wings that cannot mount up into the air. Holy fire must be put to the daily sacrifice. God answers by fire. He that

looks on the heart regards the manner of your prayers more than the number of your prayers. Cold, slight mumbling over a few petitions, either out of custom or to stop the mouth of conscience, will not prevail (Ps. 25:10; Isa. 26:9; James 5:16).

Christians, the time that you spend with God in secret is the sweetest time and best improved. Therefore, if you love your life, be in love with prayer. Resolve to spend some time with God in private every day.

Extraordinary Private Fasting

[This] is a duty very necessary and practiced but by a few. Soul-afflicting days between God and a man's self would through grace be much for spiritual advantage. Husbands would mourn apart, and their wives, apart (Zech. 12:12–13). Fasting days will be soul-fattening days (Acts 10:30), and, "Blessed are they that mourn" (Matt. 5:4).

Self-Examination

[This] is the third duty. When you are alone, ask yourself these questions:

1. Is it most certain that I am in a state of grace?
2. Is grace thriving? Does my inward man prosper?
3. Do I live in any known sin against conscience (Ps. 19:13) and exercise myself unto godliness?
4. Do I make conscience of redeeming time so as to join time and duty together?

A precious servant of the Lord was wont to say [that] if a man could answer these two questions, he need not to fear: first, "Am I God's child?"; secondly, "Am I in God's way?" (Ps. 119:94).

Direction 4:**If You Would Redeem Your Time, Compute Your Time**

Pray you may do it (Ps. 39:4; 90:12) Numbering the people was David's sin; but numbering his days, a duty. 'Tis common for men to number their sheep, their cattle, houses, lands, wares, money. But to number our days is a rare kind of numbering—for the neglect of which, what arrears are we fallen into with the great Landlord of our time!

Christians, divide your time into parcels and consider how little God has. How much time was spent in your infancy and childhood before you had the use of reason? How much is spent in our callings and employments about the world? How much in eating, drinking, and unprofitable discourse? Besides all this, half or more is spent in sleeping. So that in the work of God and our immortal souls, we employ but very little. Therefore, 'tis more than time to redeem it.

Direction 5:**Maintain Always a Holy Fear on Your Heart of Coming to the End of Time before Your Work Is Done**

Live continually in an expectation of your great charge. Buy, sell, converse, read, pray, hear, and do all as dying men and passing to receive the recompense of endless joy or woe.

Christians, if you would work while it is day; if you would glorify God on earth; if you would secure and eternally save your immortal souls; if you would not be prey to the prince of darkness; if you would stand with comfort before the Lord Jesus at His dreadful bar; if you would not spend your days without hope—arise, therefore, and be doing, and the Lord be with you.

**Considering Our
Latter End**

CHAPTER 7

Consider Your Latter End

I will now come to show you what we are to consider concerning our latter end, and oh that it may make a deep impression on all that read these plain truths!

Seriously consider and believe:

That It Is Most Certain That an End Will Be

For whatever the Scriptures speak of death, the grave, and hell is an infallible truth. You are to consider that every man is mortal, must die and pass into the other world, and that in every one of your bodies there is an immortal and never-dying soul, and that after these bodies have slept in the dust of the earth they will live again. There will be a resurrection of the just and unjust. And at the end of the world a tribunal will be set up, before which the world will be made to stand. And that as soon as your breath is gone, the spirit will return to God who gave it—either to the justice of God or to the mercy of God; to the place of joy or to the place of torment.

Our transgression [and] natural constitution, with a statute law of heaven, have brought us under a necessity of dying. Wherever the viper fastens, it kills certainly, though not suddenly. Sin and death are twins. Sin is a great murderer that lets death into the world, “for her house inclineth unto death,

and her paths unto the dead" [Prov. 2:18]. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17)—namely, you will become mortal. As soon as Adam had sinned, he (and we in him, our representative) became subject or liable to death. Sin, like a mighty monarch, reigned from Adam to Moses. A malefactor cast at the bar is dead in law, though he be reprieved for a time. "The body," says the apostle, "is dead because of sin" [Rom. 8:10]. Some die in the womb; some, in their infancy; some, in their youth. And they that live longest die at last. Death never hurts a man but with his own weapons. It always finds sin in us, and "the sting of death is sin" [1 Cor. 15:56]. And wherever you meet it or see it, you must say of it, as Ahab to the prophet, "Hast thou found me, O my enemy?" [1 Kings 21:20]. Death, and every death, is the fruit of sin: death temporal, death spiritual, and death eternal. The soul that sins shall die (Ezek. 18:20). "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

Our natural constitution renders us obnoxious to a dissolution. Our flesh is not the flesh of stone or brass but frail or moldering dust, to which, as to our center, we must return: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Eccl. 3:20). It is appointed to man once to die (Heb. 9:27). "His days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass" (Job 14:5). No shield or buckler can fortify against this king of terrors. Impartial death, the great leveler, knows no faces, and therefore none can be exempted. If faithfulness might challenge immunity from death, then Moses might have been excused; if beauty, then Absalom; if strength, then Samson; if sincerity and piety, then David; if subtlety, then Ahithophel; if magnanimity, then Alexander; if riches, then Cræsus; if wisdom, then Solomon. But one event happens to

them all, so that when the fatal moment comes no ransom can be given. No art or skill can keep us here. Sirs, were this doctrine of the other world believed, it would have a greater impression on our hearts. Did we seriously consider of that future state of retribution, according to our faith, to which we must live or die, stand or fall to eternity, it would have a greater influence on our lives.

That at Your Latter End All Things in This World Will Fail You and Take Their Leave of You Forever

All your natural endowments, outward enjoyments, parts, parentage, birth, breeding, wit, wealth, crowns, kingdoms, pearls, diamonds, houses, lands, wives, children, friends—when your breath is gone, all these are gone. Riches are not forever, neither does a crown endure to all generations (Prov. 27:24). The glittering sun of all outward glory will certainly set, which your own experience and scriptur[al] evidence do clearly evince. Riches have wings and fly away (23:5). The fashion of this world passes away (1 Cor. 7:29–31). We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we will carry nothing out (1 Tim. 6:7). If a man were possessed of as much of this world as Solomon, the great king of Jerusalem, who had great, magnificent buildings, fruitful, pleasant vineyards, gardens, orchards, and trees of all manner of fruits, variety of servants, possession of great and small cattle, heaps of gold and silver, peculiar treasures of kings, musical instruments, men and women singers, and whatever his eyes desire—yet, when he takes a serious view of all things, he would say with him, “All is vanity,” and that a man has no profit of all his labor which he takes under the sun, which made the wise man even to hate life (Ecclesiastes 2).

Since the fall, there is a curse on the creature, which indeed is deceiving, vexing, decaying. And all outward comforts may

be compared to Pharaoh's host, who are alive this hour and the next drowned and dead on the seashore. And though you judge, they will endure forever (Ps. 49:11; Luke 12:11). They will deal by you as Absalom's mule that left him in the greatest extremity [2 Sam. 18:9]. What woeful miseries attend worldly riches in the getting, keeping, and parting with them! They are snares and thorns, plagues and scorpions to many. They pierce them through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:10).

Yet here men toil, beat their brains, weary their bodies, try their spirits, break their sleep, perplex their thoughts, rack their consciences, engulf and drown themselves in cares, endanger their souls, dreaming of nothing but perpetuity. And when they have done all, like the silkworm, [they] die in their work. Indeed, many a man survives his own happiness, which perishes before he perishes. And it is the worst of miseries to outlive our own happiness. Therefore, let not riches heighten your hearts and prompt you to pride, which is too common.

This day the rich worldling sang a requiem to his sadly deluded soul, concluding he had much laid up. The night following his soul is required [Luke 12:16–21]. Haman is today the second man in the kingdom, but soon lost all, and his life too. Now does Nebuchadnezzar walk in his stately royal palace of Babel, priding himself in his outward pomp. But while the word was in his mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee" (Dan. 4:29–31). Jerusalem this year is the princess among the provinces; the next year, made tributary. And they that lived delicately are desolate and embrace the dunghills (Lamentations 1; 4; 5). Yesterday, Job's cattle might be numbered by thousands, and tomorrow he is stripped of all and left naked. Neither is our age without a sad and dreadful instance—namely, famous London—on the Lord's Day standing [and] by Wednesday burned and laid in ashes, and

thousands of her inhabitants houseless and laborless. Therefore, if riches increase, set not your hearts on them. They are uncertain, cannot satisfy, cannot profit, will perish, and that forever. Oh then, let those precious, dear, everlasting jewels laid up in your moldering, decaying, dying bodies be cared for! What can it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul (Matt. 16:26)?

How Soon All the Present Pleasures of Sin Will Be Gone and Leave Nothing but a Sting

Old age, weakness, sickness will make a great change in the whole outward man as to beauty, strength, natural vigor, liveliness of senses, and all whereby a man might take any pleasure in the world or in his lusts. When sickness, old age, death's forerunner comes, it will make a strange change in the most comely countenance. Corporal comeliness and beauty is soon stained. Sickness will not only fade it but deface it. You that are endowed with comely proportion, sparkling eyes, well-favoredness, amiableness of colors of white and red, with straightness and agility of body, with a cheerful aspect—when old age comes, it will plow deep furrows in those fair faces. And yet many, ignorant of their foul souls and filthy hearts, are proud of their fair faces and comely features, so that they grow wanton by reason of it. And to set out the beauty and whiteness of their skins (not being contented with their Creator's curious make) [they] will add painting, patches, powdering, crisping, curling, artificial hair, and whatnot. Know that old age will not only wither your beauty, which is but skin deep, but abate your outward strength, natural vigor, liveliness of senses, and all whereby you may have any worldly pleasure.

Old age is Solomon's "evil day" [Eccl. 12:1], when the sun, moon, and stars will be darkened; the keepers of the house tremble; and the strong men bow themselves; and the grinders

cease; and all the daughters of music will be brought low; and fear will be in the way; when the outward man is decayed—namely, eyes dim and dark, ears deaf, teeth rotten, gums bare, head bald, breath corrupt, hands and feet weak and trembling—an evil day indeed, in which you will find no delight in your former dalliances. For “the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail” (12:5). But the beauty of grace withers not under the greatest declinings of natural beauty, for grace is the oil in the lamp that never goes out but shines more and more. The king’s daughter is all glorious within (Ps. 45:13). Godliness, which is God’s likeness, casts a luster that is very lovely in the sight of God and man. “Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee” [Song 4:7].

Sinners! You that now taste the sweet of sin; rejoice to do wickedly; that spend your time in riotous drunkenness, in chambers of wantonness; lie on beds of ivory; and stretch yourselves on your couches; and eat the lambs out of the flock; that chant to the sound of the viol; that drink wine in bowls; that are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph; that put far away the evil day—know that the fire of sin will burn, and that your sweet morsels are but for a moment. Those sweet morsels and delicate dainties will cost you dear.

Hear now this, you that are given to pleasure, that feast yourselves in doing evil. 'Tis but a little time, and you will see and say that all your delights, hopes, joys are past and gone, and that you will never see or taste them more. Only the gravel, gall, guilt, and sting will still remain. You that love this hellish banquet of sin (the stolen waters that are sweet, and bread eaten in secret that is pleasant) do not know that “the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell” (Prov. 9:17–18). Sin is a sweet poison, pleasant in the acting but bitter in the end. For the soul that sins will die (Ezek. 18:20). And will you spare it and keep it still within your mouth, hide

it under your tongue, until it become the gall of asps within you (Job 12:12–14)? Consider also that your secret wickedness, committed in the dark, in corners, that is marked and close kept, is known to God.

The infinitely holy and heart-searching God marks them (Job 10:14; Hos. 7:2), watches them [Job 14:16], seals them. They are done among His treasures (Deut. 32:34), and they will find you out (Num. 32:23). And, if not truly and deeply repented of and pardoned, they will lie down with you in the grave and follow you into the other world and meet you at God's dreadful bar and be discovered in the sight of the whole world. Evil will pursue the sinner. This evil thing and bitter, bred in the wound, not buried in the grave, not extinguished by the fire of hell will pursue the sinner to hell. Sinners, this is most certain: unrepented sins will never leave you but lie down and rise with you. Your bones are full of the sins of your youth, which will lie down with you in the dust (Job 20:11). Sin is a bad bed-fellow and a worse grave-fellow. And if it sleep with you, it will awake with you when the dreadful trumpet will sound, "Arise ye dead and come to judgment." The damned in hell have all their sins about them. That which was the cause of their being cast into hell will be their everlasting companions there. And will you take these vipers and scorpions into your bosoms, that will be always gnawing on your hearts? Know this: your posting sun of all sinful, sensual delights will set in the dreadful ocean of endless, easeless, and remediless sorrow.

**That Only Which Is Eternal Will Stand You
in Stead When You Come to Die**

Namely, when you will shoot the vast gulf and launch out into the infinite ocean of eternity that has neither bounds nor banks nor bottom.

Immortal souls! Do you see anything that has eternity graven on it? There are varieties of objects, both of persons and things, that present themselves to your view. Lift up your eyes to the vast heavens that are bespangled and beautified with a glorious sun, moon, and glittering stars, that have been there for some thousands of years. See whether eternity be there? No, they had their beginning and must have their period (Genesis 1). "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment" (Heb. 1:10–11). The day is coming wherein the sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood. The stars of heaven will fall, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. And the earth with the works that are therein will be burnt up (Matt. 24:29; 2 Peter 3:10).

Moreover, look to your near and dear relations for whom you expose yourselves to so much pain, care, and trouble. "Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you," as the prophet speaks in another case [Isa. 51:2], to your husbands, wives, children, parents, friends, neighbors, magistrates, ministers. Are these forever? No, many of them are gone down to the dark valley already and will return no more. Or else look to those brave heroes, Alexander, Caesar, Pompey—and where are they? Are they not all conquered by the king of terrors and held in the prison of the grave for many hundred years? Look to your gold, silver, pearls, perfumes, costly cabinets, stately structures, princely palaces. Are these forever? No, they are corruptible things and cannot deliver in the day of the Lord's wrath. King's palaces are desolate places, ready to become a heap. Crowns are translated from head to head. Scepters pass from one hand to another. And kingdoms have their rise, and they have their ruin. And will you sell your

precious souls for pelf¹ and transitory trash, which indeed is more in expectation than in fruition? Consider how little that is worth for which you run the dreadful hazard of losing heaven.

But now (if you are believers), lift up your eyes to the everlasting hills and put the eagle's eye of faith within the veil. There is the Ancient of Days. God your Father is the chiefest good and highest happiness. There is Christ your dear Redeemer, the Prince of glory, and a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; and on the favor of God, the love and righteousness of Christ, you may see eternity.

Again, turn your eyes inward to the hidden man of the heart. Is there the seed of God or impress[ion] of His image and the divine nature (1 John 3:9; 2 Peter 1:4)? Is there any active, living, springing principle of grace (John 4:14)? On this you may read eternity. Grace is the heir of glory, every drop of which runs into the ocean. And nothing else can befriend you, "for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

Which of the Two Eternities You Are Going Toward

I would have you deeply and seriously consider that there is one place for the sheep and another for the goats; one place for the righteous and another for the ungodly; one place for believers and another for unbelievers; one place for the dead and another for the living; an eternal night or eternal day; eternal pains or eternal pleasures; eternal bliss or eternal burnings; an eternal life or eternal death; an eternal heaven or eternal hell.

Now sinners, stop here and consider: to which of these two do you belong? Have you any certainty of a blessed and glorious

1. *Pelf*: wealth or riches, especially when dishonestly acquired.

eternity? That heaven or hell will be your place or portion? For resolving of which, consider and answer to these queries:

Have you unfeignedly believed, repented, and turned to God with the rending of your hearts and resigned your whole souls to Him? Do you find your hearts affectionately and vehemently carried out to Jesus Christ so as not to be satisfied without union and communion with Him? Is Jesus Christ the Beloved and Darling of your souls?

Have you (being sensible of what you have done against Him and of your unworthiness of Him) by a deep and hearty humiliation laid a foundation for heaven and happiness? You must sow before you can reap. And “they that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Ps. 126:5).

Are you heaven-born or born after the flesh only? If by a sound work of conversion you are become new creatures indeed (2 Cor. 5:17), it is well. Stand and wonder at amazing mercy. If not, fear and tremble; for if you fail here, you are utterly undone forever.

Further, are you risen with Christ or dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1)? Are you partakers of the first resurrection, or are you in your graves rotting, stinking in your sins, being past feeling? Are you truly at odds with sin, and every sin? Or do you take pleasure in unrighteousness? Are you for godliness in the life and power of it? And is there no allowed sin reigning in your hearts and ways? Does sin, and every sin, look ugly, feel heavy, taste bitter; and [is there] no idol of the heart to keep Christ out of His throne? No secret sin lived in against conscience? Do you pray and desire to live in the fear and as under the eye of God, making conscience of secret sins and of secret duties, with a sincere respect to God’s glory and your own good? Does the heart-searching God find you in your closets or on your knees morning and evening, pouring out your souls before Him? Everyone that is godly will pray (Ps. 32:6).

Are you crucified to the world, or do your souls cleave to the dust? Have you a treasure in heaven or treasures in the field only? Have you bought the pearl, or are you content with pebbles? Who are your associates: the devil's herd or Christ's flock? Are you companions for swine and filthy dogs, the world of the ungodly, or of the doves and lambs of Christ? Whose mark have you? The mark of sheep (namely, holiness, humility, innocency) or the mark of goats (namely, lust, pride, and uncleanness)? Who keeps the throne: the King of saints or the god of this world? Do your hearts and lives speak, "Heaven, heaven, heaven," or, "Hell, hell, hell"? Hell is not more the place of the devil than the heart of the wicked man. Can you look upward and say, "Our Father which art in heaven"? Or must you look downward and say, "Our father which art in hell"?

How can you take comfort in anything of this world that is like[ly] to be unspeakably and eternally miserable in the other world? Suppose you had as much of the riches, pomp, and glory of the world as any man that ever lived on the face of the earth. If you could say, "This crown, this kingdom, this country is mine. This gold, this silver, or this shop, these goods, this manor, this farm, these fields, these flocks, this corn, these cattle, these mines, these pearls, these jewels are mine"—what would all avail you, if your souls are the devil's? Now, how stands the case of your precious souls? Are they secured? Have you made a real preparation for death and judgment or left all undone? Are you vessels of honor prepared unto glory or vessels of wrath fitted to destruction (Rom. 9:22–23)?

Let conscience speak. Commune with your hearts (Ps. 4:4). Consider your ways (Hag. 1:5). Search and try yourselves (Lam. 3:40). Prove your own work. Examine yourselves whether you are in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5). Whatever you sow, you will certainly reap (Gal. 6:7–8). And "in the place where

the tree falleth, there it shall be” (Eccl. 11:3). If it falls to the north, it lies to the north. If it falls toward the south, it lies toward the south. If you live and die toward heaven, heaven will be your place and home. But if you live and die toward hell, hell will be your place and home, for according to your doing in this world will be your doom in the world that is to come (2 Cor. 5:10). And is it not sad and dreadful to believe that you have precious, never-dying souls and do not know whether they will be saved or damned, stand or fall, live or die, to all eternity? And yet this is the case of thousands and millions of men and women now in the world that are making posthaste to hell and think and hope they are in the way to heaven (Prov. 16:25).

How Near You Are to Your Everlasting Habitation

You are all going down the stream of time into the great ocean, and you will shortly come thither. There is not a step you step, not a breath you draw, not a word you speak, nor a moment of time you live but has an influence on eternity. These golden sands running between two eternities will quickly be gone. A short race will be soon run. Oh what a nothing is our life!—namely, a span, a dream, a wind, a shadow, a vapor, a post, swifter than a post (Job 7:6). You are all going to your long and last home, to the house of eternity. Every man “goeth to his long home” (Eccl. 12:5).

How does he go? He goes swiftly, always in motion, night and day, sleeping and walking, laboring or loitering. This post hastens; time and tide stay not. Again, he goes insensibly. Man does not discern or perceive how his precious time does fly from him. The shadow on the dial passes from one hour or figure to another, from the sun rising to the setting, though its speedy, transient motion is not observed. So man passes from infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, from youth

to middle age, and so to old age and the grave—and we take little or no notice of it. Again, he goes irresistibly. Neither men nor angels, physic nor physician can keep him here. It is as easy to obstruct the whole course of nature or to hinder God's covenant of day and night. A man may as well restrain the sun from rising, the sea from flowing, or the wind from blowing as keep man from dying and going to the place appointed for all living. "We are but of yesterday" (Job 8:9). It was but, as it were, yesterday, and we were in the womb of nothing, had no being. And it will be but, as it were, tomorrow, and we will disappear and be as to this world as if we had never been. We are "crushed before the moth" (Job 4:19), and in a moment we go down into the grave and will come up no more. Indeed, our pictures and statues remain fresh and firm, when we are gone down to the bars of the pit and rest together in the dust. And our very dogs and horses live, when we are dead and become meat for worms.

This heart-affecting meditation had a very great influence on a great Persian king who, taking a view of his huge, vast army, wept to think that within a hundred years not one man of them would be left alive. Sinners, you are to look beyond the grave, because after death, the judgment (Heb. 9:27). Oh then, tremble to consider that you are all this day standing before the door of eternity, either on the brink of life or the brink of death, on the borders of heaven or the mouth of hell. And [you] will 'ere long be made to see what is on the other side of the wall. As soon as death has shut your eyes, you will see and know what you will be forever. If you are now unconverted and without God in the world, you are almost come within sight of the burning lake of fire and brimstone. But if saints, you are almost within the view of the New Jerusalem. If ungodly sinners, you are almost within the dreadful noise of the millstones of wrath and the rattlings of the fiery chains of

the prisoners of hell, the dolorous outcries and hideous roarings of the spirits in prison, crying out one and all, "Oh what evil and an infinite evil and bitter thing is sin, which we would not consider or believe till we came to this dismal place of torment!" There, you may hear the cursed, tormented unbeliever, crying out on his God-provoking, Christ-rejecting, and soul-murdering sin of infidelity, saying in the anguish of his soul, "If I had accepted of the remedy, I had not been in this doleful misery. The Lord of Glory was at the door. I heard Him knock a long time but would not let Him in. Therefore is hell's mouth shut on me forever." There, swearers, liars, blasphemers, that did tear and rend the sacred name of their Creator and swear by the blood and wounds of their offered Redeemer, are heard with their hot and scorched tongues to bewail that ever they should take the name of the infinitely holy God in vain.

There, the hypocritical and false-hearted professors, the sinners in Zion, cry out and wish that either they had made no show of love to Christ and holiness at all or that they had loved Him in sincerity and above all, that so they might have escaped everlasting burnings.

There, the impudent, ranting, swinish drunkard that pleased his eyes and palate with his pleasant cups, sparkling wine, and cursed companions is heard to wish in the agony of his soul, "Oh that I had been sober, temperate, abstemious,² that so I might not have tasted of the wine of the wrath of God, which is red and full of mixture, the dregs whereof I must be made to drink for ever!" (Ps. 75:8; Isa. 5:22).

There, the filthy, unclean adulterers and adulteresses that burned in their hellish lust, which they were resolved to satisfy, are heard to wish, "Oh that we had been sober, modest, chaste,

2. *Abstemious*: sparing.

and that our wanton, lustful eyes had been stark blind and never known or seen the face of man or woman, that we might not have suffered the vengeance of eternal fire!" (Jude 7).

There, the notoriously vile, abominable atheists that mocked and scoffed at the belief of a deity and judgment to come and that said in the pride and stoutness of their hearts, "Let Him make speed and hasten His work that we may see it, for 'we have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are at agreement' [Isa. 28:15]," may be heard to roar and cry, "Oh that we had heard, believed, and feared what was foretold by ministers concerning this dark and dreadful place, before it was too late!"

There, the worldling and wretched earthworm that made earth his heaven, gold his god and chiefest good, is heard to say in the bitterness of heart, "Oh that I had never seen any gold or silver all my days so that I might have had a better portion, or that I had with Lazarus begged my bread so that I might not have come into this place of torment!"

There, the timorous, fearful, cowardly apostate and backslider in heart who, for fear of a little outward hardship, declined his professed principles and turned his back on Christ and His persecuted little flock may be heard to wish that either he had never known the way of righteousness or that he had been faithful to the death.

Secure and sadly deluded souls, consider you are not far from this direful gulf, where multitudes of souls lament and weep day and night. And certainly, if the horrible and amazing cries and yells of those infernal spirits were sounding in your ears, you would not rest quiet in your beds and houses.

There were sad and astonishing outcries when the world was drowned, when Sodom was burned, to see the clouds suddenly drop fire on their heads and houses and men, women, and children burning together. But this was but a

flea bite to that place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth to all eternity. Remember, all you who forget God, the day of your calamity is at hand, and the things that will come on you make haste (Deut. 32:35).

But if you are the servants of the Lord and real saints, mourners in Zion, lift up your heads and hearts, for you belong to another place, a better country—namely, to mount Zion and to “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb. 12:22–24). And know that you are almost come within the hearing of these heavenly songs, eternal triumphs, and hallelujahs of saints, and glorious angels in your Father’s house, where you will have “fulness of joy” and “pleasures for evermore” (Ps. 16:11).

How Sudden, Violent, or Unexpected Your End May Be

Therefore, let none think or say they will die in their nest or promise themselves a time of preparation by a long life or lingering sickness, consumption, or such like. Fearless, careless sinners, you do not know what a night or what an hour may bring forth. The rich man in the gospel, while he dreamed of many days, was arrested by a killing and dreadful message: “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee” (Luke 12:20).

He lives not that knows where, when, or how he will die. Some have gone to bed well and died the same night. Others have dropped dead from their horses. Some have died at their tables while the meat has been in their mouths. Others have died in their full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet, with

breasts full of milk and bones moistened with marrow. Others die in the bitterness of their souls and never eat with pleasure. They will lie down alike in the dust, and the worms will cover them when they are brought to the grave and remain in the tomb. Sirs, there are many dreadful instances in the Word of God of the sad and sudden approach of this merciless messenger death, which stand as so many sea marks to give you warning, lest death should come in an hour you look not for it and find you unprepared.

The king of the Chaldeans in his greatest jollity and having not a thought of death saw a hand writing on the wall which was very terrible, and the same night [he] was slain. While he was feasting and drinking wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, “in the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king’s countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another” (Dan. 5:3–6, 30).

Death is the king of terrors and terror of kings. Good Hezekiah received a sudden summons for death (Isa. 38:1), which made him turn his face to the wall, pray, and weep sore, and to chatter like a crane and mourn like a dove in the bitterness of his soul, because he was to go to the gates of the grave and to the pit where there is no hope. The firstborn in Egypt were slain at midnight, which made a great cry (Ex. 12:29–30). Korah and his wicked company were swallowed up in the midst of their rebellion. They went down quick into the pit, and all Israel fled at the cry of them (Num. 16:31–34).

There died suddenly of the men of Beth-shemesh fifty thousand and threescore and ten, because they looked into the ark (1 Sam. 6:19). And God many times takes away the

desire of our eyes with a stroke, as he did Ezekiel's wife (Ezek. 24:16). Job's children died at their banquet [Job 1:18–19]. Ishbosheth was smitten and died in his sleep [2 Sam. 4:5–7]. Ananias and Sapphira, being husband and wife, died within three or four hours one of the other with a lie in their mouths (Acts 5:5, 10).

The righteous Judge many times shoots an arrow suddenly at wicked men. They die in the act of sin (Ps. 64:7). When they are about to fill their bellies, the Lord does cast the fury of His wrath on them, as He did on the chosen men of Israel (Ps. 78:30–31). Many times God, to execute His fierce wrath, sends out His destroying angel, who will make dreadful work in a little time—for in one night in the camp of the Assyrians the angel of the Lord smote a hundred and fourscore and five thousand, that in the morning were all dead corpses (Isa. 37:36).

How short and uncertain is our life, subject every moment to the stroke of death, and which the least crumb or fly may put an end to, as it has to many! And as our end may be sudden, so also it may be violent. A mortal disease may invade both heart and head, and poor dying creatures many times are so distressed and distracted that they cannot think of anything but their tormenting pain, being incapable to say anything to God or man about their souls! Oh how stupid and insensible do many souls make their passage into the other world! Like Nabal or like a man in a lethargy or as so many stocks or stones, and not awake till they awake in the flames of hell! The rich man died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes [Luke 16:23]. His first and second death were very unexpected.

All you obdurate sinners! Stand here and wonder at the matchless mercy and infinite patience of the great God in delaying the king of terrors so long! God has not dealt so kindly with thousands of sinners that are gone before to judgment

and who went down to the pit in a moment. Witness the last dreadful plague by the means of which a hundred thousand souls were sent into eternity. Oh let not London nor England forget that and other tremendous judgments, which our sins have called for, lest a worse than any yet should come on us. The forgetting of our latter end is a deadly and provoking sin, and that which will hasten judgment. “Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembered not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no comforter” (Lam. 1:9).

That When Death Comes to Strike the Stroke, Your Souls Are Startled—Your Eternity Is Cast without Change Forever

Then your immortal souls are for salvation or damnation, for eternal life or eternal death, for an eternal heaven or eternal hell. You sadly besotted souls, know and remember while you have a day before the golden thread of life is cut that, if you are found without Christ, faith, repentance, holiness but a moment after death, you are undone to eternity. After death, all means and hopes fail. There is no work nor device in the grave (Eccl. 9:10). God will then be irreconcilable; sin, unpardonable; heaven, not attainable; and your souls, lost irrecoverably. And then the devil, your bloody adversary, will have his design on you. He knows that, if you are his in life and death, that you are his forever, and that he and you will never part. Sinners, this is certain: as the tree falls, so it lies [Eccl. 11:3]; as is the seed, so will be the harvest. If you do the devil’s work, you must have the devil’s wages. If you march under the command and conduct of the Prince of Darkness and suffer him to lead and hurry you here and there at his will while you live, you will be his prisoners and slaves in that dreadful dungeon of dismal darkness after you are dead.

Consider [that] the land of darkness is no place for service. There is no repenting in the grave—no “Lord have

mercy on us” written on hell’s gates, no Sabbaths, no sermons, no ministers there. It is in the time of life that you must labor and make preparation for life eternal, because according to your work and choice in this world will be your everlasting lot in the world that is to come. It is appointed for you once to die, and after death, judgment (Heb. 9:27). The pale horse death goes before, and hell follows after (Rev. 6:8). There will be no change of your condition. The eternal ruin or eternal welfare of your precious souls depends on these few minutes. This swift stream of man’s life after it once turns or declines ever runs with a perpetual ebb, never flows again, so that all that you leave undone now will be undone forever. If you die unbelievers, you will be unbelievers forever. If you die under the guilt and power of sin and wrath of God, you will remain under the guilt of sin and wrath of God forever. But if you die holy, humble, mortified, sincere souls, you will remain holy, heavenly, and in the favor of God forever (Rev. 22:11). He that is filthy will be filthy still; and he that is holy will be holy still. But the impenitent, unpardoned sinner, though he live a hundred or a thousand years in satisfying his lusts, will be accursed at last. Poor sinners that read this little treatise, let me beg you to be up and doing while it is day! The night will come wherein neither you nor any man can work (John 9:4). Then to your work with might and main, while your candle is burning, your sun shining! Will you yet loiter and see your glass running, your sun setting, yourselves dying, and your souls perishing? Oh seek the Lord while He may be found (Isa. 55:6), “in an acceptable time” (2 Cor. 6:2)—before the day pass as the chaff; before the decree bring forth [Zeph. 2:2]; before the evil day come; before they that look out at the windows be dark, and the keepers of the house begin to tremble; before the doors be shut in the streets, and the silver cord be loosed, or the pitcher broken at the fountain; before

you are gone to your long home, and the spirit return to God who gave it [Eccl. 12:3–7].

Consider with yourselves: are you fit to grapple with this mighty monarch death? Are you freighted for this long voyage and ready and willing to pass through this dark entry? Take heed and fear, lest you be found unfit. Think on the sadly deluded virgins that had their oil to buy when their lamps should burn, and so came to the door, but found it shut. Think on poor Esau that was hunting for venison while he lost the blessing.

Poor perishing souls! What do you intend to do? If you will work, it must be now or never. Are you resolved to seek and secure the kingdom of God first (Matt. 6:33), while it is called today? Or will you bestow nothing but the dregs and snuffs of rotten old age on God and your immortal souls? Oh that you might know in this your day the things which belong to your peace, before they be hid from your eyes!

**That It Is the Most Dreadful and Amazing Sight
on This Side [of] Hell to See a Christless Unbeliever
Breathing Out His Last**

There are other sad sights—namely, to see a man starving for want of bread or dying for want of a physician or drowning for want of a boat, or to see a man dead, a corpse, a body without a soul. But ah! How sad and astonishing a spectacle it is to see a man near the coast of eternity—namely, to behold a wretched sinner in his cold sweats and dying groans with his precious and immortal soul standing on his pale, cold, quivering lips; and death, the great conqueror and king of terrors, marching furiously with his writ of removal in one hand, not to be reversed, and his deadly dart and sting in the other hand; conscience on the rack, barking, biting, and tearing him like a lion; the devil, God's executioner, looking on and standing by;

the heart under dejecting and sinking despair; the eyes dim and fixed; his heart strings ready to break with anguish; his wife, children, and friends at the bedside, weeping, sighing, crying, wringing their hands, beating their breasts; the wife crying out, "Alas, my husband!"; the child crying out, "Alas, my father!"; the poor perishing soul all this while looking backward on his misspent time and bypast sins, inward on his own heart—a dreadful sight! Where he sees no Christ, no grace, no purity, nothing but sin, guilt, death, darkness. Then, looking upward to that God who has been provoked, to that Christ who has been rejected, to that heaven and eternity that he has lost. And looking downward to that dark and dreadful pit that must be his place and portion (with a fearful looking for judgment), seeing the devils come and ready to seize on him. Oh what a dreadful outcry and shriek will the soul make when it departs! Perceiving itself sinking down, down to the burning lake and bottomless pit, where he must take up his lodging with devouring fire to all eternity.

The pangs of death, the world's loss, anguish of conscience, and frights of hell meeting together will make a man perfectly miserable and force him to cry out with cursed Cain, "My punishment is greater than I can bear" (Gen. 4:13), or to say with the sadly afflicted church, "Behold, [there is] no sorrow like unto my sorrow" [Lam. 1:12]! And if the dreadful reflection of a guilty, accusing conscience is so tormenting here, what will be the whole flame and sea of wrath when poured out to the very utmost?

Senseless sinners! Consider [that] this may be your doleful case when you come to die—namely, to have "much sorrow and wrath with [your] sickness" (Eccl. 5:17). For there is no peace to the wicked, says my God (Isa. 48:22). Not one word in all the Bible but speaks terror in life and death. Though the sinner live a hundred years, he will be accursed. He dies

under all the curses written in God's Book, indeed, under that most dreadful gospel curse (1 Cor. 16:22), the apprehension of which will cause such distraction of spirit and sad reflections of guilt, which will make them curse their God and their King, looking down to the pit, roaring out, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" [Isa. 33:14]. Therefore, be wise to consider this, all you that forget God, lest He tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver (Ps. 50:22).

And as 'tis dreadful and amazing to see the unbeliever dying, so on the contrary 'tis comfortable and reviving to see the godly man dying, because his last is his best.³ The day of his death is better than the day of his birth (Eccl. 7:1). His end is peace (Ps. 37:37).

God at peace, conscience at peace, and all at peace! Oh blessed sight, to see the heaven-born, panting soul going out of the world on the wings of joy, calmness, and serenity of spirit, with full sail to heaven, longing and crying out, "Make no tarrying, oh my God. Haste my Beloved; haste." [Song 8:14]. So "come Lord Jesus" [Rev. 22:20]. I "desire to depart, and to be with Christ," which is best of all (Phil. 1:23).

You have heard what are the great things to be considered—namely, that an end will certainly be. This world is no place of continuance. They that now see you, 'ere long will see you no more forever. You have heard that your present things will perish, that sin so full of deadly poison will leave a sting, a dart that will strike through your liver, and that the case of the wicked will be doleful, dreadful, indeed, desperate when they come to die—for when death comes, your soul then will be stated so as there can be no alteration to eternity.

3. Original: his *ultimum* is his *optimum*.

CHAPTER 8

Reasons to Consider

The next thing is to speak to the reasons why 'tis a duty and matter of such moment to consider, which are these following:

**Reason 1: Because the Only Wise, Gracious,
Most Indulgent, and Soul-Compassionating God
Wishes It, and That Most Vehemently**

[This reason] is taken from God. “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!” [Deut. 32:29.] Sirs, in this pathetic option or desire, there are the very tender bowels of God. There is the very language of His heart, and it is as if He had (after the manner of men) spoken thus to His faithful servant Moses: “I have but one wish or request, and all is comprehended in this one—namely, that you should go and tell them from Me that they must be wise to consider this, to remember the days of old and the years of many generations, what I have done for them above all nations in the world to be My treasure, portion, and peculiar people. And because I love them, I have delivered them, wrought wonders for them in Egypt, the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, and have kept them as tenderly as the apple of Mine eye, carrying them on eagles’ wings. But yet let them know that they have forgotten Me, provoked Me, and that

their end is like to be miserable; for a fire is kindled in Mine anger, and unless they do speedily consider, it will burn to the lowest hell.”

Now, you souls in peril, which is best? To thwart, cross, and grieve your well-wishing, dearest, best, and only friend, or to please and gratify your professed, deadly, implacable enemy? Your adversary the devil cannot endure that you should think of death or dying, for if Satan, that old serpent, would permit and suffer you to look into hell, he could neither drag nor draw you there at his pleasure. And will you go on in your ways of sin and death? Or bethink yourselves whose you are, what you have done, where you are going, and what is likely to become of you when your breath is gone, what provision you have made for the other world, that so the great business between God and your souls may be made up?

Sinners! If the infinitely holy, just, and righteous God did desire or design your ruin and destruction, He would not have excited you to this solemn and serious consideration of the end of sin, death, and eternity until it were too late, and you left without a remedy. So that what is here intended has a tendency to make you happy, if it be regarded. “O that they were wise!,” etc. [Deut. 32:29].

Reason 2: Because a Deep, Serious, and Heart-Affecting Consideration of Death and the Grave Will Both Realize It and Represent It As Near, Even at the Door, and Make It to Stand in Open View

Whereas things looked on at a distance, whether they are good or whether they are evil, have but a little if any influence, now a fixed and hearty consideration will give, as it were, a being for future things and bring them near so that you may really converse with those things.

A truly godly man who has a view of unseen things by divine contemplation here on the wings of faith and hope—he may ascend up to heaven and walk a turn in the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. As the prophet Ezekiel was in the vision of God at Jerusalem in his mind when his body was by the river Chebar among the captives in the land of the Chaldeans, so likewise those sadly wounded spirits, who through fear of death are all their lifetime subject to bondage [Heb. 2:15], being exercised with soul conflicts and under powerful cutting and killing convictions of sin and misery, have such dark and dismal thoughts and apprehensions of hell and the wrath of God which makes them ever and anon to enter into the chambers of death and visit the prisoners of the pit and look on that black gulf and fiery furnace to be so near that they are on the brink of it, falling down continually. This has been the cause of many of God's precious ones who are now in heaven above all these fears and frights that were once more bitter than death. And oh! How many, travailing with these pangs and agonies of soul, are ready to cry out with holy Job, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me" (6:4). Such is the nature of meditation or consideration that it may cause future and remote things to have a real, powerful, and deep impression on our minds—as, for instance:

A merchant in India by his meditation or contemplation may converse with his affairs, his wife, children, and friends in England. Or a merchant that is walking on the exchange in London may have his mind or thoughts in Spain or Italy or elsewhere. A malefactor cast into prison for some notorious crime may long before the assizes converse with the sad circumstances of his trial. He may in his thoughts see himself brought to the bar, standing before a terrible judge to hear his

indictment read, the charge proved, his doom and sentence pronounced, and see, as it were, himself at the place of his execution, with the rope about his neck, which must immediately hang him. And if you would in good earnest set yourselves to consider your latter end, you may really and heart-affectingly converse with old age, weakness, sickness, your deathbed, short breathing, cold sweats, dying pangs and groans, winding sheet, coffin, and see yourselves, as it were, stretched out, nailed up, and on the shoulders of men carrying you to the grave, where worms and filthy vermin must feed on you.

The servants of God and saints of old have done this with great success and soul-advantage, and so should you. They have reckoned or counted their lives by days, because they were every day liable to death and expected it daily. “Teach us to number our days,” said Moses (Ps. 90:12). “Few and evil have the days...of my life been,” said old Jacob [Gen. 47:9]. For “man that is born of a woman is of few days” (Job 14:1). “All the days of my appointed time,” said Job, “will I wait, till my change come” (14:14). “For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house”—a dark house—“appointed for all living” [30:23]. And, he said, “My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me” (17:1). Wherever he went or came, he was looking for a grave. Again, by consideration, we may not only look to the grave but beyond it—to the great transactions and astonishing things that will be after death. We may converse with the world burning, Christ coming, the trumpet sounding, the grave opening, the dead rising, the wicked roaring, who, as jolly as they are, will then cry to dead and deaf mountains and rocks to fall on them to hide them from God, for in that great day of His fierce and terrible wrath they will not be able to stand (Rev. 6:16–17).

By this realizing, believing consideration, we may see the Judge standing behind the door and the Son of God, as it

were, ready to break forth of the clouds with power and great glory, as Jerome did, who said, “Whether I eat or drink, I hear this voice in my ears, ‘Arise you dead and come to judgment!’” Now, if a right consideration of the great things to come be so penetrating and heart-awakening, let death, which always dogs you at your heels, be often on your thoughts. Your heads and hearts too should be much on it. Every night you lie down and every morning you rise, let there be some serious and awful thoughts of death and eternity. That which many have engraven on their rings—namely, “Remember to die”—let it be by the pen of a diamond written on your hearts. It is storied of Philip of Macedon that he laid a charge on one of his servants to come every morning into his chamber and proclaim this: that he was mortal. And, if a heathen was so careful of keeping the memory of his mortality, much more should a Christian. We should always remember the days of darkness and keep life and death, heaven and hell before us, there being but a step between us and death. The neglect and want of this was Israel’s sin and Jerusalem’s too. She did not remember her last end. “Therefore she came down wonderfully” (Lam. 1:9). And this God, who would have us remember and consider, does sadly complain of by the prophet, calling heaven and earth to witness for Him, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth.... The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider” (Isa. 1:2–3).

Reason 3: A Serious Consideration of Your Latter End (through Grace) Will Prove an Absolute and Sovereign Antidote to Expel the Greatest Evil

Indeed, [it will be] a means to escape an infinite loss—namely, sin and the dreadful effects and consequences of it.

What is the cause of that inundation and sea of wickedness and most prodigious sins that are now in the world and in this nation, in every city, town, and place, and in most families, among all ranks and degrees of men—namely, magistrates, ministers, people, parents, children, masters, servants—but this: their not duly and deeply considering their latter end? This we find laid down in the Word of God to be one main ground of all sins and of the neglect of duties.

You careless souls! Did you believe and remember that you must die and come to judgment, that your naked souls and naked sins must shortly stand before the most tremendous, direful judge of quick and dead, the reflection hereof would be as a knife to your throats, as a sword to your breasts, or as a handwriting on the wall to retard or hinder your constant and desperate course of wickedness.

Oh! What horrid, hellish outrages are now committed, and that deliberately, impudently, obstinately, even against the light of nature, conscience, Scripture! What cursing, lying, swearing, blaspheming, Sabbath-breaking, cheating, cozening,¹ stealing! What wantonness, filthiness, uncleanness, swinish drunkenness, covetousness, earthly mindedness! What mocking, scoffing, wrath, envy, malice, pride, passion, and spiritual wickedness too, as unbelief, atheism, impenitency, hypocrisy, apostasy, hatred of God, His people, ministers, ways, and ordinances everywhere abounds! Men declare their sin like Sodom and are not ashamed of the unfruitful works of darkness. And why but because they do not set their minds and hearts on their latter end.

Poor dying sinners! Let me, out of tender compassion to your bleeding and almost sinking souls, entreat you as for the Lord's sake to go down to the grave, to go down to hell in your

1. *Cozening*: deceiving.

thoughts and stop here and think of the king of terrors, the worm of conscience, the approach of devils, the burning lake, the bottomless pit, the loss of God, of Christ, of heaven and your precious souls. Remember those fiery, scorching, endless flames, the presence and company of devils, reprobates, and damned spirits; and your sweet morsels will be gall and wormwood to you. These amazing things, being truly reflected on, will be as lightning in your eyes, thunder in your ears, as thorns, darts, and swords in your flesh, as poison in your bowels, as fire in your bones to compel and force you speedily to curb and check the reins of your hellish lusts, that so you might fly from the wrath to come.

Did you but view that dark and cold grave and hot hell that is so near, you would rather starve or die than run to that excess of riot. You could not sleep and snort, dance and sport on the pit's brink under such a consideration.

But forget all this, banish the thoughts of God, death, and hell, and you will run and rush into sin as a horse into the battle (Luke 12:45), crying, "Peace! Peace!"—till danger, death, and destruction come (1 Thess. 5:3).

This was that mighty sin that ripened Jerusalem for her ruin and brought her down wonderfully. Her filthiness is in her skirts; she remembers not her last end. The Lord complains by the prophet Isaiah of the same thing: "Israel does not know. My people do not consider." But what follows? "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers... they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel" (Lam. 1:9, cf. Isa. 1:3-4).

But he that does that which is lawful and right will save his soul alive. Who is that? He that "considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed," he will save his soul. Whoever does perish, that man will never perish (Ezek. 18:14, 28).

Reason 4: The Consideration of Your Latter End Will Be a Powerful Incentive to Make You Exert and Put Forth the Greatest Industry in a Way of Duty

Indeed, it will certainly have an influence on all our duties and on all our graces, for considering and doing are frequently joined together (Ps. 41:1; Prov. 31:16). “She considereth a field, and buyeth it.” “I thought on my ways,” or, considered my ways, “and turned my feet unto thy testimonies” (Ps. 119:59; Lam. 3:40; Heb. 10:24). This, if anything, will make you serious, diligent, and constant in any duty and to work while it is day before the night comes, wherein no man can work [John 9:4].

The apostle exhorts to “consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works...and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:24–25). The remembrance of the day of our death and of our passing into eternity with a deep impression of it on the heart will be as a voice of thunder, speaking to the secure, senseless sinner, “Awake, awake, you that sleep. Open your eyes, stand on your feet, and behold and see what a sea of blood and wrath is here!” See and believe; believe and consider; consider and fear; fear and fly; and make haste in your work. Your work is great and weighty; diversions are many; adversaries are strong; your strength is small; your time is short; your account is great. Death and judgment are at the door. Therefore, up and be doing, now or never.

You slow and slothful souls! Let your apparent and inevitable danger suddenly provoke and spur you to your duty to seek the Lord in a time accepted before the door of life be shut, God withdrawn, and mercy quite gone.

The most profane seaman will sigh, mourn, pray, promise, vow if death and danger look him in the face. When the ship was likely to be broken, and death threatened immediately to surprise them, the mariners were sore afraid and cried every one to his god. And this the very light of nature dictated to

the shipmaster, though a heathen, that then it was no season to sleep. “What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not” (Jonah 1:6). And the most notorious thieves and murderers will pray in prison or when they come to the gallows, the place of execution.

When the most righteous Judge sent His destroying angel to the city of London and other places in the year 1665, for the dreadful fear of which many thousands did fly and many thousands did fall—namely, the carcasses of men like dung on the ground and as handfuls after the harvest man; when death did knock at a thousand doors in one night—oh what confession of sin, fastings, cryings, and importunate knocking was there at the throne of grace! (And it may be by many persons and families that prayed but little before or since), that God would pity, pardon, and remove that amazing sweeping judgment, which is now almost forgotten. On an awakening apprehension of Nineveh’s fatal ruin, the king and his nobles decreed and proclaimed a fast and enjoined everyone to cry mightily to God (Jonah 3:8).

Sinners! Were you but truly sensible of your peril, you would pray to purpose—namely, more ardently, more inwardly, more deeply, more affectionately than ever you have done. It was a supposed danger, and that of death, that caused Jacob to weep and make supplication, for “Esau hated Jacob...and said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob” (Gen. 27:41). “Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed” (32:7), which made him be importunate with God for deliverance, and he prevailed (32:9; Hos. 12:4). Poor sinners! Your case is dangerous (I will not say desperate), but you are ignorant of it. You do not know that you are poor, miserable, blind, and naked [Rev. 3:17]. Were you but sensible that you are liable to the wrath of God, the stroke and sting

of death every moment, it would constrain you to cry mightily to God for pardon. Holy Job, when he considered of death and judgment, set prayer to work and said, “Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away my iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust.... O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, till thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me” (Job 7:21, 14:13). This also made these two gracious kings, Hezekiah and David, to weep and pray in the bitterness of their souls: “In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD” (Isa. 38:1–3).

David, when the sorrows of death compassed him, and the pains of hell got hold of him, then, said he, “Called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul” (Ps. 116:3–4). Jonah, who could sleep in the ship, prayed in the whale’s belly. “Out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice” (Jonah 2:2). The apostle Peter and Christ Himself press prayer from the consideration of the end of the world. “The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer” (1 Peter 4:7). “And pray,” says Christ, “that ye may...escape all these things...and stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36). Neither does our dear Lord Jesus press that on us which He did not practice, for being sensible of the bitter and most dreadful cup of His Father’s wrath He prayed, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass” (Matt. 26:39).

Sinners! Let me tell you, as secure and senseless as you are, an awakening impression of approaching death and judgment on your souls would be as the cry at midnight to excite and stir you up to get in your oil and to trim your lamps. The virgins both wise and foolish were all asleep and secure enough until

that sudden and amazing cry was heard, "Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps" (25:6-7). 'Tis the storm and rain that hastens the bee into the hive, that brings the traveller into his inn, the ship into the harbor. So likewise the sense of death [hastens] the dead and drowsy professor into prayer. "In their afflictions they will seek me early" (Hos. 5:15).

A heart-affecting meditation of unchangeable eternity will be as a voice from the clouds, crying, "Haste sinners, haste, posthaste. Haste as for your life in the work of faith and repentance, in parting with sin and closing with Jesus Christ, without which there will be no hope." Noah was moved with fear and prepared and got into the ark "to the saving of his house," when the secure, deluded world died by the deluge (Heb. 11:7). Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men (2 Cor. 5:11).

You wretched sinners that will not believe or consider until you are just dropping into the pit: If you had but a little cranny to look into the other world, how violent and resolute would you be in the speedy prosecution of your known duty! You would examine, prove, and try yourselves. You would read, hear, meditate, watch, pray, repent, fear, love, obey more than ever. Did you see the night will come, is coming, and that the days of darkness will be many, whatever you [would] do, you [would] do it with your might (Eccl. 9:10). Now, "before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you.... Seek ye the LORD"—for how will you escape if you neglect so great [a] salvation? (Zeph. 2:2-3; Heb. 2:3).

Reason 5: You Are to Consider Your Latter End, Because Here Lies Your Highest Wisdom

"O that they were wise," etc. [Deut. 32:29]. If you would be so wise as to exceed all the wisest men, greatest statesmen,

and politicians in the world, it must be in considering of and preparing for your end. Sirs, in this you are most concerned, because thereby you will promote your own interest; for it will make a man profitable to himself, wise for himself (Job 22:2; Prov. 9:12). 'Tis true wisdom to understand this—namely, to be wise to that which is good (Rom. 16:19). To be wise in Christ, to secure the chiefest good is the best wisdom.

There are many worldly wise men who, while they live, provide for everything but death; and they are often ready to die before they begin to live (in a spiritual sense). And is it not a very unfit and sad season to prepare for death when it is a burden to live? And indeed, such are the many evils attending old age, that men can have no pleasure in them (Eccl. 12:1). And will these be accounted the only wise men that are but wise in their generation to get the world; to pursue lying vanities and forsake their own mercies; to hew out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water, and forsake the fountain of living water [Jer. 2:13]? This is to prefer pebbles before pearls, to gain earth and to lose heaven, to be happy for a time and miserable to eternity (Jer. 2:13; Jonah 2:8; Matt. 16:26).

True wisdom and serious consideration is exercised about things good and evil. Indeed, 'tis conversant about the best good, how it may attain it, and about the worst evil, how it may impede, avoid, and escape it, choosing the most adequate and effectual means to bring it to pass. This excellent divine wisdom is proper and profitable to direct (Eccl. 10:10), and so it does [direct] every considering godly man while he lives, fast and firmly to secure that which he has of greatest value—namely, a precious soul, worth more than anything he stands possessed of. If all the rocks were pearls, all the earth and heaven gold, or if all the waters in the vast ocean were converted into crystal or the most precious stones in the world, and put all in one scale, and the soul into the other scale—the soul would weigh

it all down. Our dear Lord tells us that the gaining of the whole world is a valueless consideration to the loss of one soul (Matt. 16:26). So that he must be wise indeed that has gotten a cabinet for this rare, incomparable jewel, where it will be forever safe. “He that winneth souls is wise,” says the wisest of all mere men (Prov. 11:30). And sure then he is so that saves his own.

Again, he that considers his end is in the very way to procure and make the best friend that will certainly stand him in stead to purpose and in the greatest peril—namely, God, Christ, angels, saints, conscience, Scripture, his real friends. When once the breach is made up between God and the poor soul, who can harm or hurt him? If God be for us, who can be against us (Rom. 8:31)? I will lay me down and sleep in peace (Ps. 4:8).

Moreover, he provides against the greatest wants by laying up for a spending time. There was not a man to be found in all Egypt so wise as Joseph, who, foreseeing their want, filled the storehouses against the years of famine. “He that gathereth his meat in the summer,” says Solomon, “is wise” (Prov. 10:5). Consider the time of youth is your summer. Old age, a sick bed is not a gathering but a spending time. And you are not wise, wise toward God, wise for your precious souls that do not make it your business to trade and lay up a stock and store against that time. Many a silly soul like the wanton grasshopper leaps and skips, chirps and sings all the summer; and when the winter comes [he] perishes for want. But the truly serious and considering soul, like the laborious bee or ant, toils or labors in the summer. And that man might put off sloth and learn his duty and so provide for the time to come, Solomon sends him to the ant: “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which...provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest” (Prov. 6:6, 8). And so the wise in heart that trade for eternity lay up the best supplies against the evil day, which are the favor of

God and interest in Christ, pardon of sin, peace of conscience, a stock of prayers, rich and choice experiences, and love tokens of their Father's favor, the evidences of their heavenly country. This is the hidden and heavenly country. This is the hidden treasure of the godly man, who only is called the man of wisdom (Mic. 6:9).

Besides, he prevents the worst of evils—namely, the guilt of sin, the sting of death, sorrows of hell, terrors of conscience, the wrath of God, the loss of God, his soul, and heaven. This infinite and irreparable evil or loss he will never sustain, because this timely consideration of death and judgment will be a means to fit him for it. “They that were ready went...to the marriage” (Matt. 25:10).

But for you that are careless of your immortal souls, that think not of death, that will not consider your latter end (if infinite mercy does not speedily prevent), you will certainly die without wisdom. If you do not seasonably secure your souls, make God and Christ your friends (while the poor people of God lay up a treasure in heaven), a good foundation against the time to come, you will treasure up wrath “against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5). And this is the doleful case of many worldly wise men and of those too whose office and employment is to keep (if it might be) others alive—namely, to cure diseases and prevent death. It is observed concerning Paracelsus, a great physician, a man very skillful in chemical experiments, that he bragged and boasted that he had attained to such wisdom in discerning the constitutions of men and in studying remedies that whoever did follow his rules and keep his directions should never die by any disease. Casually he might, and of age he must. But he would undertake to secure his health against diseases. A bold and most presumptuous undertaking—but he, who by art promised to protect others, could not by his art

make himself a protection in the prime of his age, who died before or when he had lived but thirty years.

Poor mortals! Since you cannot prevent death, it is your wisdom to prepare for it. And forasmuch as you cannot by any means, power, or skill keep off the stroke of death, get while you may a remedy or antidote against the sting of death that when you die you may not die unprepared or die without wisdom. For "man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish" (Ps. 49:20). So did the miserable, mistaken rich man, who (though by himself or others judged wise) in the account of the only wise God was a very fool, who for providing only for the time of life and not for death did deserve the name of "thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required" (Luke 12:20). A dark and dreadful night indeed, in which he lost both worlds at once, earth and heaven too. And will you say that you are wise and not consider what your end will be? The five virgins are called foolish virgins. But why? Because they did not make provision for the bridegroom's coming. And when they came to the door, it was shut on them. Ah! Sad and dreadful disappointment!

But the diligent and prepared soul that has gotten in his oil and made all ready is in a capacity to look on death with a smiling aspect, because the deadly poison and sting is out, and it can but kill the body. 'Tis not able to hurt the soul. But the sleepy, secure sinner will be dreadfully surprised, as Belshazzar was by the handwriting that appeared on the wall, the terrifying and amazing sight of which changed his countenance and troubled his thoughts, so that neither his wine, his wives, or concubines could comfort him, who had lifted up himself against the Lord of heaven (Daniel 5).

Sinners! Consider the king of terrors is a terrible sight, and to none more than to those that have their heaven here. It will be to them as the tearing of their caul from their very

hearts, worse than cutting off a member from the body; for many have suffered the loss of members to save their lives. “Oh death, death, death! How bitter, bitter” is the remembrance of you to the man that is at ease in his possessions! And let me tell you that evils and dangers, by how much the more sudden and unexpected they are, by so much the more dreadful and astonishing they are.

What a sad and hideous cry was there in Egypt when at midnight God smote their firstborn, and also when the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up Korah and his cursed company, that went down alive into the pit, insomuch that all Israel fled at the cry of them. For they said, “Lest the earth swallow us up also” (Num. 16:31–34). And how terrible was that sudden shower of fire and brimstone on filthy Sodom after a bright sunshiny morning (Gen. 19:24)! So when grim and ghastly death comes in a black night and draws the curtain and looks on the secure sinner, it will be very formidable; for who can look death in the face that dare not look God or his own conscience in the face? But the sincerely godly man, fitted for death, may look and live above the fear of death and hell and welcome death as old Jacob did the wagons that his son Joseph sent to fetch him down to Egypt. When he saw the wagons, the spirit of Jacob their father revived (45:27). Death, though a grim porter, will open the gate of glory to every believer and let them into their Father’s house, for both life and death are theirs (1 Cor. 3:22). “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord” (Rev. 14:13). “To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). “Whoso is wise” will receive these things [Ps. 107:43]. These are the reasons why your latter end must be considered.

CHAPTER 9

Applications

If it be a duty so necessary to mind your end, I will descend to improve it by way of application.

Use 1

This calls aloud to all you unconverted sinners that have made no preparation for death and judgment to stand, wonder, or sit down and admire at the unwearied patience, the matchless and amazing mercy of the infinitely gracious and glorious God.

Has the most righteous, just, and sin-revenging God held your souls in life and kept you from death and hell to this very day? And will you not, even to astonishment, adore the unsearchable riches of grace? Men commonly wonder at things above their reach or that for which they can give no reason, and especially a rare, singular, and unmerited mercy. Now stop a little and spend a few serious thoughts and consider what reason can be given that you should be numbered among the living, when so many are dead; that you should be in the world, and so many thousands of men, women, and children in their graves, and their precious souls you know not where. Now, that your bodies are not laid up in that dark and dismal prison of the grave, and your dear and never-dying souls bound, fettered, and chained in that direful, painful prison

of hell is matter of the greatest wonder in all the world. Have you not cause to doubt that many of your neighbors, relations, and sinful companions and acquaintances are gone down together, and it may be some of those you least suspect? And you know not how many are now in flames for the very same sins that you stand guilty of, if not less sinners than yourselves. Oh admire and bless God with your whole souls that you are yet on this side of the grave and not gone down into that place of torment. You enjoy many opportunities for your souls and are still exhorted to part with sin, to turn to God, to accept of Christ, to think of death and hell, that so you might never see it or feel it; for there is much more in the pains of hell and wrath of God than ever you heard or can imagine. "According to thy fear," said Moses, "so is thy wrath" (Ps. 90:11).

Poor sinners! You are still the living monuments of infinite kindness, and therefore let not the "living man complain" [Lam. 3:39]. Suppose you had died when death seemed near, when you were sick and weak, ready to give up the ghost, or when those many thousands died by the plague or sword. In what a miserable condition had your souls been to be shut up with devils and damned spirits in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone! And will you still maintain your enmity, increase iniquity, and even dare God to damn you? Sinners! Are you not beside yourselves? Indeed, stark mad to make God, that should be your best friend, your worst foe? For if His anger be kindled but a little, it will burn to the lowest hell, and none can quench it or stand before it. "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?" (Ezek. 22:14). Who can dwell with devouring fire? "Who would," says the Lord, "set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together" (Isa. 27:4). Oh when will you come to yourselves and throw away your arms and consider your souls? Or

will you not be saved? When will it once be [Jer. 13:27]? Why will you die? Let these cords of love draw you and cause you to say, “Behold, we come to thee, for thou art the Lord our God” [Jer. 3:22].

Consider [that] others’ dreadful ruin has been your warning, that are now locked up in that dark dungeon and will come up no more, and whom the devils are now tormenting, the worm biting, and the fire burning. You are at present free from the boiling cauldron and in the land of the living. Oh praise, praise the Lord for His longsuffering, you being but, as it were, under a reprieve! Oh prize and improve your life and timely prepare for death, for if your life were ended, your soul separated, and no peace with God made, you would be an undone soul. There is no place for repentance in the grave; no Christ or pardon to be obtained in hell. Bless God your glass runs, your lamp burns, the day of grace is yet continued, your dear Lord is on the mercy seat. Therefore, there is hope.

Use 2

This justly reprehends all who slight or neglect this great duty, but especially these three sorts—none of which do seriously consider their latter end—namely: (1) the insolent, atheistical sensualists; (2) the ignorant and inconsiderate; (3) the self-confident and presumptuous.

The Insolent, Atheistical Sensualists

It condemns atheistical sensualists, that put the evil day far from them (Amos 6:3), and who drown or banish the awful thoughts of God, death, and eternity out of their minds and hearts. They “take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ” and “say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways” (Job 21:12, 14). God is not in all their thoughts (Ps. 10:4). They are resolved for a

short life, and a merry, whatever be the dreadful issue. They chant to the sound of the viol and drink wine in bowls and eat the lambs out of the flock and stretch themselves upon their couches [Amos 6:4–6], saying in their hearts, as that wretch, “Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:19). They will satisfy their lusts, enjoy the pleasures of the flesh, walk in the ways of their hearts and in the sight of their eyes. And hereby they make the breach wider and themselves seven times more the children of the devil, though at last they sit down in everlasting sorrow. “Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die” [1 Cor. 15:32].

You poor, desperately deluded souls! Did you believe what you have read and heard of the other world, or what the Scripture of infallible verity speaks of the infinitely holy, great, and terrible God (who will in no wise clear the guilty), you would quickly change your course. Did you now consider you must die and be judged, that in a very little time you who hear me this day must stand before the dreadful God—would you sin so freely, love the world so immoderately, mock at a deity, jeer at serious piety, neglect your duty, trifle away your time, forget eternity, and hazard those your precious souls, as you have done and do? Such hellish rakes and devils incarnate the apostle speaks of: “Knowing this first”—i.e., before the end of the world—“there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?” (2 Peter 3:3–4). Nevertheless, these vipers, vile miscreants, and monsters in men’s shapes think that they are wise when indeed they have no understanding. Wise they are, but it is to do evil, to cavil against the truth, dispute against a life of holiness. But to do good they have no knowledge (Jer. 4:22).

This was Jerusalem’s great sin, immediately before the fierce anger of the Lord came on them. And this is the sad

and dreadful case of many, indeed, thousands in the world and in these nations—notwithstanding all those awakening, desolating providences and amazing spectacles of mortality their eyes have seen.

There are but a few that look on themselves as concerned at all, just like a company of simple sheep in a fat pasture. The butcher comes and fetches one today, another tomorrow. The rest feed on and take no notice of what is become of their lost companions. 'Tis as if a company of condemned persons (reprieved for a time) should be appointed to be executed one after another within the space of so many days. This day the first in order is brought forth and executed; the day following, a second. Yet all the rest that are to take their turns fall a drinking, carding, swearing, singing, and so continue till the very last until they be all hanged, dead, and damned.

We may compare this mad, deluded world to a company of poor, blind men, dancing about the brink of a very dangerous deep pit, but do not perceive it or see how each falls in one after the other. A first, second, and third drops down. The rest, not discerning the danger, run the round. I will thus apply it. This day or hour, a swearer tumbles down to hell; the next, a drunkard. This evening or morning, the pale horse mounts one. It may be a cursed atheist or a malicious, bloody persecutor or a filthy adulterer or an idolatrous worldling. And [he] carries him to the place of darkness. The next day he receives his commission to fetch some more of them. Those their brethren in iniquity that are left behind keep and continue their course and dance about the pit, not considering they must die and come to judgment. How little do the living lay to heart this great business of their mortality, insomuch that when they would deny a thing with greatest confidence, they will commonly say they thought no more of it than of their dying day, as if death were not a matter of any moment but

rather a mere toy or trifle not to be regarded. “She remembereth not her last end” (Lam. 1:9).

You self-destroying sinners! Do you know that you must die and leave the world forever? And are you so stupefied and mad as not to think of death in many days together—indeed, hardly to entertain a serious thought of death and judgment at a house of mourning? In the very sight of the dead you can be vain, frothy, jest, pot, pipe, feast, discourse of the world, a sad proof that men do not consider of their latter end. Some at that solemn and sad season seem a little serious, but as soon as the dead corpse is removed, and the grave and coffin out of sight, death is no more remembered. To make you sensible of this folly, let me reason with you in a few plain hints:

What! No thoughts of death, you that have been under a sentence of death and brought to the very pit’s brink, looking into eternity? Oh how sad it is to think how quickly those thoughts and impressions of your mortality have worn out and passed away! Sinners! Remember and forget not the secret vows, promises, and engagements you then made to God—namely, that you would part with sin, leave your wicked company, sit loose to the world, live godly, and make it your business to be religious and lose no more of your precious times and opportunities for your souls. If you have forgotten it, the all-seeing and heart-searching God remembers it. Know and consider in your heart that death that did but warn you then by sending his summons will shortly come himself.

Forgetful of death and made of dust, born of a woman, and under decree not to be revoked by men or angels (Heb. 9:27)! As for man, “his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass” (Job 14:5).

Not to mind your death? You that have sickly, weak, diseased bodies, full of pains and aches, that are so many

partial ordinary¹ deaths! Indeed, dying daily! What! Put off the thoughts of death? You that have been at so many funerals, heard so many passing bells or knells, seen so many graves, skulls, and coffins before your eyes? Forget your death? And yet sinners, sinning daily, carrying the cause and sting of death in your bosoms—death in the body.² The body is dead because of sin (Rom. 8:10). Your body is but a body of death. Sin has killed it; the sentence is passed (Gen. 3:19). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). The soul that sins must die (Ezek. 18:20). What? Put off this evil day? And dead in part, old and cold, having one foot in the grave—namely, feeble knees, trembling hands, wrinkled faces, gray or bald heads, the grave being ready for you! What? No more serious thoughts of death? And so many pieces and parcels of yourself gone before to this long home! So many relations and children now asleep in the dust of death! Are they buried in perpetual oblivion, never to be remembered more?

What, sinner? What? Not think of death? And death at your very heels and before your eyes! Where can you direct your eyes and not see that which preaches or represents death? All the winter, death is on the trees in your gardens, in every flower. At your table, every day you feed on the flesh of dead creatures, to tell you that you must die. And is not death in your beds every night? What is sleep but the picture and image of cold death? And your beds but the representation of your dark graves?

Oh careless, besotted sinners! Not consider of death? And have precious souls that must live or die, be saved or damned, to heaven or hell, bliss or burning, to God or devils, to saints or cursed reprobates, as soon as the breath is gone, which may be

1. Original: *quotidian*.

2. Original: *mors in corpore*.

the next day or hour. This pale horse death has the red horse hell following him (Rev. 6:8). Lastly, what? not think of and prepare for death? And called “Christians,” that profess you believe the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, a happiness beyond the grave! For “if in this life only,” says Paul, “we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable” (1 Cor. 15:19).

Poor, hardened sinners that now forget God and this great and mighty concern of your immortal souls, what will you do in the day of your visitation, when the iniquity of your heels will compass you about, and no friend in heaven above or in earth beneath that can stand you in stead? And when conscience, like a bold, sturdy sergeant, will take you by the throat and summon you in the name of the great Judge to come and stand at or before the judgment seat. “Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise?” (Ps. 94:8), to understand this, to provide for your latter end?

The Ignorant and Inconsiderate

This blames the ignorant, pettish, and inconsiderate soul who in an angry fit or passion wishes for death out of a base end—namely, as a writ of ease or outlet to present pain, poverty, sickness, and other worldly troubles and perplexities, not rightly considering how terrible death is or what the dreadful consequences of it are. Now, that you may be convinced of this sin and folly, give me leave to tell you that between the worst, longest, and deepest miseries and calamities of this life and those after death there is no preparation but an exceeding distance.

Poor, deluded souls! What is the bite of a flea to the sting of a serpent? Or a scratch on the hand to a stab at the heart? What is the heat and smart of a little candle to a hot, fiery furnace or a devouring flame? What is a drop of gall to a sea

or ocean of poison? Or what is a pain, torture, or anguish for an hour to intolerable misery, time without end, into which to the unconverted death will certainly be the door? And are you so mad to imagine that there is nothing in the other world to be feared or felt worse than outward pressures, perils, pains, which are but bodily miseries, and that but for a moment? This sin not only the profane world are guilty of but some of those that profess the name of God. Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth" (Gen. 27:46). Rachel cries out, "Give me children or I die" (30:1). Elijah, being threatened by Jezebel, said, "O LORD, take away my life" (1 Kings 19:4). Jonah for the loss of a gourd said, "It is better for me to die than to live," and told God to His very face that he did well to be angry "even unto death" (Jonah 4:8-9). The Israelites, when they wanted water, wished they had died in the wilderness. These and the like wicked wishes are in the mouths of many poor, ignorant, discontented persons, who long to be out of this wretched world.

Now, by way of conviction I will lay down these following particulars:

What think you of those inward and soul-straits and conflicts, wherewith God's poor, afflicted people are sadly exercised? And were you but sensible of the guilt and weight of sin, a wounded spirit, the wrath of God, and those everlasting burnings, it would quickly swallow up your outward miseries, though never so many. This is evident in the example of the jailor, who for the loss of his prisoners was so tormented that he would have killed himself before he was convinced of the dreadful state of his soul that was in danger of ruin. Then he fell down and cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:27-30).

To wish for death because of the evils attending this life is very wicked and dangerous. Interpretatively and in effect, it

is to wish your souls in hell. Consider and mind this also: that your present sorrows, crosses, troubles of whatever kind or degree they may be are the fruit of your ill-doings and far less than you deserve; for it is a wonder you are not in hell! And will you dare to be so audacious as to fly in the face of your faithful Creator, when you should be deeply sensible of your horrible wickedness and be humble under God's hand and accepting the punishment of your sin? You should repent and turn to God. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

You can please and gratify the devil, your deadly adversary, nothing more. You wish for death; so does the devil too. If you are his now, you must be his then—his here, and his forever. He waits and longs that your breath were gone, your souls separated. Therefore, he would have you poison, hang, drown, starve, or stab yourselves that you might be dead, damned, and burned with him in hell.

Moreover, if you were dead, you would suddenly repent and change your mind and, if it might be, give the world to be alive again, with all the wants, pains, and grief you now endure. Had you but a peeping hole into hell to see and hear what they endure, you would confess your sins, judge yourselves, and close with Christ before you die, that so you might not come into that dreadful place of torment. Now that you may hear and fear and do no more so wickedly, let me ask you:

What think you of the sting and bitterness of death, when a man comes to die, conscience being awakened, roaring like a lion, death the king of terrors standing by, when the guilt of past sins and loss of precious time will be as so many fiery darts and stinging scorpions, biting and gnawing on the heart? What, think you, will it be to die unconverted, to die in a state of sin and wrath, a traitor to God, in a state of unbelief and impenitency (the soul-damning sins), to die with an evil heart

and an accursing conscience, self-condemned, cast in your own breasts, to die, to die, which is worst of all?

What think you of the sadness and amazing terror of approaching judgment, the second death? When a man comes to take a dreadful view of the other world and begins to reflect and think, “Wherefore was I born? What have I been doing? Are all these my sins? Oh where will I leave them? Or how will I be rid of them, now I am dying? Where am I going? What will be my company? Where will be my place, and how near am I to it? What must I endure, and how long, how long?”—and conscience will answer: “To eternity, misery without end.” This will amaze, confound, or overwhelm the soul with fear and perturbation, when it sees that heaven is lost, and that it must [go] down, down to the region of darkness and company of devils in that state of everlasting woe. The killing thoughts of which made a great man wish that he might live, though but the life of a toad.

What think you of the impartiality of the Judge who will not spare the guilty, must and will judge and sentence according to the facts and reward every man according to his works? He would not spare the angels that sinned but cast them down to hell (2 Peter 2:4), nor Adam but cast him out of Paradise and set a flaming sword against him. Neither will He spare any impenitent sinner in the day of His wrath. Justice obliges Him to justify the righteous and condemn the wicked.

What think you of the impossibility of having any appeal? There will be no Moses to mediate, no mediator to plead, no Daniel, Noah, Job, to intercede or to stand in the gap—not an intercessor in earth or heaven to be found to speak a word. There can be no appeal to God. His calls and counsels have been refused; His interest, opposed; His enemies, countenanced; His laws, violated. His anger will burn like fire. No appeal to Jesus Christ. His government has been slighted,

and grace and person, rejected. Or to the Holy Spirit. He has been quenched and grieved. Or to angels and saints. All will be against you.

What think you of the resignation of soul and body to the executioner and tormentor, the red dragon? 'Tis sad to see a poor malefactor committed to the jailor or hangman, but oh how much more dreadful will it be for ever-living souls in the face of men and angels to be delivered into the hands of the raging, roaring lion, the devil? When God, the righteous judge, will say in sight of the whole world, "Here are the men that broke My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths, that hated My saints, that served the devil in satisfying their lusts, the open and professed adversaries to My name and interest, and that would not, though I often entreated them, come at My call, accept of My love, receive My Son, or endure a life of holiness or by any means be drawn and persuaded to think of and prepare for death and judgment, though they had time and opportunity enough. Now take them, Devil, and away to hell with them, for My soul abhors them. Your covenant servants and voluntary slaves they were in time, and your prisoners in chains of darkness they will be to eternity, to be tormented day and night forever (Rev. 20:10)."

What think you of eternal banishment and separation from God, Christ, angels, saints, heaven? This is the punishment of loss and the worst of hell: "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). Oh terrible! Terrible! To be doomed or sentenced to lie under the wrath and hatred of the infinite, great, and dreadful God forever and ever, as long as God will live, whose being is to eternity. As long as there is a devil to torment or to be tormented will their plagues last. The fearful and unbelieving and the abominable murderers, whoremongers, liars, dogs, sorcerers

carry all their sins down to hell with them, the fuel that feeds the wrath of God, so that the oil of sin causes the lamps of wrath to burn and flame everlastingly. The debt of sin can never be repaid, justice never satisfied, and the damned souls remain impenitent and God implacable, so that there can be no hope of pardon. The sentence is strict, unchangeable, irreversible, eternal. Oh eternity! Eternity! This stings, plagues, augments, and aggravates the most intolerable punishment of the damned. After innumerable thousands of years, they will think it but the beginning of their sorrows and will be so far from an end as if they had been in hell but an hour. It will be an “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:9). In comparison of which, all the rendings, rackings, tearings, torturings of men’s bodies here by the most exquisite torments on racks, gibbets, wheels, gridirons, boiling lead, boiling oil, and other bloody invented engines and instruments of amazing cruelty are but a flea biting.

Sinners! ’Tis “Hell! Hell!” that will make the sadly tormented soul seek death, wish and long for that which will never be (Rev. 9:6). And will you desire and wish for the woeful day? God forbid! Now your condition may be changed. Then it will be stated: “Woe, woe to you that desire the Day of the Lord!” To what end is it for you? “The day of the LORD is darkness, and not light” (Amos 5:18)—a day of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, at which the people will be much pained, and all faces will gather blackness. The inhabitants of the land will tremble, for the day of the Lord is very terrible (Joel 2). Now, therefore, do not wickedly wish it but wisely consider and prepare for it. And blessed is that servant whom, when his Lord comes, [He] finds so doing.

The Self-Confident and Presumptuous

It reproves the self-confident and presumptuous, who conclude on a fitness and preparedness for death and judgment on very slight and unwarrantable grounds—namely, because they separate from the notoriously wicked, are not profane, make a profession, show some legal sorrow for sin, run the round of duty, though carnal and heartless enough in those duties. From hence they easily persuade themselves that all is well—namely, that they are the children of God, in a state of grace and going to heaven, and as fit to die as the very best. How many thousands are there in the Christian world who sleep securely and dream of an interest in Christ, that hope and promise themselves a future and a glorious felicity, who are but mere mortal men and worse, or rotten, painted hypocrites at the best, having only a form of godliness, restraining, counterfeit, or common grace? Such scribes and Pharisees are the foolish virgins and yet confident to the very last. They came to the door with a “Lord, Lord, open unto us” [Matt. 25:11]. They had blazing lamps but no oil in their lamps or vessels—no real union with Jesus Christ, no precious faith, no sincere love and evangelical repentance. The root of the matter was not in them.

You that have a name to live, take heed you be not deceived. If you are not truly united to Jesus Christ, He will certainly disown you. The Lord Jesus tells us of such sadly deluded souls that will stand up at the last day and challenge a reward in heaven, to whom He will protest, “I know you not” (7:23). They never savingly knew Him, had never any union or communion with Christ in the world. Many are called, but few chosen. “The children of the kingdom,” says Christ, “will be cast out” [22:14; 8:12]. And I must tell you, whoever comes to heaven will miss many there which they thought to find and find others there they little expected. The sinners in Zion are more than a

few—the goats more than the sheep, the tares more than the wheat, more reprobate silver than pure, tried gold. The pure in heart and truly godly man that mourns and bleeds for sin, that loves God and prizes Christ above the world is many times full of fears and doubts about his soul and the eternal condition of it. Oh what would he not give to be assured that all is well between God and him? To know that God and Christ are his, that he is fit to live or die? Because a mistake here is very dreadful and of an infinite consequence. But on the contrary, the foolish disobedient that are deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in sin and alienated from the life of God, having no hope and without God in the world, are highly confident and strongly persuaded that it will go well with them in the world to come. I knew a poor, ignorant, profane wretch, being told on his deathbed (and but a little before he entered into eternity) that death was come, replied, “Where is it? I will go forth and meet it.” Putting his legs over the bed, in a little time [he] gave up the ghost. Therefore, in this great soul affair, let none be so foolhardy as to trust without trial, “but let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden” (Gal. 6:4–5).

Question: If the consideration of our latter end is of so much moment, why do men and women that have immortal souls think no more of it?

Answer: (1) The great cause is from that horrid, cursed atheism and unbelief, which is deeply rooted and riveted in men’s minds and hearts. They do not credit that wondering and amazing doctrine of the other world, according to the belief of which they must live or die to all eternity. If we should take a serious prospect of endless eternity and of those great things men seem to believe—namely, that they must die, that

in every man's body there is a never-dying soul, that there will be a different and unchangeable state of men after death, and that without holiness, real holiness of heart and life, no man will see the Lord [Heb. 12:14]—compare the lives and practices of those that pretend to believe these things, and we may see them as busy as a company of ants on a sunny day, and that the general course of men has no tendency toward this end but indeed a sad and woeful incongruity.

(2) The second cause is want of spiritual and divine wisdom. It was for want of that wisdom which is from above that the Israelites did not consider. "O that they were wise!," said God. "They are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them" (Deut. 32:28–29). If men were wise for their precious and eternal souls, they would consider what is here to be done and what is likely to be their condition in the other world. "The prudent man foresees the evil"—or, considers the evil—"and hides himself" [Prov. 22:3; 27:12]. When God by the mouth of Moses threatened to plague the Egyptians by the pestilence, hail, and fire, he that believed and feared the word of the Lord among the servants of Pharaoh made his servants and cattle flee into the house, and [they] were preserved (Ex. 9:20). So the soul that is truly wise to consider the danger of being destroyed by the grievous hail and fire of God's wrath will flee into the hiding places—namely, under the wing of the great and glorious Mediator, where alone there is true succor. But he that did not fear or consider the danger left his servants and cattle in the field, and [they] were destroyed (9:21, 25).

(3) The third hindrance is sensuality, worldly pleasures, and cares. These carry away the heart from true consideration. The Israelites' confluence of creature comforts caused them to forsake and forget God (Deut. 32:14–18). The old world was eating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, not considering their danger, till the flood came and took them

away (Matt. 24:38–39). The men of the earth do so mind earthly things that their hearts are surfeited and drunken with the cares of it (Luke 12:34). And while men's minds and thoughts are carried so vehemently after the world to make provision for their lives, they can think but little of their death (vv. 15–18).

(4) The fourth obstruction is a plague on the heart and desperate security proceeding from it. No bonds next to death are so strong to keep men under as security and senselessness of spirit. So dead a sleep possesses most of the ungodly world that they are past feeling and become so stark dead that the voice of God in the dreadful threatenings of His Word and the alarm of His amazing, tremendous judgments and desolating providences prevail not to awaken them. The Lord has poured out on them the spirit of a deep sleep and has in judgment closed their eyes that they can sin in the very face of the Judge at the very brink of hell, at the very mouth and entrance of that great gulf of eternity.

(5) A fifth hindrance to men's consideration of their latter end is a strong delusion of heart or satanical suggestion. The old serpent and desperately deluded hearts make them dream that God is all love, that they will have a long life, that preparation for death and eternity is a short work, and that it may be done at any time—namely, when they have done with the world, when they are old or lying on a sick bed. They say in their hearts 'tis but believing or repenting and say[ing], “Lord, have mercy on us. Let me die the death of the righteous” [Num. 23:10; Ps. 123:3]. Under this deadly delusion they dream of heaven and go laughing to hell (1 Thess. 5:3).

And that which does much increase this stupidity may be the want or neglect of a powerful and soul-searching ministry, whose office as watchmen is to foresee the danger and to warn and awaken secure sinners, crying aloud to them in the name

of the Lord, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph. 5:14). But some cannot endure that ministers should be so severe, plain, and piercing in their doctrine so as to thunder and lighten in the eyes and ears of sleepy souls. They are well contented to sit under those that daub with untempered mortar and who sow pillows for their armholes, under whose ministry they may take a nap and sleep it out. But they hate him who reproveth in the gate, that galls, cuts, and wounds their conscience—just like the gall-backed horse that bites and kicks at him that would heal him.

A person of no mean quality, speaking his opinion of several ministers, said, “Such a man I can hear, and such a one I can hear very well.” But the third he mentioned that was wont to lay the axe to the root of the tree and grapple with the heart: “I cannot endure to hear him, for he always grates on my conscience.”

(6) Men do not consider their latter end because they are afraid to do it:

First, to wanton sinners, the remembrance of death is a bitter pill that will not suffer the pleasure of sin to go down so sweetly. Therefore, they say to the thoughts of death, as the governor to Paul, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” [Acts 24:25]. Serious thoughts of death and judgment to come, as the handwriting on the wall, will dampen the spirits and mar the mirth of the greatest prince and gallant in the world.

They fear to think of death because they have made no preparation for it—namely, they have not believed, repented, lived a life of holiness so as to make their God their friend. A bankrupt that owes many hundred pounds more than he is worth is afraid to cast up his accounts. So poor and impenitent sinners that are indebted to God, that owe Him ten thousand

talents are unwilling to think of death, because death will say to them, "Come, give an account of your stewardship, for you must pay the utmost farthing" [Matt. 5:26; Luke 16:2].

They are afraid to think of death by reason of the dreadful consequences of death, as it relates to both worlds. The change that death makes, as to this present world, is very amazing.

It brings unavoidably a dissolution or separation of soul and body. These two dear companions that have lived and conversed together and sinned together for many years must then part. And a living man will become a dead carcass, fit for nothing but the grave; and the soul must have another habitation (Job 17:13–14; 19:26). Well might death be called the king of terrors [18:14].

(7) It is a matter of fear to leave this world that has been so pleasing and delightful and for which you have toiled and labored so many years—in one night to lose it all. For when the departing hour comes, you may take a view of all your comforts which you have had under the sun and helps of heaven—namely, husbands, wives, parents, children, kins-folks, friends, jolly companions, gold, silver, houses, lands, sweet and delicate banquets, pleasing bargains—and say, "We must now part; farewell forever. We will never see or enjoy you more. We will never eat, drink, or converse more, buy or sell more. All our fleshly and sensual delights are ended. Our joy, our mirth is ceased. And all the blessed advantages for our salvation will now terminate. Farewell, the means of grace and all the golden opportunities for our souls. Farewell, all those faithful ministers that we have heard. Farewell, all those powerful awakening sermons that have sounded in our ears. Farewell, all the blessed Sabbaths. Farewell, all the counsels, examples, reproofs, prayers of our serious and religious friends and relations. We will never see the face of a minister more or hear a sermon more, never have the door of grace

and life opened to us anymore forever.” And what remains but a doleful remembrance of those good things that are past and gone and a severe, strict account that is yet behind?

Oh dreadful change and loss indeed to them that make the world their home, that have their heaven on this side of heaven and no provision or portion beyond the grave! The thoughts of which made a wicked young man (very thriving in the world) to utter these words, “If I live, I will be a rich man; but this is the plague of it: I must die”—which accordingly came to pass not long after.

No wonder death is so terrible, for after death, the judgment. Death is a pursuivant³ that summons guilty souls to come and give an account at God’s dreadful bar. And what [is] more terrible to the malefactor than the sight and presence of an angry judge? While Paul reasoned of judgment, Felix trembled and bid him be gone. That doctrine did so gall him that he could not endure it (Acts 24:25).

Use 3

The third use is to exhort, persuade, and stir you up, to put this duty of so great and infinite concern into practice. Oh sirs! I beseech you to entertain some timely thoughts of your dying hour, that death and you may be more familiar. The best friend you have in heaven and earth longs to see it done. “O that there were such an heart in them!” [Deut. 5:29].

Now if you would do anything in this blessed work—namely, to prepare for death and judgment—it must be done (1) suddenly; (2) seriously; [and] (3) effectually.

3. *Pursuivant*: a junior officer of the military.

Suddenly

It must be done *suddenly*. It is a business of that importance that must not be neglected or delayed for a moment's time. Did you but see that you are on the confines of eternity and in danger every day of being undone forever, you would quickly come to the resolution. To further and engage you, consider:

Life (as dear and precious as it is) is very uncertain. What a nothing is this life! A wind, a vapor, a dream, a thread, a breath, a bubble. How soon may the thread be cut, the glass run, or this bright, burning lamp be dim or out? When, how, or where this short dying life may terminate, you do not know. Whether at home or abroad, among your friends or strangers, in the field or house, at your table or in your bed, who can tell?

Death may come suddenly. When the pale horse will set forth, whether in the morning or at midday or at midnight, no man can tell. There is a fatal hour which none can pass (Ps. 64:7; 73:18–19; Luke 12:20; 1 Thess. 5:2).

When death comes, it strikes sure. This king of terrors on the pale horse always rides the circuit and does execution wherever he comes. No shield or buckler or armor of proof can defend us—no, not an army or guard of men or angels. If dreadful death finds a king on his throne or a beggar on the dunghill, it is all a case. The strength of a man, though a Samson, this great leviathan death counts but a straw. Death does his work speedily, easily. Witness the last plague. I will add here:

Death's calls, warnings, and alarms are very frequent. [There is] not one of you but have had many a call and knock to mind you of death.

Death's commands are peremptory. He brings his writ along with him. Death comes in the name of the terrible Judge and takes his commission out of the court of heaven in order to the accomplishment and execution of an eternal

and irrevocable decree, so that he must do his work [and] will have his errand. If a man had mines of gold and silver to give, it cannot deliver from the arrest of this inexorable sergent.

Death's conquest is great. "I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living" [Job 30:23]. "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?" [Ps. 89:48]. "Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass" [Job 14:5]. They that have conquered kingdoms and countries and carried all before them have been subjected by death. When death comes and takes a man by the throat, though the proudest, stoutest, strongest in the world, he must go, willing or unwilling. It is all one to death. 'Tis observable that of bad men their souls are not resigned but taken away. "What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" (27:8). "A tempest steals him away in the night" (27:20). "This night shall thy soul be required" [Luke 12:20]. Death will not stay one night. 'Tis in vain for them that are strong and lively to say to death, "Go to the wrinkled faces, to the grey heads, to the pale cheeks, to the naked backs, to the dry bones, to the dry breasts. Meddle not with this young man; strike not this comely, beautiful woman, who is in the flower and prime of nature. Go to yonder consumptive, declining, decaying old man. Go to that weak, withered, old woman. Let me alone to be excused." Oh but death regards it not! For this great conqueror death knocks as often at the young man's door as at the door of the old woman. Death arrests and carries away the strong, the healthy, the rich, the honorable, the learned prisoners to the grave as often as the weak, the sickly, the poor, the base, and ignorant.

Seriously

You are to do it *seriously* with your soul. The living will lay it to heart (Eccl. 7:2). The dead cannot. There is no device in the

grave. Then go about it now in good earnest, before old age and death come.

Effectually

Do it *effectually*. Go thoroughly with the work. Leave it not undone, or but done by halves. Let every lust be mortified, every duty performed, every grace exercised. As good never a whit, as never the nearer. Now you have an opportunity before you. The day of grace is continued. Christ is at the door. Open to Him and make all sure, for if ever you be justified, pardoned, sanctified, it must be now.

CHAPTER 10

Motives

The considerations to persuade you are these following:

Motive 1

Consider there is an absolute and indispensable necessity for the doing of it—a present necessity, an infinite and eternal necessity. Other things may be done; this must be done. And it is more than time this great work were done and finished. It is the grand business of your life timely and truly to prepare for death and judgment. It were better that all your concerns in the world were wholly neglected—namely, husband, wife, children, buying, selling, seed time, harvest, omitted and let all run to ruin, than to hazard, lose, and undo your souls—for this will certainly ruin body and soul forever.

Oh seriously mind how little you have done in the time of your life past and how incapable you will be to do anything at the end of time, when you come to take up your lodging in the grave. Oh remember the days of darkness, for they will be many (Eccl. 11:8). They that have been in the grave a thousand years have done nothing; neither can you when you come there. Now, for you that have lived some twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or sixty years and done nothing in order to a preparation for your everlasting state, it is high time to begin the work.

The most of you are so senseless as not to consider or entertain a thought of death till you hear the bell or see a grave or coffin, or till death comes within your wall and knocks at your bed head—when you see a friend, a child, a brother, a husband or wife gasping or dying, till you see them bedewed with cold sweats and groaning with dying pangs. Till your eyes thus affect your hearts, your hearts are seldom affected with the sense of your mortality. Now, since it must be done, and done suddenly, resolve in spite of men and devils and all the world to set about the work.

Motive 2

Consider [that] it may be done. You are in a capacity to do it. Adored forever be free grace!

Time and Opportunity Are Yet Before You

The torch burns, and sun shines; yet it is day, though not morning. Some sands are behind, though not a whole glass. Some of you are old, lame, deaf—but not dead. Others, weak, sick, languishing—but alive. If the sun were set, the candle out, the glass run, farewell all hope of heaven or of altering your condition forever. They that are gone down to the dead and among the damned may (and do) reflect with torment on the opportunity once offered to make them happy, but can call back none. That is impossible.

God Is Willing to Help if You Go to Him

“Thine is the power,” and He gives it to them that have no strength (Isa. 40:29). Duty is ours; assistance and success are God’s. That God who has given you a considering season can also give a considering soul. Go to Him on your knees and beg as for your life His speedy aid. And say as the woman to David, “Help, O king” [2 Sam. 14:4], or as the father for his distressed

son, "If thou canst do any thing...help us" (Mark 9:22). Christ did help us. It is His promise, "Seek, and ye will find" [Matt. 7:7; Luke 11:9]. But it cannot be said so of separated souls, because time and means for them are gone forever.

Then, in the name of the Lord, acquit yourselves like men, wise men that are endowed with precious, rational, considering souls, that differentiate you from brutes. Let that noble faculty of reason be executed in considering your latter end, for consideration is a serious, eager, or lively act or exercise of the understanding about the things to be done or not to be done, furthering or impeding the execution of them as it seems good. It is the exercise of the mind and heart. These are at work in this divine consideration. Contemplation, as one observes, looks on things as the eye on the object. Judicium discerns things, whether good or bad. But meditation or consideration is a further inquisition into the truth. Set consideration at work and, not like brutes, suffer your eyes, ears, lusts, and senses to be your guides. But commune with your hearts, consider your ways, reflect on your actions, look to your end—which, if you did, you would not be so sensual, so sinful as you have been and are (Isa. 1:4).

Motive 3

Consider the omitting or neglect of it will render you the worst of fools. If the doing of it be your highest wisdom, the not doing of it must needs be the greatest folly. This will make you like Ephraim, a silly dove without a heart. Do you know that you must die, and die but once? And will you not endeavor to do that well which cannot be done a second time? As Luther said to his adversaries, "You can kill me but once. You are not able to raise me to life again and kill me a second time." So I say to you. Oh you secure sinner! When your breath is gone, it will return no more.

Oh consider with a trembling heart how much depends on this dying once!—namely, the gaining or losing of your dear, precious soul, the gaining or losing the favor of God, the fruition of God. The joys of heaven or the torments of hell hang on it.

When death comes, your eternity is cast. The very next moment after you have shot the black and amazing gulf, you will see and know what you will be and where you will be to all eternity. And will you judge the men of the earth or worldly wise men [as] the wise men who take care for the body and neglect the soul? That make provision for time, but none for eternity? Oh sirs! If you would but trace them to a sick bed, a deathbed, from thence into eternity, and to God's dreadful tribunal, you might easily determine (Jer. 17:11; Luke 12:20–21; 16:22–23; Rev. 6:15).

Motive 4

In a very little time your present, powerful, and awakening helps and advantages to excite and put you in mind of the other world will be past and gone. And these are chiefly three—namely, (1) awakening ordinances; (2) awakening providences; [and] (3) awakening convictions.

Awakening Ordinances

[These] will have an end. The faithful, powerful ministers of the gospel that watch for your souls and whose office is to fire the beacons and give the alarm will, we know not how soon, finish their work. Those Boanergeses and ambassadors of the Lord that preach the dreadful and amazing doctrine of death and judgment, and that with loud and earnest cries, tears, and fervor of spirit to make you sensible of your sin and danger, will shortly be called home. Moses, that great prophet, after he had composed this excellent song (of which my text is a part) was

gathered to his fathers. Noah, that preacher of righteousness, after he had for many years together warned the old world, was called into the ark; and they had never a sermon more till the wrath of God came on them, and there was no remedy (2 Peter 2:5). Be you not therefore as your fathers, to whom the former prophets have cried, saying, “Turn ye from your evil ways,” for they have not long to cry [2 Kings 17:13]. The prophets do not live forever (Zech. 1:4–5). You cannot rationally expect always to hear the pleasant noise of Aaron’s bells or the sound of silver trumpets. The sun will go down over the prophets. Therefore, while the watchmen are on the walls, take warning and finish your work while you have the light.

Oh sirs! Improve for your eternal advantage those plain and powerful sermons which you hear and read, and let it not be accounted legal preaching. Who were more severe in their preaching than our Lord and His forerunners, whom we ought to imitate, otherwise we draw the horrible sin of blood guiltiness on our souls (Ezek. 3:18–19)? It is observed that there are more dreadful doctrines scattered up and down in the New Testament than in the Old, the powerful application of which is very necessary both for secure sinners and drowsy saints. Holy David, after his fall, fell into a deep sleep and did not awake until Nathan came and told him plainly and particularly of his sin. And of the virgins we read, while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept (Matt. 25:1–13). Oh how many sleepy souls are there in the world and in many cities, towns, and parishes in this nation that will, either living, dying, or after death, sadly bewail not improving the labors of their faithful pastors!

Awakening Providences

All your awakening providences, by which God warns and calls, will have an end. The great and glorious God for a long time

together has been speaking and calling to us by His Word, and of late years He has spoken by His dreadful rod, and that very terribly. The sword, the plague, the fire, the decay of trade, and other judgments are the loud voice of an angry God. Those afflictions on our families, relations, estates, persons are in order to the awakening us out of sleep, and so for our profit. When Manasseh was among the thorns and bound with fetters and carried into Babylon, he besought the Lord and humbled himself greatly (2 Chron. 33:11–13). After Ephraim was chastised, he awakened, turned, and repented; for bonds and cords of affliction do open the ear to instruction, when he shows them their work and their transgression and commands that they turn from iniquity (Job 36:8–10; Jer. 31:18–19). Now to have a deaf ear to the rod and word, to be hardened and secure and go on in sin under awakening and amazing providences is a dreadful judgment, and that which ripens men for ruin (2 Chron. 28:22). This is that King Ahaz, who, in the time of his distress, did trespass yet more against the Lord (Jer. 5:3).

Awakening Convictions

Your awakening convictions will have an end too. Those secret and powerful workings, strivings, and strugglings of the Spirit of God under the rod and in the world will be suspended. Christ will not always be at the door calling, knocking. And His Spirit that is so much grieved and opposed will not always strive and struggle with your hearts and consciences (Gen. 6:3). Now, sinners, if you have any love or regard to your immortal souls, before all these helps be taken away be wise to consider and prepare for your end, lest God should resolve speedily and say to you as to the Jews, “Why should ye be stricken any more?” (Isa. 1:5). Or as Hosea 4:17: “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” They will have their lusts, and they will have them. “As I live,” says the Lord, “this iniquity will not be purged till you

die” [Isa. 22:14]. “Since nothing will prevail, I am resolved,” says God, “they will never hear any awakening, soul-searching sermon more, never have a correction or conviction more till they go down to hell.”

Motive 5

Consider that the earnest cries, tears, prayers of unbelievers when they come to die will be in vain, fruitless, and unsuccessful. Though you speak in the anguish of your souls and complain in the bitterness of your spirits, when your flesh on you will have pain, and your souls within you will mourn, it will be to no purpose. You that will not seek God betimes and make supplication to the Almighty. That will not pray while you have time to pray, helps to pray, health to pray, encouragement to pray.

Now God invites. You may have audience. Your prayers in a dying hour will be but the expressions of your fears and terrors, arising from the sense and nearness of your danger, when there will be but a step between your departing souls and the state of devils. God seldom hears from some men unless trouble, sickness, fear, distress, and anguish come on them. Then pain will make them pray and howl on their beds—and it is but howling, not praying (Hos. 7:14). But “will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?,” says Job (27:9). No, says the Lord. “I will not be inquired of by you” (Ezek. 20:3). Because it comes from an evil mind or stinking breath, proceeding from a corrupt, rotten, cursed heart, and then it must needs be abominable (Prov. 15:8; 21:27). “I will,” says David, “wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar,” for “if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer” (Ps. 26:6; 66:18).

If God would not hear a David’s prayer, a man after God’s own heart, He will not hear a devil’s prayer nor the prayer of a

swearer, Sabbath-breaker, drunkard. He hears not sinners that like and love their lusts. “No,” says the Holy Spirit. “Though they seek Me early, they will not find Me” [Prov. 1:28]. Here note that there is a twofold early—namely, God’s early and man’s early. God’s early is in the morning of our life, in the time of youth. Then God calls and invites to come (Eccl. 12:1). Man’s early is in the evening or at the end of life or when a man is near to death, when pain, sorrow, and anguish come on him. “In their affliction they will seek me early” (Hos. 5:15). “When your fear cometh as desolation, and destruction cometh as a whirlwind.... Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me” (Prov. 1:27–28). God will say to all such sinners, remember it, as Isaac to Abimelech, “Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you?” (Gen. 26:27). Or He will say, as once to the children of Israel that cried to Him in their sore distress, “Go and cry to the gods which you have chosen. Let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation. As for me, I will not deliver you” (Judg. 10:13–14). “You have served the devil, embraced the world, satisfied your lusts, joined with Mine enemies. Go to the devil. Go to your lusts, to your wicked company. Let them deliver you in your distress. Now death and devils are come for you. I will not own you nor your prayers. Your souls abhorred Me, and My soul abhors you and your prayers. Depart from Me, I know you not” [Matt. 7:23].

Motive 6

It is the great comfort of the godly man’s life to hope and know that he is fit for death. Whatever be their lot and portion in this world, be assured it will go well with them in the other world. Are you in a state of grace, at odds with sin, and truly in love with Christ and holiness? Be of good cheer. Go your way and eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry

heart, for the bitterness of death is past. The king of terrors that had the power of death is conquered by the Lord of life. Terrible death that rides on the pale horse is dismounted by the dear Lord that rides on the white horse, under whose bloody cross you may see him disarmed, wounded, and dead. Death that reigned from Adam to Moses is now swallowed up in victory. Hosea 13:14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues: O grave, I will be thy destruction." The believing soul is dead with Christ while he lives (Rom. 6:8) and is delivered not only from the damnation but the dominion of sin, and there is hope in his death. When he dies, he will die in the Lord (Rev. 14:13). He will sleep in Jesus (1 Thess. 4:14). His end will be peace (Ps. 37:37). This made the apostle after his sad conflict (Romans 7) to triumph over this last enemy death (1 Cor. 15:55).

Motive 7

If you should not prepare for death, yet you will wish you had (as many do when it is too late). You that are for making for the flesh and so eagerly pursuing the world and the things of it, when you will be cast on a bed of languishing, you will wish in the very torment of your minds and flames of horror, "Oh that I had parted with my sin! Oh that I had been careful to please and honor God and to get an interest in Jesus Christ! Then should I now have died the death of the righteous, but this I wholly slighted. I prosecuted the world with might and main and got so many thousands for my posterity, and I lived a merry and jovial life. But for my soul, for my eternity, things of infinite worth, I have done nothing. I forgot my soul. Now here is the messenger of death come for me to imprison my body in the grave, the chambers of darkness, and to carry my soul I know not whither, I fear to hell. Oh that I had been wise

to understand this! To consider my latter end! What would I now give to live a few years more, to make provision for my soul, that must now enter the gulf of endless eternity?"

Motive 8

Consider the gain will be exceedingly great, as will appear by these following particulars:

Would You Hate Sin As Hell and Be More Truly Holy?

Consider your latter end. This is most certain: that all the antecedents and dreadful consequences of death spring and grow out of this bitter root. What is it that wounds, stings, pains, and kills? What is it that brings diseases and threatens death, that murders the body and that damns and burns the soul? What is it that does necessitate you to make use of physic and physicians while alive and brings you to a coffin or grave when you are dead? Is it not sin which you embrace in your bosom?

You poor, blind, deluded souls! As little and as lovely as sin looks in your wanton eyes, it is the mother and nurse of all your miseries, hatched in hell, the devil's spawn or excrement. "He that committeth sin is of the devil" (1 John 3:8). This is that evil thing and bitter that hails death and hell at the heels of it, indeed, that arms death, devils, and hell against us. Were it not for this black, ugly, fierce, cruel, and bloody adversary, law or justice could not condemn us, death could not kill us, devils could not torment us, hell could not burn us.

Sin is the traitor and murderer of your immortal souls, and those nails that will shortly dig your graves. And will you hug, hide, and hold it fast? Will a woman put a knife in her bosom that has killed or murdered her dear child or husband? No, by no means. It must be broken and cast away forever. Now, sirs, if sin is the enemy, use it as an enemy or murderer. Kill it; take the sacrificing knife and cut the throat of it. Or

strike the heart vein and let it bleed till it dies. Deal with it as Samuel by Agag: cut it in pieces [1 Sam. 15:33]. Did you think seriously of death and hell, you would hate it to purpose and say, “Away to hell with it, from whence it came.” And it would put you on a desire and earnest endeavor after holiness. Being exposed to a dissolution, what manner of persons ought you to be “in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11)? But if you forget death, you will make dreadful work—namely, your accounts greater, and hell the hotter. You will increase your sin, and God will heap up wrath against the day of wrath. And if ever God shows mercy, it will cost you dear. Your souls must mourn; your hearts must break and bleed for sin—for unless you repent, you will certainly be damned (Luke 13:5).

*Would You Speedily Call Off Your Hearts from the World
and Lay Up a Treasure in Heaven?*

Remember your latter end. In the greatest affluence of worldly prosperity, always consider that you must die.

Poor worldlings, that make gold your hope, whose plottings and ploddings are for earth! If death and eternity were more in your thoughts, you would let that go in your affections which you cannot hold in your possession and love that but a little which will be lost and which you cannot love long. Riches have wings, and they will be gone [Prov. 23:5]. Consider how little the things of this world will stand you in stead in the evil day. Your gold and silver cannot keep you from diseases while you live nor from hell when you are dead (Ps. 49:6–7; Prov. 11:4).

It falls out with many of the great storers of the world, as it does with a sumpter horse,¹ who all the day carries a great treasure on his back but at night is taken from him, and he thrust into a foul stable. So many wealthy worldlings that tire

1. *Sumpter*: a pack horse.

themselves to get and carry worldly treasure, when death comes, it is taken from them. And they for their ill getting or ill using of it are thrust down to hell. The rich man died and in hell lifted up his eyes.

And if you would deaden your hearts to this empty earth and look after a treasure above, a happiness beyond the grave that will last as long as your souls will last, think often of death. This would divert your worldly cares and projects.

Remember from this day to your last day cannot be long. Your journey or voyage is short, and a little provision is enough. Neither poverty nor riches but food convenient is the desire and choice of a citizen of Zion [Prov. 30:8]. Converse more with death and be often looking into eternity, and you may hear, as it were, a voice speaking to you, as God to Baruch, "I will break down and pluck up. And do you seek great things? Seek them not" (Jer. 45:4–5). Death is the great leveller that will make all equal. And you that grasp the world most greedily will find it but vanity, for "all is vanity" is the language of experience (Eccl. 1:2; 1 John 2:17).

When Samuel was to anoint Saul, he brought or directed him to Rachel's sepulcher, and to this end (as is supposed)—namely, to suppress or prevent naughty, proud thoughts that might arise from that new and great preferment. And if the supposition be true, it is as if he had spoken thus: "Saul, God has highly honored you, and I anoint you king. But remember, here lies the dust of that beautiful Rachel. And though you are now king in Israel, yet must you be as Rachel—namely, laid in the grave or sepulcher"—the thought of which is a very mortifying meditation. You that have the waters of a full cup, that wallow in wealth and swim in worldly glory, to wean you from the world (that your hearts may not be turned into earth and buried before you are buried), keep fresh in your thoughts death and eternity (Job 14:14).

Would You Be Deeply Sensible of the Sad and Doleful Condition of Unbelievers, When They Come to Die?

Think seriously on your latter end. What will you do in the hour of distress, when God will call for your breath, change your countenance, and require your souls, if you have made no preparation for death and judgment?

Poor souls! I would pity you with my very heart to think how ignorant you are of your great concernments. You eat, drink, sleep, buy, sell, and get gain, but slight your souls and do not consider of the evil day.

Woe be to him that is alone—that is, alone in life and alone in death; that has no Christ to befriend him or stand by him in that woeful day; that comes to lie down on his deathbed without peace or pardon, who will go into the grave and stand before the bar without an advocate to plead for him.

It is most probable you may have different apprehensions of yourselves and others in your dying hour, for the nearer the object, the clearer the sight. Oh sinners! When the door of eternity begins to open (as usually it does to men dying), you will have other thoughts of yourselves and other men. Here you ruffle it out, thinking yourselves above and better than others. “Behold great Babel!” said that proud person in his princely palace. But when pale death appears, it will pull down those peacocks’ feathers and cause their crests to fall. Now the world shines and sparkles in your eyes, which makes you judge and think that nothing but riches, honor, and greatness can make you happy. Then it will appear (the paint being off) to be an empty nothing. As for the pure in heart, who mourn for sin and mind their souls above the world, are scorned, jeered, hated, being looked on as a company of poor, pensive, sneaking, besotted fools, [they] will then be adjudged the best, wisest, and happiest men on the earth. Now, sin is excused and called a light and little thing or trick of youth. But then it will

have a black and dreadful face and feel more heavy than lead, taste more bitter than death itself.

Now, the damned and cursed crew are your brave boon companions and bosom friends, but when you are come to your dying groans and cold sweats, away with them. Their sight is terrible! But know that you who have been companions in sin must be companions in sufferings and lie down together in everlasting chains and flames. You will be fettered and bound together and never part anymore forever.

Now, an interest in Christ and a life of holiness is little valued, and every base lust and trifle preferred. Then a world, a world for Christ. "Forty thousand pounds for a good conscience!," cried out a wicked, wealthy worldling, when dying and passing into eternity.

Would You Expedite Your Repentance?

Try your state and make all ready for the other world. Think on this last enemy, the king of terrors, that will 'ere long terminate your days; and then all your opportunities will be gone forever.

If the thoughts of death, especially the second death, did but influence your hearts and penetrate into your consciences, you would easily be persuaded to cast away your sins—namely, to cut off a right hand or pluck out a right eye and to rend your hearts and to sit alone, to mourn in secret, to afflict your souls, and to put your mouths in the dust, if so be there may be hope (Lam. 3:29). We see that men in a journey, if they think they have day enough, are slack and slow enough. But if they see but a little time, they will make speed. If a man must do the work of a whole day in half a day, he will make haste. Repentance is not a work for a day, though a daily work. Our whole life is little enough to complete and perfect it. As long as we sin, we must mourn. While we provoke the Judge, we

must plead guilty and sue out our pardon with ropes about our necks and smiting on our breasts and (if it might be) with tears of blood. And the great things of death and judgment will prepare and prompt you to do it suddenly; for when the day is gone, the night comes, and the grave and hell have shut their mouths on you, what can be done (Eccl. 9:10)?

Would You Pray More Fervently, More Frequently than Ever You Have Done?

Remember you must die.

The monuments and statues of the dead, as one notes, are made in a praying posture—namely, kneeling and with hands lifted up to heaven—as if the remembrance of them now dead should teach us our duty, what we must do while living. One that was wont to pray often in a day, being asked why he spent so much time in prayer, gave no other answer but this: “I must die; I must die.” An awakening apprehension of a man’s entrance on an endless state and a speedy approach before the holy God will make him pray, and that importunately. If there be in the family a husband, wife, or child near to death, almost everyone that comes about the bed will be lifting up hands and putting up prayers. And then you cry out, send presently for some sober, serious minister or some solid, savory, praying Christian to commend his sad case to God.

The young man who lately suffered for murder, who came into Newgate as ignorant of God as the horse or the mule and as senseless of his soul as a stock or stone, was by the access and application of ministers to him convinced of his desperate case. And through the grace and blessing of God on His appointed means, he seemed so deeply sensible of the dreadful hazard of his precious soul that he did with so much brokenness of heart confess his sins, pray and plead with God and Christ for pardon, even to the wonder and amazement of

those ministers and Christians who were present. And being asked how often he prayed, [he] answered five or six times in a day. And it was with such meltings and multitudes of tears that it did move the very bowels of the auditors and, as they said, turned them into tears. Thus, you see how a powerful conviction of death and judgment may prevail on the heart to make them cry that never prayed before. As for you that can lie down at night, rise up in the morning, and go about the world without secret or family prayer—I must tell you that you have but a slight, if any, thought of death and eternity and no sense of or regard to your everlasting condition, which is a sad symptom of a Christless state.

Would You Do Good to Others, to Their Bodies and to Their Souls?

Consider you must die, and after death you will be incapacitated of doing anything. The wise man, speaking of the season of doing and of the vicissitudes of man's life—namely, that there is a time to be born and a time to die—and he, having observed the issues and changes of providence that have made everything beautiful in its season, concludes that it is best for a man “to do good in his life” (Eccl. 3:12). “As you have therefore opportunity,” says the apostle, “let us do good to all men” (Gal. 6:10), when “it is in the power of thine hand to do it” (Prov. 3:27). Sirs, the real thoughts of death will prompt you to give a portion to six and also to seven, and that in season; for when death comes, all is gone. Then it is no more in the power of your hand to do it.

Did you now believe and consider that you must die and give an account to God, the great landlord and donor of all your good things (great receipts have great accounts), you would not contract your hearts and shut up your bowels against those many miserable objects who are so often in your view.

Now, that you may be like sheep and not like swine, be good in your life and let your acts of mercy be distributed in the morning, the fittest season to sow this seed. Therefore, speedily draw out your soul to the hungry, before death separates your soul and body; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased (Isa. 58:10; Heb. 13:16).

Would You Get and Keep Sincerity?

A precious pearl indeed. Think often of death and judgment. Then it will be tried; then it will stand you in [good] stead. Sincerity (the scriptur[al] perfection) is the best of a Christian, the grace of every grace; for faith unfeigned and love in sincerity are the very nerves and sinews of Christianity.

The next best to the precious blood and righteousness of our Redeemer (to plead for us at the hour of death and in the court of heaven) is “truth in the inward parts” ([Ps. 51:6]; Isa. 38:3). To be a mourner in Zion is a matter of solace and real comfort, but to be a sinner in Zion is sad and will be a matter of torment. A Judas among the apostles, a devil in a Samuel’s mantle is a devil indeed. The sinners in Zion are afraid, and [with] cause enough; for to live and die in hypocrisy is most dreadful, because hypocrisy will certainly bring you down to hell. Indeed, the hottest place of that devouring fire will be the hypocrite’s portion (Isa. 33:14; Matt. 24:51).

Would You Redeem Your Time and Be Greedy of Getting Grace in the Day of Grace for the Present, Spiritual, and Eternal Salvation of Souls?

Think seriously of your end.

You sleepy, secure souls! Did you consider that the night of death will come certainly and may come suddenly, you would work while it is day and not be so mad as to put off believing, repenting, and soul-afflicting work, self-trying and approving

work until the day of old age, a sick bed, or dying pangs seize on you. Consider a deathbed repentance is seldom had, and seldom good. Or sick bed repentance is seldom found, but often a sick repentance. Now, if you would imitate your Lord to work while it is day, remember you must die (John 9:4).

CHAPTER 11

Directions and Reminders

Direction 1

Search diligently to find out what it is that keeps you and the serious thoughts of death and eternity at so great a distance, and cry mightily to God speedily to remove it.

If it be either ignorance, atheism, unbelief, sensuality, earthly mindedness, or security, be deeply sensible of it and set prayer to work. Pour out your very soul to God with the greatest fervor and importunity. Say, as Moses, “Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps. 90:11–12). Sirs, it is spiritual wisdom [that] will cause you to consider. “Then cry after knowledge, and lift up your voice for understanding” (Prov. 2:3–4). “For she is thy life” (4:13). It is as much as your life and soul are worth. Then, enter into your closet and fall on your knees and pray to God in the name of Christ for spiritual wisdom. We must seek it (Ezek. 36:37), and God will give it (James 1:5). Beg more than for your life for a truly wise and awakened heart, without which the great concerns of God and your immortal soul be forever neglected.

Direction 2

Diligently and faithfully use and improve the most awakening means which have a tendency hereunto.

*Set Yourselves under a Powerful, Faithful, and
Soul-Searching Ministry*

[Those] who make the conversion of souls their main business. A lazy, secure minister is not likely to awaken a secure sinner. The conviction and conversion of souls is not the mark they shoot at. Resolve to hear, love, countenance, and encourage those that grapple most with the conscience and earnestly endeavor to drive and draw souls to Jesus Christ by setting the blessing and the curse, life and death before them. Conviction leads the way to conversion, as the needle threads the cloth. What is a plaster worth, when there is no wound? It is the broken bones [that] cry out for help. The whole need not the physician. Overly general preaching is like the sword in the scabbard that does not cut nor wound, or like physic in the bottle that does not penetrate or work. But plain, particular, convincing preaching—such as Nathan’s to David or Peter’s to the Jews (2 Sam. 12:7; Acts 2:36)—is like the sword in the bowels or physic in the body that will pain to purpose. Those preachers that have no faculty of reproving and convincing secure sinners are like a company of drone bees that have lost their sting, being good for nothing. But they that have the charge of so many golden fleeces should sever the wheat from the chaff, the sheep from the goats, the precious from the vile. And, in so doing, we will be as God’s mouth and free from the blood of all men.

Oh, then, let this dreadful and amazing doctrine of death and judgment be more frequently and effectually preached, that souls in peril, near ruin, may see their sin and their danger

and flee to Christ as the only refuge. Knowing the terror of God, we persuade men (Matt. 3:7; 2 Cor. 5:11).

Converse with the Best Christians

Namely, those who are sober, grave, solid, savory, and sound in the faith—such as make religion their great business, who love to speak of God and of the world to come, by whose counsel and example you may be stirred up and persuaded to repentance and holiness to consider of death and judgment. These were David's excellent ones in whom he did delight and his companions (Ps. 16:3; 119:63).

Read the Best Books

And those that treat of death and judgment, but especially the Word of God. There are the pure, crystal streams and richest mines. In this field, you will find the pearl. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly [Col. 3:16]. Be not ignorant of any part of it but be sure to acquaint yourself with those scriptures that speak of the shortness of life, the certainty of death and judgment, heaven and hell. Read Job and the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes, Psalm 39 and Psalm 90. And let me desire you to be often urging on your hearts some of those scriptures that set forth the dreadfulness of that place of torment that will be the portion of all that forget God and make no provision for their precious souls. Some few I have here set down, which I desire you would all consider and apply. "Upon the wicked he shall rain...fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup" (11:6). "Woe be unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him" (Isa. 3:11). He will cast them into a furnace of fire. There will be weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth (Isa. 33:14; 66:15; Matt. 13:42; 25:41; Luke 16:25–26; 2 Thess. 1:8–9; Rev. 6:8, 14–15).

Direction 3

Make conscience of setting apart a little time every day on purpose to think on your latter end. Do it frequently, until death and you become familiar. Ever and anon put yourself into a posture of dying. Converse with your winding sheet,¹ coffin, grave. Let your great change be so on your heart that you may every morning or evening walk a turn or two with death. Remember, however it may be with you now, you must 'ere long be grasping and groaning forth for breath on your dying bed and grapple with the king of terrors and in a moment go down to the grave, and will come up no more (Job 7:9; 10:21).

If you would affect your heart with thoughts of your latter end, go down to Golgotha and think on these dry bones and putrefied bodies. And there revive the memory of your departed relations, husbands, wives, children, friends, neighbors, and look beyond the chambers of the grave. Converse with those miserable, departed souls. Give the prisoners of the pit a visit. Meditate on the raging, furious flames; that dismal darkness, smoke, and stink of the bottomless pit; the shrieking of the damned and roaring of the devils; the heart-piercing complaints for water to cool their scorching tongues. And when you do think on those millions of souls that are hanging up in hell, reflect on yourself and expect your turn speedily.

Suppose every day your last, every meal your last, every journey your last, every duty, sacrament, sermon, your last. And when the Lord's Day comes, think with yourself, "This will be the last spiritual market that I will have to buy the spiritual oil of grace and to provide for the Bridegroom's coming. After this day is ended, I may never more hear the Lord Jesus speak to me by the mouths of His faithful ministers, never be invited to come to Christ or to believe, repent, part with

1. *Winding sheet*: a burial shroud.

sin, and accept of a pardon more.” And so demean yourself every day and in every duty as if you should be called to God’s bar and give up your account at night. In all your thoughts, words, and actions, say to yourself, “Would I do thus and thus? Namely, would I eat, drink, sleep, converse, buy, sell, preach, hear, pray, for worse, if I certainly knew this day would be my last?” Oh let that motto, “Remember that you will die,”² which some carry in their rings, be engraved on your hearts, being the great concernment of your lives. This is that which God’s people and some of the heathen too have been careful to remember. King Asa made his sepulcher in his lifetime (2 Chron. 16:14), and some in their gardens and places of solace and delight, as Joseph of Arimathea (John 19:41). And some of the heathen were wont to walk among the graves to put them in mind of death. Some have had their graves always before their gates; others, dead men’s skulls presented every day at their table. And will we that believe the doctrine of the other world put off the serious thoughts of death?

Solomon advises us to go to the house of mourning, telling us it is better, because the living will lay it to heart [Eccl. 7:2]. When you hear the tidings of the death of your friends, relations, or neighbors, go there, though not personally, yet contemplatively. In your minds and thoughts, go and put yourselves in their stead and think thus: A living man or woman is become a dead corpse or cold clay. The soul is gone to its everlasting habitation—but to what place, whether to be comforted or tormented, who can tell? If he was a godly man, he is certainly gone to heaven. If you are such a one, your soul will shortly be with him. But if an ungodly man, he is certainly gone to hell and now among devils. And if you are such a one, you will ’ere long be there too. ’Tis true, the dead can have no

2. Original: *Memento Mori*.

thoughts of the living, but the living, says Solomon, know that they must die [9:5]. And you that are young, when you hear of the death of a lively, lusty young man or lovely, beautiful young woman—stop, reflect, and consider. May not this be your case, oh man, woman, or child, in a very little space?

I will say no more by way of direction. [I] only desire you to review the particulars before mentioned. And you that are parents and masters of families, who make conscience of looking to the souls of those committed to your charge, may cause your children and servants to learn by heart the particulars I here set down:

1. That it is most certain an end will be.
2. At our latter end, all things in this world will be gone forever.
3. All the pleasures of sin will be gone and leave nothing but a sting.
4. That only which is eternal will stand us in stead.
5. Consider which of the two eternities you are going toward.
6. We are all near our everlasting habitations.
7. You know not how suddenly or unexpectedly your end may be.
8. When death comes, your souls are stated; your eternity is cast.
9. 'Tis a dreadful and amazing sight to see a Christless soul breathing out his last.

Use 4³

The fourth use may be of comfort to the poor people of God who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to

3. Editorial note: Continued from chapter XXX.

bondage [Heb. 2:15]. Let not your hearts be troubled; fear not, neither be terrified because of this king of fears. But cheer up your spirits and comfort your hearts with this: that death, as terrible as it is to the wicked, cannot hurt you. The day of your death will be better than the day of your birth [Eccl. 7:1], and therefore death is put into the believer's inventory and reckoned among his privileges (1 Cor. 3:22). Death will be gain to the godly man—namely, an outlet to all his present misery and an inlet to endless glory. Then the truly penitent, perplexed, wearied soul will be perfectly free from the power of Satan, the fiery darts and dreadful temptations of that unclean spirit. Then the old serpent forever will be under their feet. Then the body of death will be put off, and the indwelling of sin, that natural fountain of corruption, will be perfectly dried up. You will never complain of vain thoughts or hard hearts anymore; never doubt of the truth of grace or favor of God more. The believer will then be with Jesus Christ. The day of his dissolution will be the day of his coronation. He will then receive the crown, sit down on the throne, and enter into his Master's joy, which is fullness of joy and pleasure forevermore.

Objection: I sometimes think of death, but the thoughts of death and judgment are very terrible. I fear I am not fit to die. How will it be known?

Answer: There is a habitual fitness for death and an actual fitness for death. Every graciously upright man or woman in the world, who fears God in truth, is habitually fit to die, so prepared for his great change that the sting of death, or second death, will not hurt him. Having passed the strait gate, shot the gulf, he is out of danger. As soon as a man is in a state of grace, born again, made a new creature, and by faith united to the Lord Jesus Christ, God is reconciled, his person justified, his sins pardoned and recorded in the court of heaven,

though his pardon is not brought down, transcribed, and sealed in the court of his own conscience. The truly converted soul is God's special favorite and will lodge in His bosom and nevermore be out of His favor. 'Tis true, heaven may be out of sight. God may frown but will never condemn. There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ (Rom. 8:1). "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). "Who will lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.... It is Christ that died" (Rom. 8:33-34).

Question: When is the godly man actually prepared for death?

Answer: When his spiritual estate is well settled—namely, all made sure between God and his soul—particularly:

1. When a man is truly conscious to himself that he has sincerely and in much brokenness of heart repented of all his known sins committed before or after conversion, so that there is no fresh or former guilt remaining on him. This godly sorrow is the godly man's pleasure. He delights to be sowing in tears, loves with his soul a wet seed time; for they that sow in tears will reap a harvest of joy, which is a time of refreshing from the presence of God (Ps. 126:5-6; Acts 3:19).

2. When sin is so great a burden that he is weary of this body of death and willing the infected house should be pulled down, that the leprosy might be cured, that so he might never sin or offend his Father more. The serious thoughts or sense of which is a heavy burden and matter of grief that makes him groan and complain. We in this tabernacle groan, being burdened. And oh how bitterly did St. Paul complain, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). He has been in deaths often for the sake of his dear Lord; but this death, this body of sin

troubled him more than any. It was so great a burden to holy David that he felt it in his very bones (Ps. 38:3).

3. The godly man is fit to die when the work of grace is perfected and his generation work ended. When the believing soul has his vessel full of oil and the wedding garment of the glorious righteousness of Christ about him, then he is a vessel of honor prepared unto glory (Rom. 9:23), wrought for the self-same thing (2 Cor. 5:5) and made meet or fit for the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12). The ship that is laden or freighted is fit to put to sea and to sail from hence or for its appointed port. The laborer is fit to receive his wages when he has done his work. So when the heaven-born soul has faithfully served his generation and done the work in his place, calling, and relations for which God sent him and entrusted him (though the best fall short, being in some degrees unprofitable servants), then is he fit to welcome death, though to the flesh it is the king of terrors. When the godly man, living or dying, can appeal to the heart-searching God, as Hezekiah did (Isaiah 38), and say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4), [and], "I have finished my course, and there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:8)—this makes him fit and willing to depart and to be with Christ.

4. When sin is pardoned, and the pardoned sealed—i.e., when the clamorous noise of the guilt of sin in the conscience is calmed and silenced by the blood of sprinkling, and his evidences for heaven bright and clear, so that his better country is within his view and the gate of glory wide open—namely, abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Christ (2 Peter 1:11). Lot had a mind to prolong his time in Sodom. It was a goodly city, and he was not well assured whither to go when he had left it. But when the gracious soul is assured of a better state, a better life that is

“hid with Christ in God” [Col. 3:3], so that he can say, as once an eminent man did, dying, “I will but change my place; I will not change my company,” then he may (being sealed to the day of redemption) long for his dissolution.

5. When the heart is weaned from and weary of this evil world and so inflamed with love to Christ that it cannot live without Him or be weaned from Him. Having tasted of the grapes of Eshcol, he must go to Canaan to see the good land, that goodly mountain. A foresight or glimpse of the sweetness, beauty, and glory of the Lord Jesus will cause most vehement longing to be with him. “Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace...for mine eyes have seen thy salvation” [Luke 2:29–30]. For this, we groan earnestly. And oh how confidently, quietly, and comfortably may such a soul entertain the thoughts of death that has sincerely repented of all sin and to whom sin is so grievous a burden that he would die to be rid of it, and whose soul is filled and freighted with grace and assured of glory, and the heart sent as a harbinger to heaven before him! And indeed a serious and hearty consideration of our eternal state would provoke us to press earnestly after this.

Concluding Questions

To close up all, let me ask you, in the presence of the great Judge of the quick and dead, at whose dreadful tribunal you must shortly stand, these following queries:

Question 1

First, whether a seasonable preparation for death and judgment—namely, how you may escape hell and come safe to heaven—be not the most urgent and important business you have in all the world? Let your consciences judge and determine.

Question 2

Are they not in a very happy condition that do believe, repent, and turn to God with their whole heart; who, by living a life of grace, are truly prepared for death, out of that dreadful hazard of losing heaven (Ps. 37:37; Rom. 8:1)?

Question 3

Is it not possible that you, being yet on this side of the grave and hell, may prepare for this evil day? Were you resolved on it, it would be done. You have often intended it, promised it. When will it be? None but the devil and your flesh will stop and hinder you.

Question 4

Do you firmly believe the things here will fail, that death will come, that sin, that accursed thing, will sting, and that the impenitent sinner's case at the hour of death will be sad and very desperate? Let me say to all such [that] there is not a night you lie down on your beds but you run a very great hazard. If death should call, and you [be] not ready, you must go, though you are ruined to eternity (Matt. 25:10–12, 19, 22–23).

Question 5

Have you so lived as to be fit to lie down in a grave, to rise again and stand before God, who is a consuming fire? Do you know yourselves in a state of grace, that you are new born, that your evidences for heaven are clear and certain? Is your work done? Do your lamps burn? And have you a well-grounded assurance that you are in the number of those to whom death will be a privilege (Phil. 1:21)?

Question 6

Can you cheerfully and without dread entertain the thoughts of a dissolution and of leaving all your earthly and sensual

delights? Suppose the dreadful Judge should at this instant send death into this place, with the names of five or six of you in his writ or forehead. And death should say, "You, and you, this man, and that woman, must go along with me. I have received a command from the great and terrible God, who has the power of death and hell, to bring you, young man, young woman, this day or night, before the judgment seat. I have often warned you by sending my deputies, and that these ten, twenty, or forty years. Every coffin, every dead corpse or grave you have seen were so many intimations of my coming. Now," says death, "I am come. Look here on my commission. See my dart and my sting. This dart must kill your body and send your soul into eternity. I command you this moment to bid adieu, to take your leave of friends, relations, houses, lands, pleasures of sin once for all. You will never see or enjoy them more" (Luke 12:19–20).

Oh how can you think of you dying, the world burning, the trumpet sounding, the dead rising and standing at the bar, and not fear and tremble? You sons and daughters of pleasure, did you consider what horror and astonishment dogs you at the heels, which will inevitably come on you, as travail on a woman with child, you would not say to God, "Depart," and treasure up wrath, lay up scourges and scorpions for your distressed souls against the last day.

Question 7

Let me ask you, that pass for saints and hope for heaven, whether your consciences in secret do not tell you that you made but poor preparations for it. Indeed, it may be you have done less for heaven than many that are now in hell.

You say you must die and come to judgment. But how stands the case as to the other world? If you look downward to this world, it is well. But how is it within your precious souls?

Do you believe that atheists, unbelievers, drunkards, swearers, murderers, thieves, persecutors, liars, Sabbath-breakers, adulterers, worldlings are going swiftly to hell? Do you believe that Christ's flock is little, and not fear yourselves? Do you think that Esau, Judas, Ahab, Agrippa, Herod, Simon Magus, and the foolish virgins are in hell; and yet [you are] confident of you going to heaven? These have outdone many of you. Esau wept and cried for the blessing (Heb. 12:17). Ahab humbled himself (1 Kings 21:29). Herod did many things and heard John joyfully (Mark 6:20). Agrippa was almost a Christian (Acts 26:28). The scribe was not far from the kingdom of God (Mark 12:34). The foolish virgins were not profane. They took care to trim their lamps and knocked at the door. Now, what sins have you left? What grace have you exercised? What duties have you performed, and how? Take heed you be not deceived. Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for many will strive to enter in and will not be able (Luke 13:24).

Question 8

You having so many warnings, time, and means to prepare for death and judgment, and [yet] will not, who will pity you when you perish? God will not (Prov. 1:26–27). Christ will not (Luke 19:27). Angels, saints, ministers will not. All will say, “Away with them; let them be damned.”

And oh! What a killing and amazing sight will Christ's coming in the clouds be to all that either denied His coming or who would not prepare for it! His incarnation was terrible (Matt. 2:3). His crucifixion was more terrible (Luke 23:44–45, 47–48). But His being on the tribunal will be most terrible. Then will the tribes of the earth mourn (Matt. 24:30), and men [will] cry to the rocks and mountains to fall on them (Rev. 6:15–16). When they will see so many thousands and millions of men and women dragged down with all the devils of hell to

the burning lake of fire and brimstone—how will they then mourn for sorrow of heart and howl for vexation of spirit and with bitterness of soul wish they had never heard of Christ, that they had been born among the heathen or never had a being or enjoyed a life of pleasure on the earth! How will the wretched sinner beat his breast, pluck off his hair, tear his bowels, crying out, when he sees all hopes are gone, “Oh that I had now no soul! Or that this immortal soul were mortal! That I might now die and breathe no more! Or that my sentence might be but to lodge with devils in this burning lake for ten thousand years, that so I might not remain in a state of punishment from the face and presence of God to all eternity!”

Oh then pray that serious thoughts of death may be always on your heart. And whither you go, let them go. And where you lodge, let them lodge, that you may speak of them to your children and family when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up! Oh let these great things of death and judgment be bound as a signet on your hand and write them on the posts of your house and on your gates, that they may be always before your eyes for your good always, that you may beware, lest you forget the Lord your God and the everlasting concernments of your immortal soul, and God’s anger be kindled against you and destroy you suddenly with a mighty destruction.

Consider now what I have spoken, and the Lord give you understanding in all things (2 Tim. 2:7)—which is that [which] God wishes in the text: “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!” [Deut. 32:29].