

# Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 251

## REDEEM THE TIME

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*Redeeming the time.*

Ephesians 5:16

### Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,  
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,  
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

# Free Grace Broadcaster

## REDEEM THE TIME

# 251

### Contents

A Solemn, Priceless Gift.....	2
<i>Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)</i>	
Time Is Exceedingly Precious .....	3
<i>Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)</i>	
God and Time .....	7
<i>Archibald A. Hodge (1823-1886)</i>	
Time Is Your Opportunity .....	9
<i>Richard Baxter (1615-1691)</i>	
Buying Up the Opportunities.....	14
<i>David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)</i>	
Time Thieves to Avoid .....	20
<i>Richard Baxter (1615-1691)</i>	
Let Your Light So Shine .....	27
<i>David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)</i>	
The Time Is Short.....	32
<i>Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)</i>	
A Most Dreadful Loss .....	37
<i>Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1647)</i>	
Now Is the Day of Salvation .....	44
<i>Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)</i>	

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# A SOLEMN, PRICELESS GIFT

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

**T**IME is a solemn and priceless gift and involves a responsibility and an account of a most tremendous character. It is the preface to eternity—brief, it is true. Yet, as the preface indicates the character of the volume, so the present is the foreshadowing in each one’s history of the future. Time is a feather falling from the pinion<sup>1</sup> of eternity, as it sweeps on in its boundless, endless course, hurrying us with rapid flight to that eternity from where it came. What sin, what madness, then, to abuse a privilege so solemn, to misuse a blessing so precious. To employ it in vain pleasures and frivolous pursuits; to use it in senseless puerilities<sup>2</sup> and sinful engagements; to devote it too absorbingly even to literary and elegant pursuits—the studies of the antiquarian, the researches of the historian, the fascination of art, the discoveries of science—may verge upon the crime of robbing God of one of His most costly loans.

All these absorbing engagements are limited to the present and have no essential relation to the soul’s certain and solemn future. Oh, you killers of time! How will the ghost of your murdered hours haunt and upbraid<sup>3</sup> you through the interminable<sup>4</sup> centuries of eternity! Oh, what would you not then give for one hour of that precious period of your existence that now you waste and fritter and destroy in vain, useless, and sinful trifles, chimeras<sup>5</sup> and shadows. Remember, you rob God when your *time* is not consecrated to His glory. Ponder well the inspired precept, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph 5:16). Consider the apostolic exhortation, “This I say, brethren, the time is short” (1Co 7:29).

From *The Man of God: Spiritual Religion Explained and Enforced*,  
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**Octavius Winslow (1808-1878):** Baptist pastor and prolific author; later an Anglican priest; born in Pentonville, England, UK.



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<sup>1</sup> **pinion** – bird’s wing.

<sup>2</sup> **puerilities** – childish and immature behaviors.

<sup>3</sup> **upbraid** – find fault in a scolding way.

<sup>4</sup> **interminable** – endless.

<sup>5</sup> **chimeras** – creations of the imagination.

# TIME IS EXCEEDINGLY PRECIOUS

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

*Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.—Ephesians 5:16*

**W**E should set a high value upon time and be exceedingly careful that it is not lost. We are therefore exhorted to exercise wisdom and circumspection<sup>1</sup> in order that we may redeem it.<sup>2</sup> Hence, it appears that *time is exceedingly precious*. Time is precious for the following reasons:

Because a happy or miserable eternity depends on the good or [evil] improvement<sup>3</sup> of it. Things are precious in proportion to their importance or to the degree wherein they concern our welfare. Men are wont to set the highest value<sup>4</sup> on those things upon which they are sensible their interest chiefly depends. And this renders time so exceedingly precious because our eternal welfare depends on the improvement of it. Indeed, our welfare in *this* world depends upon its improvement. If we improve it not, we shall be in danger of coming to poverty and disgrace; but by a good improvement of it, we may obtain those things that will be useful and comfortable.<sup>5</sup> But time is above all things precious, as our state through eternity depends upon it. The importance of the improvement of time upon other accounts is in subordination to this.

Men esteem gold and silver precious; but they are of no worth to any man unless by them he has an opportunity of avoiding or removing some evil, or of possessing himself of some good. And the greater the evil is that any man hath advantage to escape or the good that he hath advantage to obtain by anything that he possesses, by so much the greater is the value of that thing to him whatever it be. Thus, if a man, by anything that he hath, may save his life, which he must lose without it, he will look upon that by which he hath the opportunity of escaping so great an evil as death to be very precious. Hence it is that time is so exceedingly precious, because by it we have opportunity of escaping everlasting misery and of obtaining everlasting blessedness

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<sup>1</sup> **circumspection** – cautious observation; considering all circumstances before acting.

<sup>2</sup> **redeem it** – buy it up.

<sup>3</sup> **improvement** – using to the best advantage.

<sup>4</sup> **wont to...value** – in the habit of setting the highest value.

<sup>5</sup> **comfortable** – encouraging; strengthening.

and glory. On this depends our escape from an infinite evil and our attainment of an infinite good.

**Time is very short, which is another thing that renders it very precious.** The scarcity of any commodity occasions men to set a higher value upon it, especially if it is necessary and they cannot do without it. Thus, when Samaria was besieged by the Syrians and provisions were exceedingly scarce, “an ass’s head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove’s dung for five pieces of silver” (2Ki 6:25). So time is the more to be prized by men because a whole eternity depends upon it; yet we have but little time. “When a few years are come, then I shall go the way whence I shall not return” (Job 16:22). “My days are swifter than a post...They are passed away as the swift ships: as the eagle that hasteth to the prey” (Job 9:25-26). “What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jam 4:14). It is but as a moment to eternity. Time is so short, and the work that we must do in it is so great that we have none to spare. The work that we must do to prepare for eternity must be done in time, or it can never be done. And it is found to be a work of great difficulty and labor and, therefore, that for which time is more necessary.

**We ought to esteem time very precious because we are uncertain of its continuance.** We know that it is very short, but we know not how short. We know not how little of it remains—whether a year, or several years, or only a month, a week, or a day. We are every day uncertain whether that day will not be the last, or whether we are to have the whole day. There is nothing that experience doth more verify than this...How much more would many men prize their time if they *knew* that they had but a few months or a few days more to live! And certainly, a wise man will prize his time the more, since he knows not but that it will be so with himself.

This is the case with multitudes now in the world, who at present enjoy health and see no signs of approaching death. Many such, no doubt, are to die the next month, many the next week, yea, many probably tomorrow, and some this night. Yet these same persons know nothing of it and perhaps think nothing of it—neither they nor their neighbors can say that they are more likely soon to be taken out of the world than others. This teaches us how we ought to prize our time and how careful we ought to be that we lose none of it.

**Time is very precious because when it is past, it cannot be recovered.** There are many things that men possess, which if they part with, they can obtain them again. If a man has parted with something

that he had, not knowing the worth of it or the need he should have of it, he can often regain it, at least with pains and cost. If a man has been overseen<sup>6</sup> in a bargain and has bartered away or sold something, and afterwards repent of it, he may often obtain a release and recover what he had parted with. But it is not so with respect to time. When once that is gone, it is gone forever. No pains, no cost will recover it. Though we repent ever so much that we let it pass and did not improve it while we had it, it will be to no purpose. Every part of it is successively offered to us that we may choose whether we will make it our own or not. But there is no delay: it will not wait upon us to see whether or not we will comply with the offer. If we refuse, it is immediately taken away and never offered more. As to that part of time that is gone, however we have neglected to improve it, it is out of our possession and out of our reach.

If we have lived fifty, sixty, or seventy years and have not improved our time, now it cannot be helped: it is eternally gone from us. All that we can do is to improve the little that remains. Yea, if a man has spent all his life unimproved [except for] a few moments, all that is gone is lost. Only those few remaining moments can possibly be made his own. And if the whole of a man's time be gone and it is all lost, it is irrecoverable. Eternity depends on the improvement of time; but when once the time of life is gone, when once death is come, we have no more to do with time. There is no possibility of obtaining the restoration of it or another space in which to prepare for eternity. If a man should lose the whole of his worldly substance and become a bankrupt, it is possible that his loss may be made up. He may have another estate as good. But when the time of life is gone, it is impossible that we should ever obtain another such time. All opportunity of obtaining eternal welfare is utterly and everlastingly gone.

You have now heard of the preciousness of time. You are the persons concerned to whom God hath committed that precious talent. You have an eternity before you. When God created you and gave you reasonable souls, He made you for an endless duration. He gave you time here in order to prepare for eternity, and your future eternity depends on the improvement of time. Consider, therefore, what you have done with your *past* time. You are not now beginning your time, but a great deal is past and gone. All the wit, power, and treasure of the universe cannot recover it. Many of you may well conclude that more than half of your time is gone. Though you should live to the

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<sup>6</sup> **overseen** – hasty.

ordinary age of man, your glass<sup>7</sup> is more than half run; and it may be that there are but few sands remaining. Your sun is past the meridian and perhaps just setting or going into an everlasting eclipse. Consider, therefore, what account you can give of your improvement of past time. How have you let the precious golden sands of your glass run?

Every *day* that you have enjoyed has been precious; yes, your *moments* have been precious. But have you not wasted your precious moments, your precious days, yes, your precious years? If you should reckon up how many days you have lived, what a sum would there be! And how precious hath every one of those days been! Consider, therefore: what have you done with them? What is become of them all? What can you show of any improvement made, good done, or benefit obtained, answerable to all this time that you have lived? When you look back and search, do you not find this past time of your lives in a great measure empty, having not been filled up with any good improvement? And if God, Who hath given you your time, should now call you to an account, what account could you give to Him?

How much may be done in a year! How much good is there opportunity to do in such a space of time! How much service may persons do for God, and how much for their own souls, if they improve it to their utmost! How much may be done in a day! But what have you done in so many days and years that you have lived? You that are past your youth—what have you done with the whole time of your youth? What is become of all that precious season of life? Hath it not all been in vain to you? Would it not have been as well or better for you, if all that time you had been asleep or in a state of non-existence?

You have had much time of leisure and freedom from worldly business: consider to what purpose you have spent it. You have not only had ordinary time, but you have had a great deal of holy time. What have you done with all the Sabbath days that you have enjoyed? Consider those things seriously, and let your own consciences make answer.

From *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, 233-236;  
in the public domain.

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**Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758):** American Congregational preacher and theologian; born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony, USA.




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<sup>7</sup> **glass** – hourglass.

# GOD AND TIME

Archibald A. Hodge (1823-1886)

**W**HAT is eternity? Eternity is *infinite* duration<sup>1</sup>—duration discharged from all limits,<sup>2</sup> without beginning, without succession, and without end. The schoolmen<sup>3</sup> phrase it “an ever-abiding present.”

We, however, can positively conceive of eternity only as duration indefinitely extended from the present moment in two directions, as to the past and as to the future, *improperly* expressed as eternity *past* and eternity *future*. The eternity of God, however, is one and indivisible.

*What is time?* Time is *limited* duration, measured by succession, either of thought or motion. It is distinguished in reference to our perceptions into past, present, and future.

*What relation does time bear to eternity?* Eternity, the unchanging present without beginning or end, comprehends all time and co-exists as an undivided moment with all the successions of time as they appear and pass in their order.

However, thought is possible to us only under the limitations of time and space. We can conceive of God only under the finite fashion of first purposing and then acting, of first promising or threatening and then fulfilling His Word, etc. He that inhabiteth eternity infinitely transcends our understanding (Isa 57:15).

*When we say that God is eternal, what do we affirm and what do we deny?* We *affirm*, first, that as to His existence, He never had any beginning and never will have any end. Second, that as to the mode of His existence, His thoughts, emotions, purposes, and acts are without succession, one and inseparable, the same forever. Third, that He is immutable.

We *deny*, first, that He ever had a beginning or ever will have an end; second, that His states or modes of being occur in succession; third, that His essence, attributes, or purposes will ever change.

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<sup>1</sup> **duration** – time during which anything continues.

<sup>2</sup> **duration...all limits** – continuation without any limits whatsoever.

<sup>3</sup> **schoolmen** – term for the teachers of philosophy and theology in the Middle Ages. Also known as *scholastics*; examples would be Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) and John Duns Scotus (c. 1265-1308).



*In what sense are the acts of God spoken of as past, present, and future?* The acts of God are never past, present, or future as respects God Himself, but only in respect to the objects and effects of His acts in creation. The efficient *purpose* comprehending the precise object, time, and circumstance was present to Him always and changelessly. The event, however, taking place in the creature occurs in time, and is thus past, present, or future to our observation.

*In what sense are events past or future as it regards God?* As God's knowledge is infinite, every event must, first, be ever equally present to His knowledge from eternity to eternity. Second, these events must be known to Him as they actually occur in themselves, *e.g.*,<sup>4</sup> in their true nature, relations, and successions. This distinction, therefore, holds true: God's knowledge of all events is without beginning, end, or succession; but He knows them as in themselves occurring in the successions of time—past, present, or future—relatively to one another.

From *Outlines of Theology: Rewritten and Enlarged* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1878), 142-143; in the public domain.

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**Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886):** American Presbyterian minister, son of Charles Hodge; born in Princeton, Mercer, New Jersey, USA.



Time is priceless and precious. In one point of view, it is more important and solemn than eternity. Eternity is the creature of time: it is just what time makes it—happy or miserable, a blessing or a curse, draped with clouds of endless night or gilded with beams of eternal day. One hour of time is of more value to a soul speeding to the judgment, unprepared to meet its dread sentence, than the ceaseless evolutions of eternity! There is no day of grace, no opportunity of conversion, no proclamation of salvation in the eternal world. Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation! Let us, then, redeem the time because the time is short. Gathering up its unemployed hours, its spare moments; redeeming it from sleep, from frivolous calls, from vain recreation—how much work for God and service for man may be accomplished? Many a valuable volume has been compiled at the breakfast table. Many a useful plan has been matured in a railway carriage. And many a work for Christ has been arranged while yet but few had brushed the dew of morning's slumber from their eyelids, which otherwise the absorbing calls of professional and public life had rendered impossible.

—*Octavius Winslow*

The wisdom of a Christian is eminently discovered in saving  
and improving all opportunities in this world for the  
world that is to come.—*John Flavel*

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<sup>4</sup> *e.g.* – Latin = *exempli gratia*: for example.

# TIME IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY

Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

**T**IME being man's opportunity for all those works for which he liveth and which his Creator doth expect from him, and on which his endless life dependeth, the redeeming or well improving of it must necessarily be of most high importance to him. Therefore, it is well made by holy Paul the great mark to distinguish the wise from fools. "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time" (Eph 5:15-16a). I shall therefore give you special directions for it, when I have first opened the nature of the duty to you and told you what is meant by time and what [is meant] by redeeming it.

Time, in its most common acceptance, is taken generally for all that space of this present life, which is our opportunity for all the works of life and the measure of them. Time is often taken more strictly for some special opportunity that is fitted to a special work, which we call the *season* or *the fittest time*. In both these senses, time must be redeemed.

As every work hath its season that must be taken, so have the greatest works assigned us for God and our souls some special seasons besides our common time. 1. Some times God hath fitted by nature for His service: the time of youth, health, and strength are specially fit for holy work. 2. Some time is made specially fit by God's institution, such as the Lord's Day above all other days. 3. Some time is made fit by governors' appointment, such as the hour of public meeting for God's worship and lecture-days,<sup>1</sup> and the hour for family worship, which every head of a family may appoint to his own household. 4. Some time is made fit by the temper<sup>2</sup> of men's bodies: the morning hours are best to most, but some prefer the evening. And all prefer the time when the body is freest from pain and disabling weaknesses. 5. Some time is made fit by the course of our necessary, natural, or civil business: the day is fitter than the sleeping time of night, and that hour is the fittest wherein our other employments will least disturb us. 6. Some time is made fit by a special shower of mercy, public

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<sup>1</sup> **lecture-days** – days, other than the Lord's Day, appointed by Puritans for hearing sermons.

<sup>2</sup> **temper** – constitution; temperament.

or private: when we dwell in godly families, among the most exemplary, helpful company, under the most lively, excellent means, the most faithful pastors, the most profitable teachers, the best masters or parents, and with faithful friends. 7. Some time is made fit by particular acts of providence:<sup>3</sup> a funeral sermon at the death of any near us, or the presence of some able minister or private Christian whose company we cannot ordinarily have, or a special leisure, such as the eunuch had to read the Scripture in his chariot (Act 8:26-39). And some time is made specially fit by the special workings of God's Spirit upon the heart, when He more than ordinarily illuminateth, teacheth, quickeneth,<sup>4</sup> softeneth, humbleth, comforteth, exciteth, or confirmeth. As time in general, so especially these seasons must be particularly improved for their several<sup>5</sup> works: we must take the wind and tide while we may have it and be sure to strike while the iron is hot. 9. Some time is made fit by others' necessities and the call of God: the time to relieve the poor when they ask or when they are most in want;<sup>6</sup> or help to our neighbor when it will do him most good; to visit the sick, the imprisoned, and the afflicted in the needful season. Thus are the godly like trees planted by the riverside, which bringeth forth fruit in their season (Psa 1:3). So it means to speak in season to the ignorant or ungodly for their conversion or to be sorrowful for their consolation. 10. Our own necessity also maketh our seasons: the time of age and sickness is made by necessity the season of our special repentance and preparation for death and judgment. 11. The present time is commonly made our season, through the uncertainty of a fitter time or of any more. "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee" (Pro 3:27-28). "Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth" (Ecc 11:2). "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Pro 27:1) "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal 6:10). These are our special seasons.

To redeem time supposeth, 1. That we know what we have to do with time, on what we ought to lay it out, and of how great worth the

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<sup>3</sup> **providence** – God's...most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures and all their actions. (*Spurgeon's Catechism*, Q. 11; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY)

<sup>4</sup> **quickeneth** – makes alive.

<sup>5</sup> **several** – distinct; particular.

<sup>6</sup> **want** – need.

things are for which we must redeem it. 2. That we highly value time in order to this necessary work. 3. That we are sensible of the greatness of our sin and loss in our negligent and willful losing so much as we have done already. 4. That we know the particular season of each duty. 5. And that we set less by all that with which we must part in redeeming time than we do by time itself and its due ends; or else we will not make the bargain.

And as those five things are presupposed, so these following are contained in our redeeming time: 1. To redeem time is to see that we cast none of it away in vain but use every minute of it as a most precious thing and spend it wholly in the way of duty. 2. That we be not only doing good but doing the best and greatest good that we are able and have a call to do. 3. That we do not only the best things but do them in the best manner and in the greatest measure and do as much good as we possibly can. 4. That we watch for special opportunities. 5. That we presently take them when they fall and improve them when we take them. 6. That we part with all that need to be parted with to save our time. 7. And that we forecast the preventing of impediments,<sup>7</sup> the removal of our clogs,<sup>8</sup> and the obtaining of all the helps to expedition<sup>9</sup> and success is duty. This is the true redeeming of our time.

The ends and uses that time must be redeemed for are these: 1. In general, and ultimately, it must all be for God. Though not all employed directly upon God—in meditating of Him or praying to Him—yet all must be laid out for Him, immediately or mediately,<sup>10</sup> that is, either in serving Him or in preparing for His service: in mowing or in whetting;<sup>11</sup> in travelling or in baiting<sup>12</sup> to fit us for travel. And so our time of sleeping, feeding, and needful recreation is laid out for God. 2. Time must be redeemed especially for works of public benefit: for the church and state, for the souls of many, especially by magistrates and ministers, who have special charge and opportunity; who must “spend and be spent” for the peoples’ sakes, though rewarded with ingratitude and contempt (2Co 12:14-15). 3. For your own souls and your everlasting life: for speedy conversion without delay, if you be yet unconverted; for the killing of every soul-

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<sup>7</sup> **impediments** – hindrances.

<sup>8</sup> **clogs** – hindrances to motion or activity.

<sup>9</sup> **expedition** – promptness or speed in doing something.

<sup>10</sup> **immediately or mediately** – indirectly or directly.

<sup>11</sup> **mowing or in whetting** – cutting down grass in a field or sharpening a tool or weapon.

<sup>12</sup> **baiting** – giving food to horses.

endangering sin without delay; for the exercise and increase of young and unconfirmed grace and the growth of knowledge; for the making sure our calling and election (2Pe 1:10); and for storing up provisions of faith, hope, love, and comfort against the hour of suffering and of death. 4. We must redeem time for the souls of every particular person to whom we have opportunity to do good, especially for children, servants, and others whom God hath committed to our trust. 5. For the welfare of our own bodies, that they may be serviceable to our souls. 6. And, lastly, for the bodily welfare of others. And this is the order in which those works lie, for which and in which our time must be redeemed.

The price that time must be redeemed with is, above all, 1. Our utmost diligence: that we be still doing, put forth all our strength, and run as for our lives; and whatever our hand shall find to do, that we do it with our might, remembering that “there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave” whither we go (Ecc 9:10). Our sluggish ease is an easy price to be parted with for precious time. To redeem it is not to call back time past; nor to stop time in its hasty passage; nor to procure a long life on earth, but to save it, as it passeth, from being devoured and lost by sluggishness and sin. 2. Time must be redeemed from the hands and by the loss of sinful pleasures, sports,<sup>13</sup> and revelings,<sup>14</sup> and all that is of itself or by accident<sup>15</sup> unlawful: from wantonness, licentiousness, and vanity. Both these are set together. “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:11-14). 3. Time must be redeemed from things indifferent and lawful at another time, when things necessary do require it. He that should save men’s lives, or quench a fire in his house, or provide for his family, or do his master’s work will not be excused if he neglect it by saying that he was about an indifferent or a lawful business. Natural rest and sleep must be parted with for time when necessary things require it. Paul preached until midnight, “ready to depart on the morrow” (Act 20:7).

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<sup>13</sup> **sports** – games; diversions.

<sup>14</sup> **revelings** – morally loose and noisy feasts or parties.

<sup>15</sup> **accident** – quality or characteristic of a thing.

The lamenting church, calling out for prayer, saith, “Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord” (Lam 2:19). Cleanthes<sup>16</sup> lamp must be used by such, whose sunlight must be otherwise employed. 4. Time must be redeemed from worldly business and commodity<sup>17</sup> when matters of greater weight and commodity do require it. Trades, plough, and profit must stand by when God calls us (by necessity or otherwise) to greater things! Martha should not so much as trouble herself in providing meat for Christ and His followers to eat when Christ is offering her food for her soul. She should with Mary have been hearing at His feet (Luk 10:38-42). Worldlings are thus called by Him: “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters...Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness” (Isa 55:1-2). 5. Time must be redeemed from smaller duties, which in their season must be done, as being no duties when they hinder greater duty that should then take place. It is a duty in its time and place to show respect to neighbors and superiors, to those about us, and to look to our family affairs—but not when we should be at prayer to God or when a minister should be preaching or at his necessary studies. Private prayer, meditation, and visiting the sick are duties—but not when we should be at church or about any greater duty that they hinder.

From *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter*, Vol. 3  
(London: James Duncan, 1830), 120-124.

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**Richard Baxter (1615-1691):** Anglican Puritan preacher and theologian; born in Rowton, Shropshire, England, UK.



By the redemption of time, we must understand the study, care, and diligence of Christians at the rate of all possible pains, at the expense of all earthly pleasures, ease, and gratifications of the flesh to rescue their precious seasons, both of salvation and service, out of the hands of temptations that so commonly rob unwary souls of them.—*John Flavel*

We have a great deal of work to do, but little time. Therefore, we should redeem it from pleasure and rather encroach upon our recreation to spend it in matters that most concern us. All complain of the shortness of time, and yet everyone hath more time than he useth well.—*Thomas Manton*

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<sup>16</sup> **Cleanthes** (300-232 BC) – Greek philosopher.

<sup>17</sup> **commodity** – profit; interest.

# BUYING UP THE OPPORTUNITIES

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

*Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.—Ephesians 5:16*

THE apostle is saying something very important. His great concern is that all Christians should realize the difference between themselves and those who are not Christians. The Christian has the wisdom of God in Jesus Christ. He knows things, he has an insight into life that nobody else has; and what he must do, therefore, is to walk circumspectly.<sup>1</sup> He must understand the condition of the world in which he lives—the days are evil. It is only a Christian who can say that. The non-Christian even resents that statement. He believes that the world is wonderful, that life is amazing. No, says the Christian, the days are evil. And so, we [see] that the Christian regards his life in this world primarily as a great opportunity—an opportunity of behaving as light, an opportunity of witnessing to the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. In this way, he redeems the time, buying up the opportunities.

That, then, is the thought we must have in our minds as we proceed to consider how the Christian uses his life in this world as an opportunity to disseminate<sup>2</sup> the knowledge and the light that comes from God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The first thing, therefore, which we must emphasize is that he must indeed redeem the time. The meaning of the word *redeem* is that of buying up something, and especially the idea of buying it for ourselves. If you like, it is the picture of a man who is looking for a bargain. He wants to buy something for himself, and he is watching the goods on the stall or in the shop window. He is anxious to get that bargain, so he looks around and shows great keenness.

Now, that is the exhortation that the apostle gives us here as Christians. Realizing what you are, he says, and that the days are evil, and understanding the condition of the world in which you find yourselves, be like men who are watching for opportunities. Be ready to grasp them and to take hold upon them. That is quite a familiar picture of the Christian in the New Testament. The apostle Peter puts

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<sup>1</sup> **circumspectly** – cautiously; carefully.

<sup>2</sup> **disseminate** – scatter abroad, as in sowing seed.

the same thing in his own language in these words...“For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries” (1Pe 4:3). Surely, the apostle Peter is arguing, it is almost unnecessary that I should plead with you about this. You have already spent enough of your time in this world doing those other things, wasting it, and throwing it away. Well, he says, don’t do that any longer. You have wasted so much of your life in this world with rubbish and nonsense. Not anymore! Be alive, alert, seek every opportunity. Hold on to every minute and every second—redeem the time. In light of the fact that you wasted so much and allowed so many glorious opportunities to slip by, don’t do it anymore.

Paul is not merely exhorting us not to waste our time. He is very positive. He says you must go out of your way to seek opportunities. You see, it is so much stronger than the negative, though the negative is, of course, included. You cannot do this if you are wasting your time. But it is not only that. Be alert, be alive, seek opportunities. Look for them and take them eagerly every time you are presented with one. This, of course, is all-important because the days are evil and because of the conditions in which we find ourselves.

Now, it seems to me that here the apostle is exhorting us to buy up the opportunities for two main reasons. The first is for our own sake. Then, secondly, for the sake of other people.

Let us consider the first of these. You are to redeem the time, says the apostle, for your own sake. How am I to see to it, during the remainder of my brief life in this evil world, that I buy up the opportunities?

Let us see first what he tells us negatively. Then we shall see how he refers us positively to what the will of the Lord is. We find very practical advice and instruction with regard to this in the first Psalm. If I am to redeem the time, there are certain things I must not do. I must not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. I must not waste my time in standing in the way of sinners. I must not loiter about in the sort of place where I know that they are likely to be passing along. Neither am I to sit in the seat of the scornful. If I do those three things, far from buying up the opportunity, I am wasting opportunities. Here is God’s instruction: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.” You know their outlook; you know their view of life. Have nothing to do with them. Do not have any interest in their philosophy, their counsel. Do not invite sin, or as Paul



puts it in writing to the Romans, “Make not provision for the flesh” (Rom 13:14). If you put yourself in the way of sinners, the end will be that you will be sinning with them. Therefore, if you know of literature of a type that is likely to harm you, do not look at it. Throw it into the fire. Have nothing to do with it. Do not spend too much of your time reading unsavory details about law cases in newspapers. They do not do you any good. That is standing in the way of sinners; and if you stand there, you will be carried along with them before you realize it.

The same is true of sitting in the seat of the scornful. The apostle Peter puts this quite plainly to us in his First Epistle in the second chapter, verses 11 and 12: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims”; that is what you are—you are strangers and pilgrims in this world since you have become Christians. “I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles.” That is the same thing, exactly. There, then, are the negatives.

What about the positive? Well, go back again, and you will find it all in the first Psalm. Here is the blessed man: “But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” You see, this man is not wasting his time with unworthy and harmful literature. Rather, he spends his time in the law of the Lord, and he meditates in it day and night. He is not like the man who says he is so busy that he really has no time for Bible study and for reading good books. But how is he so busy? Does he spend more time with his newspaper than with his Bible? Then, he has no excuse any longer. Let him give the time he was giving to his newspaper to the law of the Lord instead. The Christian meditates on the law of the Lord day and night. This is his delight. He says, I want something that will build me up and help me and enable me to function as light; so, he is a man who is very careful about the portioning of his time. He does not fritter away his time and find at the end of the day that he has not read his Bible, scarcely prayed to God or done anything else because his time has gone with the frivolities of the things of this present world. No, no, this is the man who buys up the opportunity. He has to discipline himself. He says, “I must do this, I insist on this. I am doing so at all costs.” Never was this more necessary than it is today.

Or take another exhortation that is given by our Lord Himself. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal” (Mat 6:19). Do not spend your time in this world doing that. What then? Well,

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Mat 6:20). You are a pilgrim of eternity; that is where you are going. Well then, do not spend all your time in laying up treasures in this world because you are going out of it; you are going to decay, and you will leave them behind you. Look ahead, prepare ahead, lay up treasures there, redeem the time. Buy up the opportunity.

Take the similar exhortation in Luke’s Gospel chapter 16, verse 9: “Make to yourselves friends of the mammon<sup>3</sup> of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.” What does he mean? It is a comment on the parable of the Unjust Steward. What was the characteristic of that steward? It was his wisdom. As our Lord says, “The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light” (Luk 16:8). Here was a man in trouble, and he jumped at an opportunity. He said, “Now, before the sentence drops on me, I am going to prepare for the future; so, he went to customers and said, ‘How much do you owe?’ One man said, ‘I owe this much’—so the steward said, ‘Write down much less, half that.’” And so he went on. What was he doing? He was preparing himself for the calamity that was about to descend upon him. He was a wise man. He saw what was coming, and he acted immediately, redeeming the time. You and I are to be like that. So our Lord says, “Use your money in such a way in this world that when the end comes, you have your preparation already made there, so that when you cross right over into the other world there will be many who are ready to receive you and to rejoice at the sight of you.” You see, you are living in this world in such a way that you are really making preparation for that next world. You are buying up the opportunity.

I could quote Scripture almost endlessly to you in this connection, but let me mention just one passage—a very striking one at the end of the thirteenth chapter of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans: “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom 13:11-14). These are all different ways, you see, of telling us

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<sup>3</sup> **mammon** – wealth; riches.

to rouse ourselves, to realize who we are and what we are and to clutch at every opportunity. Be alive and alert. Regard this world as but an opportunity of pleasing Him. Make to yourselves friends, even with the mammon of unrighteousness; lay hold on eternal life.

If anything further is needed to press upon us the urgency of doing this, think of this: “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2Co 5:10). Christians, we must give an account of “the things done in his body, according to that [we have] done, whether it be good or bad” (2Co 5:10). “Very well,” says the apostle, “knowing the terror of the Lord, I persuade men.” What he means is this: he knows that he will stand before his Lord. It is not that he is in danger of losing his salvation. It is not judgment in the sense that our eternal destiny is going to be determined. He is talking to people who are already Christians and whose eternal destiny is safe. This is a kind of judgment of reward. The One Who came from heaven to earth for us and died on that cruel cross of shame on Calvary’s hill; Who spared not Himself, Who endured the contradiction of sinners. He Who even bore that agony in the garden and on the cross, He will look at us—and what He will look for is this: how we spent our time in this world after we realized what He had done for us. It is the terror of love you see, not the fear of torment. You will look into that beloved face and into those eyes and you will realize, as you have never done before, what He did for you. Then you will realize with shame what you did not do for Him. “Oh,” says Paul, “buy up the opportunity, do not waste a second. Keep that in the forefront of your mind.”

The apostle John says exactly the same thing in his First Epistle, chapter 3: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” Then he immediately adds, “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1Jo 3:2-3). That is precisely what the apostle Paul is saying here. “Ye are all the children of light,” he says, “and the children of the day” (1Th 5:5); you must not walk as if you are still in darkness. No, realizing what is coming, you know you have not a second to waste. Buy up every opportunity. Make full use of the time you have got left in this world. And then, finally, to cap it all, there is a great statement in the book of Revelation in chapter 14 and verse 13: “Write”—you must have heard this at funeral services; have you ever realized its significance?—“Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev 14:13). Here

it is again. Thank God, the works that follow us are our good works! They are the works that we have done as we have been buying up the opportunity or redeeming the time. It is all being recorded, nothing will be forgotten; you will hear the blessed words: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat 25:34). This is an amazing thing—“their works do follow them.”

Very well, then, here is the exhortation in the light of all that. In order that you may have that reception, that you may hear that encomium,<sup>4</sup> redeem the opportunity! What a wonderful thing it will be to hear those words: “Come, ye blessed of my Father.” Work it out in terms of Matthew 25, of the people who visited Him in prison by visiting His people in prison and giving them food and drink and clothing. You see, they bought up every opportunity, they were living in the light of this, and they redeemed the time.

From *Darkness and Light: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:17-5:17* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 449-455; used by permission.

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**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981):** Welsh expository preacher and author; born in Cardiff, Wales, UK.



What is time? Who can readily and briefly explain this? Who can even in thought comprehend it, so as to utter a word about it? But what in discourse do we mention more familiarly and knowingly than time? And we understand when we speak of it. We understand also when we hear it spoken of by another. What then is time? If no one asks me, I know. If I wish to explain it to one that asketh, I know not.—*Augustine*

Wisdom is seen when professors walk not as fools in a vain, careless, and sinful manner but as wise. This they do when they walk as the Word of God directs them; when they walk uprightly according to the gospel; when they walk as they have Christ for an example; and when they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. One special and particular instance of their walking wisely is redeeming the time because the days are evil, which is done when they lose no opportunity of doing good to others.—*Richard Sibbes*

Though these transitory days, months, and years will at last expire, yet *eternity* shall not. O it is a long word and an amazing matter! What is eternity but a constant permanency of persons and things in one and the same state and condition forever, putting them beyond all possibility of change?

—*John Flavel*

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<sup>4</sup> **encomium** – warm, glowing praise.

# TIME THIEVES TO AVOID

Richard Baxter (1615-1691)

**T**HIEF 1. One of the greatest timewasting sins is idleness or sloth. The slothful see their time pass away, their work undone, and can hear of the necessity of redeeming it; yet they have not hearts to stir. When they are convinced that duty must be done, they are still delaying and putting it off from day to day, saying still, “I will do it tomorrow or hereafter.” Tomorrow is still the sluggard’s working day, and today is his idle day. He spendeth his time in fruitless wishes: he lieth in bed or sitteth idly and wisheth that this were laboring. He feasteth his flesh and wisheth that this were fasting. He followeth his sports and pleasures and wisheth that this were prayer and a mortified life. He lets his heart run after lust, pride, or covetousness, and wisheth that this were heavenly-mindedness and laying up a treasure above. Thus, the “soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat” (Pro 13:4). “The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour” (Pro 21:25). Every little opposition or difficulty will put him by a duty. “The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing” (Pro 20:4). “The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets” (Pro 22:13). “As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth” (Pro 26:14-15). And at last his sloth depraves his reason and bribeth it to plead the cause of his negligence. “The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason” (Pro 26:16). Time will slide on, duty will be undone, and your souls will be undone, if impious<sup>1</sup> slothfulness be predominant. “The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain” (Pro 15:19).

You seem still to go through so many difficulties that you will never make a successful journey of it. Yea, when he is in duty, the slothful is still losing time. He prayeth as if he prayed not and laboreth as if he labored not—as if the fruit of holiness passed away as hastily as worldly pleasures. He is as slow as a snail and doth so little work...and all is but next to sitting still and doing nothing. It is a sad

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<sup>1</sup> **impious** – without reverence for God; wicked.

thing that men should not only lose their time in sinful pleasures but also lose it in reading, hearing, and praying by doing all in a heartless drowsiness! Thus, “He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster” (Pro 18:9). If he begins in the Spirit, and for a spurt seemeth to be in earnest, he flags, tireth, and endeth in the flesh (Gal 3:3). “The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious” (Pro 12:27). If he seeth and confesseth a vice, he hath not a heart to rise against it, to resolutely resist it, and to use the means by which it must be overcome. “I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man” (Pro 24:30-34). Shake off, then, this unmanly sluggishness! Remember that you run for the immortal crown. Therefore, see that you lose no time and look not at the things that are behind; that is, do not cast an eye or lend an ear to any person or thing that would call you back or stop you: heaven is before you...Abhor a sluggish habit of mind: go cheerfully about what you have to do, and do it diligently with your might. Even about your lawful, worldly business, it is a timewasting sin to be slothful. If you are servants or laborers, you rob your masters and those that hire you, who hired you to work and not to be idle. Whatever you are, you rob God of your service and yourselves of your precious time and all that you might get therein. It is they that are lazy in their callings that can find no time for holy duties. Ply your business the rest of the day, and you may the better redeem some time for prayer and reading Scripture. Work hard on the weekdays, and you may the better spend the Lord’s Day entirely for your souls...Sloth robbeth multitudes of a great part of their lives. “Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger” (Pro 19:15). A careful, diligent person is still redeeming time while he doth that which is good; and a slothful person is always losing it.

**Thief 2. The second timewaster is excess of sleep.** Necessity cureth most of the poor of this, but many of the rich are guilty of it. If you ask me, “What is excess?” I answer, “All that is more than is needful to our health and business.” So much as is necessary to these, I reprehend not. Therefore, the infirm may take more than the healthful and the old more than the young. Those that find that an hour’s sleep

more will not hinder them, but further them in their work, so that they shall do the more and not the less as being unfit without it, may use it as a means to the after improvement of their time. But when sluggish persons spend hours in bed that neither their health nor labors need—merely out of a swinish love of sleep; yes, when they will have no work to do or calling to employ them, except that which yields to their sleepy disease; and when they think they may sleep longer than is necessary because they are rich and can afford it and have no necessary business to call them up; these think they may consume their precious time, and sin more, and wrong their souls more, because God hath given them more than others. As if their servant should plead that he may sleep more than others because he has more wages than others. O did these drowsy wretches know what work they must do for God, for their poor souls, and for those about them, it would quickly awake them and make them stir. Did they but know how earnestly they will shortly wish that they had all those hours to spend again, they would spend them better now than in drowsiness. Did they but know what a woeful account it will be when they must be answerable for all their time, to say, “We spent so many hours every week or morning in excess of sleep,” they would be roused from their sty and find some better use for their time, which will be sweeter in the review, when time is ended and must be no more.

**Thief 3. The next timewaster is inordinate adorning of the body.** The poor may thank God that they are free also from the temptations to this and can quickly dress and go about their business. But many ladies and gallants<sup>2</sup> are so guilty of this vice that I wonder conscience is so patient with them. O poor neglected, undressed souls! O filthy consciences, never cleansed from your pollutions by the Spirit or blood of Christ! Have you not better use for your precious hours than to be washing, pinning, dressing, curling, spotting, and powdering until ten or eleven o'clock in the morning, when honest laborers have done one half of their day's work? While you are in health, were not six o'clock in the morning a fitter hour for you to be dressed that you might draw near to the most holy God in holy prayer, read His Word, and set your souls and your families in order for the duties of the following day? I do not say that you may go no neater than poor laboring people or that you may bestow no more time than they in dressing you. But I say that for your souls and in your callings, you are bound by God to be as diligent as they and have no more time given you to

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<sup>2</sup> **gallants** – men of fashion and pleasure, who are well-dressed and showy.

lose than they. You should spend as little of it in neatifying<sup>3</sup> yourself as you can and be sensible that, otherwise, the loss is your own. That abundance of precious hours that your pride consumeth will lie heavy one day upon your consciences, and then you shall confess—I say you *shall* confess—with aching hearts that the duties you owed to God and man and the care of your souls and of your families should have been preferred before your appearing neat and spruce to men. If you have but a journey to go, you can rise earlier and be sooner dressed; but for the good of your souls and the redeeming of your precious time, you cannot.

O that God would but show you what greater work you have to do with those precious hours and how it will cut your hearts to think of them at last! If you lay but hopelessly sick of a consumption, you would desire to be cured. It is like this proud disease: bestow less of your time in adorning the flesh, which is hasting to the grave and rottenness. Can you not now see how time and life consume?...When time is gone, conscience itself shall answer all and make you wish you had been wiser.

You know not, ladies and gallants, how precious a thing time is! You little feel what a price yourselves will set upon it at the last. You little consider what you have to do with it. You see not how it hasteth and how near you stand to vast eternity! You little know how despised time will look a wakened conscience in the face, or what it is to be found unready to die! I know you lay not to heart these things. If you did, you could not, I say, *you could not* so lightly cast away your time. If all were true that you say—that indeed your place and honor requireth that your precious morning hours be thus spent—I profess to you, I would pity you more than galley-slaves...Indeed, your excuses are frivolous and untrue, and they do but show that pride hath prevailed to captivate your reason to its service. For we know lords and ladies, as great as the rest of you (though alas, too few), that can quickly be up and dressed and spend their early hours in prayer and adorning their souls and can be content to come forth in a plain and incurious<sup>4</sup> attire...

**Thief 4. Another timewasting sin is idle talk.** What abundance of precious time doth this consume! Harken to most men's discourse when they are sitting together, working together, or travelling together, and you shall hear how little of it is any better than silence. And if

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<sup>3</sup> **neatifying** – making neat and elegantly dressing.

<sup>4</sup> **incurious** – not elaborate.



not better, it is worse. So full are those persons of vanity who are empty, even to silence, of anything that is good, that they can find and feed a discourse of nothing [for] many hours and days together; they think [there is] such fecundity and floridness<sup>5</sup> of style as deserveth acceptance if not applause. I have marveled oft at some wordy preachers with how little matter they can handsomely fill up an hour! But one would wonder more to hear people fill up not an hour, but a great part of their day and of their lives—without any study at all and without any holy and substantial subject—with words that if you should write them all down and peruse them, you would find that the sum and conclusion of them is *nothing*. How self-applaudingly and pleasingly they can extempore<sup>6</sup> talk idly and of nothing a great part of their lives! I have heard many of them marvel at a poor unlearned Christian that can pray extempore many hours together in very good order and well-composed words. But are they not more to be marveled at who can very handsomely talk of nothing ten times as long, with greater abundance, without repetitions, and that extempore, when they have not that variety of great commanding subjects to be the matter of their speech? I tell you, when time must be reviewed, the consumption of so much in idle talk will appear to have been no venial<sup>7</sup> sin as empty, careless sinners now imagine.

**Thief 5. Another notorious timewasting thief is needless, inordinate sports and games.** They are commonly stigmatized by the offenders themselves with the infamous name of “pastimes” and masked with the deceitful title of recreations—cards, dice, stage-plays, dancings, revellings, and excesses in the most lawful sports, especially in hunting, hawking, and bowling, etc. Whether all these are lawful or unlawful of themselves is not the present question. But I am sure that the precious hours that they take up might have been improved to the saving of many a thousand souls that by the loss of time are now undone and past recovery. Except malicious enemies of godliness, I scarcely know a more wretched sort of people on the earth and more to be lamented than those fleshly persons who, through the love of sensual pleasure, do waste many hours day after day in plays, gaming, and voluptuous courses.<sup>8</sup> Their miserable souls are dead in sin, enslaved to their fleshly lusts, unreconciled to God, and find no delight in Him or in His service and cannot make a recreation of any heaven-

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<sup>5</sup> **fecundity and floridness** – ability to produce ideas using unusual or complicated words.

<sup>6</sup> **extempore** – with little or no preparation; on the spur of the moment.

<sup>7</sup> **venial** – lesser; slight.

<sup>8</sup> **voluptuous courses** – excessively sensual practices.

ly work! How will it torment these unhappy souls to think how they played away those hours in which they might have been pleasing God, preventing misery, and laying up a treasure in heaven? And to think that they sold that precious time for a little fleshly sport, in which they should have been working out their salvation and making their calling and election sure (2Pe 1:10).

**Thief 6. Another timewasting thief is excess of worldly cares and business.** These do not only pollute the soul with deep stains in a little time and then recede as some more disgraced sins; but they dwell upon the mind, keep possession [of it], and keep out good. They take up the greatest part of the lives of those that are guilty of them. The world is first in the morning in their thoughts, last at night, and almost all day. The world will not give them leave to entertain any sober, fixed thoughts of the world to come nor to do the work that all works should give place to. The world devoureth almost all the time that God and their souls should have: it will not give them leave to pray, read, meditate, or discourse of holy things. Even when they seem to be praying or hearing the word of God, the world is in their thoughts: “They come unto thee as the people cometh; and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love; but their heart goeth after their covetousness” (Eze 33:31). In most families, there is almost no talk or doings but for the world. These also will know that they had greater works for their precious time, which should have always had priority over the world.

**Thief 7. Another timewaster is vain, ungoverned, and sinful thoughts.** When men are wearied with vain works and sports, they continue unwearied in vain thoughts. When they lack company for vain discourse and games, they can waste the time in idle, lustful, ambitious, or covetous thoughts alone without any company. In the very nighttime while they wake and as they travel by the way, yes, while they seem to be serving God, they will be wasting the time in useless thoughts. This devoureth a greater proportion of precious time than any of the former: when time must be reckoned for, what abundance will be found upon men’s accounts, as spent in idle sinful thoughts! O watch this thief and remember: though you may think that a vain thought is but a little sin, yet time is not a little or contemptible commodity...

**Thief 8. Another dangerous timewasting sin is the reading of vain books, playbooks, romances, and [fictionalized] histories.** Also, unprofitable studies [that are] undertaken [for no reason but] pride or

the pleasing of a carnal and curious mind...I speak not here how pernicious<sup>9</sup> this vice is by corrupting the imagination and affections, breeding a diseased appetite, and putting you out of relish with necessary things. But think before you spend another hour in any such books, whether you can comfortably give an account of it to God. How precious is time, which you are wasting on such childish toys! You think the reading of such things is lawful; but is it lawful to lose your precious time? You say that your petty studies are desirable and laudable; but the neglect of far greater things is not laudable. I discourage no man from laboring to know all that God hath any way revealed to be known. But I say, as Seneca,<sup>10</sup> “We are ignorant of things necessary because we learn things superfluous and unnecessary.” Art is long and life is short; and he that hath not time for all should make sure of the greatest matters. If he be ignorant of anything, let it be of that which the love of God, our own and other men’s salvation, and the public good do least require and can best spare. It is a pitiful thing to see a man waste his time in criticizing or in growing wise in the less necessary sciences and arts, while he is yet a slave of pride or worldliness, hath an unrenewed soul, and hath not learned the mysteries necessary to his own salvation. Yet these studies are laudable in their season. But the fanatic studies of those that would pry into unrevealed things and the lascivious employment of those that read love-books, play-books, and vain stories will one day appear to have been but an unwise expense of time...I think there are few of those that plead for it that would be found with such books in their hands at death or will then find any pleasure in the remembrance of them.

**Thief 9. But the master-thief that robs men of their time is an un-sanctified, ungodly heart.** This loseth time whatever men are doing because they never truly intend the glory of God. Having not a right principle or a right goal, their whole course is hell-wards; and whatever they do, they are not working out their salvation. However God may use the time and gifts of some of them as a mercy to others, they are still losing their time as to themselves. Therefore, a new and holy heart with a heavenly intention and design of life is the great thing necessary to all that will savingly redeem their time.

From *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter*,  
Vol. 3 (London: James Duncan, 1830), 156-168.



<sup>9</sup> **pernicious** – destructive; ruinous.

<sup>10</sup> **Lucius Annaeus Seneca** (also Seneca the Younger) (c. 4 B.C.-A.D. 65) – Roman philosopher, statesman, and orator; Rome’s leading intellectual of his day.

# LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

*Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore, be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.—Ephesians 5:16-17*

**P**EOPLE are judging Christianity by what they see in us. Not only that, they are judging Christ by us, they are judging God by us. We stand for God and for Christ, for the gospel of salvation, for the whole of the Christian message. We are its representatives. They judge it entirely by what they see in us. They do not read the Bible or books about the Bible. We stand for it. So, they are observing us! You see why the apostle says we must redeem the time and buy up every opportunity. God has often brought people to repentance and to salvation simply by leading them to observe other Christians; they have felt a sense of condemnation and at the same time a sense of something attracting them. This is the reason we are to be careful, says the apostle.

What, then, are we to do? How are we to redeem the time? We are to live in such a way that we will silence all criticism. Peter puts that perfectly in 1 Peter 2:11-12: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” They are harmful to you, so do not do it for your own sake. But then he goes on: “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.” Live in such a way, he says, that you will disarm their criticism. There will be nothing to say. Though they have been speaking against you as evildoers, your very good works will answer them, and they will have to admit that they were wrong.

That is obviously the first thing, but we must go beyond that. We must not only live in such a way that we silence criticism, we must positively live in such a way as to attract these people and to make them feel that they are missing something great and wonderful by not being Christians. There is to be that about us which was in the Lord Himself, which attracted people like a magnet. Do you see those poor men possessed with devils? When they saw Him, they ran to Him. They had lived up in the mountains and amongst the tombs. They were running *away* from people; but when they saw Him, they ran *to*

Him. “Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners,” we read at the beginning of Luke, chapter 15. It was always the effect He had; the Pharisees did not attract people, but Christ did. There was something about Him that made them feel they would receive understanding and sympathy. The woman that was a sinner in the city went and fell at His feet, washed them with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. That was His effect always, and you and I are to live in that kind of way.

But how do we do so? What kind of a life must we live? The first essential, I would say, is this: it must be an *ordered* life. It must be a disciplined life. One of the things that does most harm to the Christian cause is an erratic Christian. You know the sort of man who comes rushing in and makes us feel for a while we have never been Christians before. But it does not last more than a few weeks; then he suddenly disappears completely. Then back again he comes! Nothing does such serious disservice as that. The world is watching, and it smiles when it sees such a person coming back again. Well, thank God, it is not the world who decides such a man’s destiny. If you have been an erratic Christian, let me assure you that if you have come back and come back truly, God will receive you, and you will have another opportunity. But do not go on behaving like that: “Go, and sin no more” (Joh 8:11). But we must not be erratic or changeable or unpredictable, if we claim that we are wise. We do not live by *ad hoc*<sup>1</sup> legislation. We have a great plan and we live steadily according to it...

Or, look at it like this. We must live a life that is not characterized by stumbling or falling in any way. A stumbling or a falling Christian is a very poor recommendation for the gospel because the world can stumble and fall into sin in any shape or form—sin in temper, anger, lack of control, lack of sympathy and of understanding. A man who does that is not redeeming the time. He is not recommending Christianity, nor God, nor the Lord Jesus Christ. No, the great characteristic of the life of a Christian is to be consistency. There must be no violent reactions one way or another. Listen to a psalmist describing this kind of good man in the 112<sup>th</sup> Psalm: “He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD” (Psa 112:7). You see, times of crisis always help to show what a man really is. It is one thing to be a theoretical Christian, but the real test is what you are like when things go wrong. Suddenly you are taken ill; and if you are alarmed and do not know what to do, the world says, “I thought he

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<sup>1</sup> **ad hoc** – made only for a particular purpose or need, not planned before it happens.

was a Christian, but it doesn't seem to help him very much." What are you like when sorrow or bereavement comes to your home? What are you like when a war breaks out? You see, it is by our reactions that we betray what we are. Our Lord said, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Mat 12:37). Something happens, you speak instinctively, and you have shown exactly what you are in the depths. The Christian is steady: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD" (Psa 112:7).

Of course, you see, when things have been going well, this man has been talking to himself and saying, "Well, yes, thank God, things are going well. God is gracious and kind to me. I don't deserve even this. I can't understand why He blesses me as He does; but He does, and I thank Him for it. But I know that in an evil world like this, you never know when things go wrong. Sin has brought in all sorts of consequences and complications; and I am part of the world, and I am subject to these things. At any moment, they may come to me." So, when they come, he is not taken unawares. He has thought ahead, he has seen it all. It is all right, he says, this is a part of my lot in this world; "in this tabernacle [we] do groan, being burdened...earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (2Co 5:2, 4). "His heart is fixed." He is a steady man. He has a balance in his life. He has reserves that nobody else knows anything about. He is on a rock, on a foundation; and though the whole world may be convulsed in final calamity, this man is steady, trusting in the Lord. That is the sort of life we are to live.

Think also of redeeming the time as it is applied practically in the matter of speech. This is so important. You not only live like this because you know other people are looking at you, but when you are in conversation with them, you are full of wisdom, discretion, and understanding, and you watch for your opportunities. You may be sitting in the train next to somebody or talking to somebody over the garden wall. They begin to express their opinions, and you are able to buy up the opportunity. They may start by saying, "Isn't it awful?" You do not just say, "Yes, isn't it?" You say, "But why is it awful do you think? What is the cause of all this?" You have taken your opportunity. Let them speak. You do not suddenly go to them and say, "Are you saved?" Oh, no, you must be wise—he that is wise winneth souls (*see* Pro 11:30). Listen to their conversation. If they express a criticism or an opinion, be ready to use the Christian message. Lead them on to

it, starting from where they start, gradually leading them on and linking what is said to eternal principles.

Or they may ask you questions. What a heaven-sent opportunity! If we only look at it in this way, it is amazing how constantly people are presenting us with these very opportunities. Yes, but are we buying them up, are we looking for them? Are we always ready to take hold of and to improve the occasion? That is what the apostle is telling us to do. Or again, we must keep our eyes open and watch what is happening to people. Here is a man who has taken ill, a man whom we have known and who has no interest in Christian matters. It is a wonderful thing to go and offer him a little sympathy, to try to help him in some practical way; and then you will soon be given your opportunity to improve it. Illness, sickness, accident, death, misfortune—all these things are constantly happening to people and there we find our opportunity. When their hearts are tender, let us be there and let us be ready. Redeem the time, buy up the opportunity!

Then, finally, we must be governed by our understanding of what the will of the Lord is. “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5:17). There is the overruling principle that governs everything. What does he mean? “Understanding what the will of the Lord is” does not mean that you seek a special guidance about everything that you do and say. There are people who interpret it like that, you know, and they never move without praying and waiting for some immediate guidance. But you need not do that. Here is the guidance in the Bible before you. Read your Bible instead. There are very exceptional circumstances in which one needs some special guidance, but they are very few. Understanding what the will of the Lord is does not mean that.

What does it mean? It means the very thing the apostle has already been telling us in verse 10: “Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.” He says exactly the same in Romans 12 in the second verse. What, then, is the will of the Lord? Surely, there should be no doubt about this. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Pro 9:10). What else is His will? Well, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification,” says Paul in the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, chapter 4 and verse 3. He says it here in the Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 1 and verse 4: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” Holiness is always the characteristic of the Christian. This is what the will of the Lord is. This is what He wants me to be. He wants me to be somebody who will act as light in this

world, and the Bible is full of instruction to me about what to do and what not to do. Read the Ten Commandments, read the Beatitudes, read the Sermon on the Mount. That is the will of the Lord. To know the will of the Lord, I say, you must read your Bible. Meditate on the law of the Lord like the man in the first Psalm, whose delight is in it and who meditates in it day and night. Know it thoroughly and then apply it.

In other words, I would like to put it like this. Here is a man whose chief desire in life is to please the Lord...he, as it were, looks at the picture of the cross of Christ and reads that inscription—I did this for you, what have you done for Me?—and he gets up and serves obediently. He is a man who, having realized what God has done for him in Christ, [thinks] that he does not belong to himself. “Ye are not your own...ye are bought with a price” (1Co 6:20); therefore, serve God with your body, with your spirit, with the whole of your being. This is his one desire, and he knows that the Lord’s desire is that he should show to the world that the Lord has delivered him from sin, has made him holy, and is preparing him for heaven. If you keep that in your mind, you cannot go wrong. Everything, then, will be determined by that.

If you want something further, here it is. Look at the Son of God as He lived in this world. We are to try to live like that, to follow His steps Who did no wrong. “When he was reviled, [he] reviled not again...but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1Pe 2:23). There it is all before us. “Be ye imitators”—Paul has already said that to these Ephesians—“Be ye imitators of God” (*see* Eph 5:1). Imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, not to *make* yourselves Christians, but *because* you are Christians. “As he is, so are we in this world” (1Jo 4:17). We are to follow in His steps. We are to deny ourselves, to take up the cross and to follow Christ. And as we do so, our lives will be holy, they will be steady. They will be calm and serene; they will be a rebuke to sin in every shape and form. They will be an attraction to poor sinners who are beginning to realize their state and their need. “Always knowing,” he says, “and understanding what the will of the Lord is.” Here is His will: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat 5:16)...“Let your light so shine”!

From *Darkness and Light: An Exposition of Ephesians 4:17-5:17* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 455-460; this book is available in print from [www.banneroftruth.org](http://www.banneroftruth.org); used by permission.





# THE TIME IS SHORT

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*The time is short.—1 Corinthians 7:29*

**T**HE time is short. This inspires us. It ought to fire us with zeal for immediate action. The sun hastens on, the sands run down. “Now is the accepted time” (2Co 6:2). Let those who love the Lord be prompt. The time to do the deeds that thou must do, or leave them undone, flies swiftly past. Say not, “I will do this by-and-by.” Do it at once. Other duties await thee; brief is the space allotted thee for all. Are your children converted? Pray with them tonight. Let not tomorrow come without putting your arms about their necks, kneeling down with them devoutly, and praying fervently that God would save their souls. It is the King’s business, and it demands haste. “The time is short” for others as well as for yourself.

A dear brother told me, a week or two ago, that a man who worked for him frequently brought in goods when they were finished; and he thought that the next time the man came in he would speak to him about his soul. When he came, however, business absorbed the employer’s attention, and the man passed away.<sup>1</sup> He felt, he did not know exactly why, pricked in his conscience and resolved that on the next occasion, he would enquire as to his eternal interests; but he was too late. Instead of coming again, a messenger brought tidings that he was dead. Startled by the news, our brother could find no comfort in regrets, though he bewailed as one who could not forgive himself a hundred wasted opportunities in the presence of one keen self-reproach. Oh, that an inspiration would constrain you to serve the Lord now! Every time the clock ticks, it seems to say, “Now.” The time is so short that the matter is urgent. Do not wait, young man, to preach Jesus till you have had more instruction; begin at once. You, who mean to do something for the poor of London when you have hoarded up more money, spend your money now; do it at once. You, who mean to leave a large sum to charities when you die, defer it not; be your own executors.<sup>2</sup> Lay out the capital at once; get some joy and comfort out of it yourselves. Now is the time to carry a good purpose

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<sup>1</sup> **passed away** – went his way.

<sup>2</sup> **executors** – persons appointed to see that a will is carried into effect.

into good effect. Before you were saved, the message to you was, “To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart” (Psa 95:7-8). After you are saved, the message to you is, “Today, obey His voice, and serve the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.” “The time is short,” so make the most of it.

“The time is short.” I want to ring this sentence louder and louder in your ears that it may inspire you to pray for immediate conversions. I have met with many who are hoping to get converted someday, but not now. Is not such procrastination perilous? Dare any of you run the risk of willfully abiding in unbelief another hour? Can you brook<sup>3</sup> the thought of remaining month after month in jeopardy of your soul? Is it safe to tempt the Lord and provoke the anger of the Most High? O sirs, while you flatter yourselves with pleasing prospects, you are beguiling your hearts with a reckless presumption! We want you to be converted, and no time can be more suitable than this present time. Forsake your sin immediately. Do not turn back to dally<sup>4</sup> with it a little longer. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and lay hold on the promise of eternal life without any further delay. You may never see another morrow, or the desire that whets your appetite now may fail you then. This is our prayer: that you may, this very hour, be brought into the fold of Christ.

Then seeing that “the time is short,” let us bear with patience the ills that vex us. Are we very poor? “The time is short.” Does the bitter cold pierce through our scanty garments? “The time is short.” Is consumption beginning to prey on our trembling frame? “The time is short.” Are we unkindly treated by our kinsfolk? Do our comrades revile, and our neighbors mock us? “The time is short.” Have we to bear evil treatment from an ungenerous world? “The time is short.” Do cruel taunts try our tempers? “The time is short.” We are traveling at express speed and shall soon be beyond the reach of all the incidents and accidents that disturb and distract us. As we travel home to our Father’s house, the distance diminishes, and we begin to sight the city of the blessed, “the home over there.” It is needless to murmur or repine; why trouble yourselves about what you will do a month or two hence?<sup>5</sup> You may not be here; you may be in heaven. Your eyes will have beheld “the king in his beauty,” you will have seen “the land that is very far off” (Isa 33:17).

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<sup>3</sup> **brook** – bear; endure.

<sup>4</sup> **dally** – play; lose time in idleness and vanity.

<sup>5</sup> **hence** – from now.

Worldly-mindedness ill becomes us who have confessed that we are “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb 11:13). “The time is short” in which we can hold any possessions in this terrestrial<sup>6</sup> sphere. Then, let us not love anything here below too fondly. “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out” (1Ti 6:7). Survey your broad acres, but remember that you will not long be able to walk across them. Look on your plenteous crops, but ere long another shall reap the profit of those fields. Count your gold and silver, but know that wealth, greedily as it is sought, will not give you present immunity from sickness and sorrow, neither will it secure your welfare when called to quit your frail tenement.<sup>7</sup> Trust in the living God. Love the Lord, and let eternal things absorb your thoughts and engage your affections. “The time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not...And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away” (1Co 7:29-31).

Are these gloomy reflections? Nay, dear brethren, the fact that “the time is short” should inspire us, who are of the household of faith, with the most joyous expectations. Do you really believe in the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Do you really believe that your head is to wear a crown of life that fadeth not away? Do you really believe that these feet of yours, all shod with silver sandals, will stand upon that street of pure gold? Do you really believe that these hands shall pluck celestial fruits from trees whose leaves can never wither, and that you shall lie down in the spice-beds in the gardens of the blessed? Do you believe that these eyes shall see the King in that day when He comes in His glory, and that these bones shall rise again from the grave, and your bodies shall be endowed with an incorruptible existence? “Yes,” say you, “we do believe it, and believe it intensely, too.” Well, then, I would that ye realized it as so very near that you were expectant of its fulfilment. Who would cry and fret about the passing troubles of a day when he saw the heavens open, beheld the beckoning hand, and heard the voice that called him hence? Oh, that the glory might come streaming into your soul till you forget the darkness of the way! Oh, that the breeze from these goodly mountains would fan you! Oh, that the spray from that mighty ocean would refresh you! Oh, that the music of those bells of heaven in yonder turrets would enliven you! Then would ye speed your way

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<sup>6</sup> **terrestrial** – earthly.

<sup>7</sup> **quit...tenement** – leave your weak body.

towards the rest that remaineth for the people of God, inspired with sacred ardor<sup>8</sup> and dauntless courage. But “the ungodly are not so” (Psa 1:4). It is to them I must address the last word, “The time is short.”

This alarms us; and well it may, on their account. Let me toll a knell.<sup>9</sup> It is a dismal knell I have to toll for the unconverted man to whom life has been a joy, for he has prospered in the world. You have succeeded in the enterprise on which you set your heart. You have bought the estate that you longed to secure. It is a fine place certainly; but you have only got it for two or three years! Would I have taken it for that term? No, I would not have taken it on a nine hundred-and ninety-nine-years’ lease. Freeholds<sup>10</sup> for me! Did I say two or three years? Nay, there is not a man beneath the sun who can guarantee that you will hold it for three weeks. “The time is short.” Drive down the broad avenue; walk round the park; look into the old feudal<sup>11</sup> mansion; but “the time is short,” very short, and your tenure<sup>12</sup> very limited. You have gained your object, you are possessed of real property; what next? Why, make your will. The thing is urgent. “The time is short.” But what have you not done? You have not believed in Christ; you have not embraced the gospel; you have not found salvation, you have not laid hold on eternal life; you have not a hope to solace you when your strength fails and you pant for breath. How few the opportunities that remain! Some of you have attended my ministry all the while I have been in London; I wonder how much longer you will hear me and yet remain unsaved. Your turn to die will come at length. You ail a little, your trifling indisposition does not yield to treatment; the symptoms grow serious, the disease is dangerous, your death is imminent. Pain unnerves you; terror distracts you. Your family and your friends look at you with helpless pity. The doctor has just left you in dismay. Send for the priest, or fetch the parson; but what can they do for you unless you believe in Jesus? ’Tis over, the last struggle! Then picture yourself to yourself—a lost spirit, asking for a drop of water to cool your tongue! That will be your portion, sinner, unless you repent. Bethink you,<sup>13</sup> sirs, there is but a step between you and death, a short step between you and hell, unless you believe in

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<sup>8</sup> **ardor** – zeal.

<sup>9</sup> **toll a knell** – ring a bell, especially for a funeral.

<sup>10</sup> **freeholds** – permanent and absolute ownership of land or property with freedom to dispose of it at will.

<sup>11</sup> **feudal** – pertaining to *feuds*, estates of land granted by a superior on condition of services to be rendered.

<sup>12</sup> **tenure** – ownership; occupancy.

<sup>13</sup> **bethink you** – cause yourself to reflect or consider.

Jesus. Do you still imagine that there is time enough and to spare? I beseech you, do not cherish so vain a thought. It may be that you suspect me of exaggerating: that I cannot do in such a case as this. Time is rushing on, swiftly but silently. While I speak, the minutes pass, the hour is soon gone, the day is almost spent. I charge you, then, by the ever-blessed Spirit, listen now to the warning; escape from sin; get out of that broad road which leads to destruction; believe in Jesus; lay hold on eternal life. May the Spirit of God arouse you! May these words be blessed to you! They should be put more forcibly if I knew how. With all the fervor of my soul, I entreat you, for I know your everlasting interests are in imminent jeopardy. God grant that you may not linger longer, lest haply<sup>14</sup> you linger too long, and perish in your lingering! “The time is short.”

In a little while, there will be a great concourse<sup>15</sup> of people in the streets. I think I hear someone enquiring, “What are all these people waiting for?” “Do you not know? He is to be buried today.” “And who is that?” “It is Spurgeon.” “What! The man that preached at the Tabernacle?” “Yes; he is to be buried today.” That will happen very soon; and when you see my coffin carried to the silent grave, I should like every one of you, whether converted or not, to be constrained to say, “He did earnestly urge us, in plain and simple language, not to put off the consideration of eternal things. He did entreat us to look to Christ. Now he is gone, our blood is not at his door if we perish.” God grant that you may not have to bear the bitter reproach of your own conscience! But, as I feel that “the time is short,” I will stir you up so long as I am in this Tabernacle; and I do pray the Lord to bless the word every time I preach it from this platform. Oh, that some souls may be saved that Jesus Christ may be glorified, Satan defeated, and heaven filled with saved ones!

From a sermon published on Thursday, December 10, 1903, originally delivered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

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**Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892):** Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



If ye knew the sterling worth of time, ye would shrink from  
the smallest waste of so precious a thing.

—*Charles Spurgeon*

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<sup>14</sup> **haply** – perhaps.

<sup>15</sup> **concourse** – gathering.

# A MOST DREADFUL LOSS

Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1647)

*But after this the judgment.—Hebrews 9:27*

**I**F the only time that we have to provide for eternity is the time of this life, how then are those to be reprov'd that misspend and squander away this precious time of their lives about vanities<sup>1</sup> and neglect the great business that they were sent into the world for? If such great things depend upon our lives, then the loss of the time of our lives is a most dreadful loss.

We all say time is precious, and it is so. The thorough understanding and applying of this point would make us see time precious indeed. If there could be an extract of the quintessence<sup>2</sup> of all the pearls in the world put into one, it would not be such a precious pearl as the time of our lives because that which depends upon it is infinitely worth more than ten thousand worlds. However, men and women make little of their time and play and sport it away. Yet there is no moment of thy time that thou doest misspend, but for all thou knowest it might be the very moment upon which thy eternal condition doth depend. Thou goest abroad and art merry and jocund<sup>3</sup> and misspendest thy time and abusest thyself. I say, for all thou knowest, that instant of thy sinning might be the very moment upon which the very hinge of all thy eternal condition depends! Did we understand this doctrine aright, we should see it to be an exceedingly great evil and folly to misspend our precious time.

Men ordinarily live in the world as if they had nothing to do but only to make provision for the flesh. If a man should come to the city about a business that concerns his life, and the time he hath to do it is very short, how industriously (do you think) would he spend that time? Every time the clock strikes would strike his heart.

Or suppose God should send a damned soul that is now in hell into the world again and should say thus to him, "Soul, you shall go and live again in the world. I will give you a little space: you shall live a quarter or half a year (or if it were but a month or week); and I will

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<sup>1</sup> **vanities** – worthless things.

<sup>2</sup> **quintessence** – purest form.

<sup>3</sup> **jocund** – cheerful.

put you in such a state that there shall be a possibility for you to make your peace with me and to deliver yourself from this misery that you are under.” I appeal to you, how do you think such a one would spend his time? Now, as you are persuaded and convinced in your consciences how such a one would spend his time, so *you* should labor to spend *your* time! Many would have rules to guide them in their way. Why, take this rule, if such a thing could be, that a damned soul could be sent into the world again and be in a possibility of another state: I say that what you think such a one would do, *you* should do. [Suppose] one should come and say to him, “What shall I give for your time that is granted to you?” How would he contemn<sup>4</sup> him! If you offer him crowns and kingdoms, yes, all the world for his time—be it but a week or a day—he would scorn such an offer and prize one day more than a thousand worlds. Now, you have had days and weeks, one after another, and yet for all that you know you are liable to eternal ruin. You know not whether you have a week or a day more before your eternal condition be stated upon you. O what need you have then to improve your time!

How few think of the passing away of their time or that any great matter depends upon the time of their lives here in this world! You would count it a great folly and madness if a man had precious oil that was worth a thousand pounds<sup>5</sup> a pint, and he set up a light with this oil to talk or play or do trifling<sup>6</sup> things by—what? a lamp that is fed by such oil, that is worth thousands? Surely, this lamp should be for some weighty business and not for trifles! Know, brethren, that the time of your lives is this lamp, lighted up, and fed with such precious oil: O do not squander it away, then, about trifles and vanities. For there are things of infinite concernment that you must do in this time of your lives.

The great charge of Christ against Jezebel was, “I gave her space to repent of her fornication, but she repented not” (Rev 2:21). I remember an expression of a woman that was in great distress of conscience. Some came to her, endeavoring what they could to persuade her that there was hope of mercy for her. She looked with a ghastly countenance upon them and said, “Call time again, call time again!” as if she had said, “If you can call back time again, there may be hope for me!” Certainly, we do not consider what depends upon time! It is a good sign of an enlightened conscience to make conscience of time.

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<sup>4</sup> **contemn** – treat with contempt.

<sup>5</sup> **thousand pounds** – huge sums of British money.

<sup>6</sup> **trifling** – unimportant.

There is nothing that puts a more serious frame into a man's spirit than to know the worth of his time. Says one in discovering the loss of the opportunity of time, "Suppose there was a company of men sailing to sea, and they come at last to a little island that lies in the midst of the sea, many thousands of miles from any other land. They go and refresh themselves upon the island, but says the Mariner, 'Look to yourselves, be not far off, be within call! For I will not stay for any of you.' The old men, it may be, are afraid to be too far, but the young men trust their legs and think they can make haste. But the Mariner is gone, and they are left behind and perish. It is true that while we are here in this world, we are refreshing ourselves. 'But be sure,' says God, 'you be ready when I call!' And God's call is the time of death."

Now God calls, and poor creatures are not ready; so, they perish eternally. O the loss of the time of your lives will be a dreadful loss one day! It will pierce your souls to think that once you had a day of grace, but now you have *no* time. Judgment is now passed upon you, and there is no remedy. It is reported of a woman who had her house on fire that she was very busy and spent her time about saving trifles. In the meantime, she had a child in the cradle and forgot that. When she looked upon what she had saved, she saw a few trifling things; but then it came into her mind, "O what is become of my child?" Imagining that her child had been burned (though it was saved), she ran mad, considering that she could be so foolish as to mind things of no concern and to forget her child! Take heed that it be not your case. You hear that time is precious and that there are great things that concern your souls and eternal condition, which you must do. Yet, you spend your time to get estates, to get a little pleasure or honor in the world. But when the conclusion of all shall come, and you shall look back to see what you have done, God shall come and call you to an account and say, "Well now, there is an end of your time; what have you done in this world?" It may be you can say, "Lord, I have got an estate, and I have led a merry and jovial life." "But all this while, what hast thou done for thy soul? What hast thou done for eternity? What hast thou done for the making of thy peace? What hast thou done about those things that are of such infinite weight and consequence?" Thy heart will be overwhelmed with this thought: "O Lord, I did forget my soul! I had no thoughts about my eternal estate. I have spent a great deal more time in playing than in praying; at least more time in playing than I have done in praying to God in private to make my peace with Him." However you may pass away your time merrily here, it will be a dreadful thing to you hereafter, when you shall know



what was the business of your time and what you were born for...It becomes men that have not made their peace with God to spend their days in bewailing their sinful and miserable condition and not in merriness and jollity,<sup>7</sup> in chambering and wantonness.<sup>8</sup> How thou wilt wish one day that thy time had been spent rather in mourning and lamenting! Abraham said to Dives,<sup>9</sup> “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy pleasures.” This life is not the life of thy sensual pleasures but to make all even between God and thy soul. When God is so gracious as to give us space for such great ends as He doth in this world, He expects that all the children of men should spend their days in seeking His face, in making their peace with Him, in prizing His mercy, in admiring and adoring the riches of His grace and goodness in His Son. But where do we find this? What a different course of life there is in most men from what God expects! They that squander away their precious time are guilty of desperate folly, seeing all depends upon it.

If after death comes judgment, then certainly, when death finds any man unprepared in an state of unregeneracy<sup>10</sup> and hath not made his peace with God, it must needs be exceedingly dreadful because it brings judgment and states<sup>11</sup> such a one in his eternal condition (Job 18:14). Death is called there the king of terrors, and well may it be so. For indeed it is the most dreadful thing in the world to those that understand the meaning of their own sinful state and condition. There is enough in this to daunt<sup>12</sup> the heart of the proudest, stubbornest wretch that lives upon the earth to consider, “Now I am launching into the ocean of eternity. But God knows I have made little provision for it. It may be the ocean of the wrath of this infinite God that I am now launching into and must be in forever!”

Certainly—except thou hast good assurance of the work done between God and thy soul—the sight of the infinite ocean thou art launching into immediately after death cannot but make thee give a dreadful shriek when thou seest thou art now like to miscarry eternally. Death taking an ungodly man is no other but the cutting asunder of the thread upon which he hung over the pit of eternal misery. It is the pulling up of the floodgates of God’s eternal wrath. Here, when

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<sup>7</sup> **jollity** – light-heartedness.

<sup>8</sup> **chambering and wantonness** – sexual immorality and sensuality.

<sup>9</sup> **Dives** ('dī-vēz) – in the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible: rich man in Luke 16:19-31.

<sup>10</sup> **unregeneracy** – not being born of God’s Spirit.

<sup>11</sup> **states** – places.

<sup>12</sup> **daunt** – overcome.

afflictions are upon men and women, God's wrath is but only like the little droppings of water through the floodgates. As you see in floodgates, there will be leaking forth of some drops of water only. But there is a vast difference between those drops and when the floodgates are pulled up; then the streams gush out abundantly! So it is with God's dealings here in the world with ungodly men: it may be God's hand is upon them in many afflictions, but these are but as some few drops of His wrath. But when death comes and finds them unprepared, then God pulls up the floodgates, and the streams of the wrath of the Almighty overflow them. Death to them will be no other than the Sergeant of the Lord of hosts to haul them to prison. It will be a taking up of the drawbridge. It will be to them a dismal and dreadful sunset that brings with it a night of eternal darkness, and that will be a most dreadful sunset that shall never have day more.

Why, know that at death, the day of grace and salvation sets to thee, and an eternal night of dismal blackness and darkness will be upon thee, so that when thou art going out of this world and thy peace not made with God, thou must then bid farewell to all comforts and to whatever thou didst enjoy. "Farewell to those excellent truths of God that I have had revealed to me. I shall never hear such gracious truths out of the mouths of God's ministers more. Farewell all my loving friends that I rejoiced so much in and all the merry meetings that ever I have had. I shall never have them more. Farewell now wife, husband, children, I shall never see your faces more. Yes, farewell house and lands and all delights. Farewell sun, moon, stars, and all the world. I shall never see you again until I see you all of a light fire<sup>13</sup> at the great and dreadful day of Christ (2Pe 3:7, 10). And now I am leaving the world and all the comforts here and all the means of grace here; O Lord, where am I going?"...

It is a doleful<sup>14</sup> thing for a poor creature whose time is at an end not to know where he is going—to think of former pleasures and delights and never to have them more. When I consider the death of any ungodly man, that place in Isaiah 10:3 comes to my mind: "And what will ye do in the day of visitation?" It is true, thou dost now ruffle it out<sup>15</sup> in the world and takest thy fill of pleasure...and art stout and stubborn in thy way and scornest the truths of God by His ministers. But what wilt thou do in the day of visitation, when the time shall come that puts an end unto thy days here? O the change that will then

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<sup>13</sup> **all of a light fire** – burning brightly in the blaze of judgment.

<sup>14</sup> **doleful** – filled with sorrow; mournful.

<sup>15</sup> **ruffle it out** – make a great display; carry oneself proudly or arrogantly.

be in thy spirit! God will then look upon thee with indignation and say, “O wretched creature that hast spent thy days in vanity, thou shalt continue no longer in this world. Now the wrath of the Almighty is let out upon thee! Thou art upon thy sick bed in distress, and conscience now is awakened and tortures that soul of thine. It tells thee that thou didst commit such and such wickedness at such a time, in such a company, in such a chamber. And thou beginnest now to curse thyself for thy folly and for neglecting the day of grace and salvation. Now thy time is almost gone. Well, thy sickness increaseth, thy pains continue, thy friends are all sent for, and they come about thee bewailing of thee, and thou beginnest to look ghastly. Thy drawest thy breath short, and the devil waits for his prey. Thy mouth falls, thy soul departs, and there is an end of thee—an end of all thy pride, an end of all thy stoutness, and an end of all thy vanity and wickedness.” And this is the man that hath not made God his portion. Mercy hath had her time; but thou hast neglected it, and now thou art gone forever.

We speak much of the mercy of God; and is it not rich mercy for God to give thee, a wretched sinful creature, such a blessed time for repentance as thou hast in this world? For God to call and cry to thee and to offer thee grace, pardon, and peace, He did not do so to the angels that sinned. When they committed but one sin against God, He cast them away and would not so much as treat with them about any terms of peace. Therefore, seeing thou hast had thy time already, let all the angels in heaven, saints, creatures, yes, and devils themselves acknowledge that God was merciful to this man, to this wretched man and woman, that had such a fair time though now judgment be upon them. O my brethren, the thoughts of death under this notion hath a great deal in it to work upon your hearts.

I remember I have heard of one that used to pray six times a day; and being asked why he spent so much time in praying, he gave no other answer but this: “I must die, I must die.” That which was to come after would put a period to the time of his life upon which so much did depend.

O that we had hearts to consider it! That we knew, even now in this our day, the things that belong to our everlasting peace before it be too late. Brethren, these things are of infinite concernment to your immortal souls; the Lord grant they may be prevalent upon every one of us.

Wherefore, my brethren, let me speak to you all (for I am not come this day only to spend an hour with you, but to do your souls some good): be it known to you, this is your day—the day of grace and sal-

vation. Yet once again, in the name of God, I declare unto you this truth (supposing you have heard it many times before): there is not the worst, the vilest in the congregation, that is come through the providence of God before God this day, but for ought we know it is possible for thy sins to be pardoned. It is possible yet for thy soul to be saved, for God to be reconciled to thee, and this day it is once more declared to thee: thou art not yet stated in eternal misery, which might have been thy condition before now. O that when you are gone home, you would get into your closets and fall down before God, and bless Him for this message, once more preached to you. Beloved, if I or any of the servants of the Lord should be sent by God to the gates of hell with this message, “O you damned spirits, know from the Lord that there is a possibility for you to be saved,” certainly they would with joyfulness hearken to such tidings! Now, this cannot be preached to them, but this may be preached—this *is* preached—to the vilest and wickedest wretch and enemy to God and goodness that is in the congregation. God declares this now to you, but how long it will be before judgment comes to state thee in another condition, thou canst not tell. Therefore, know in this thy day the things of thy eternal peace. And who knows what may depend upon one day?...Therefore, know your time. It is a happy thing for a man to do a business in such a time wherein he may have the benefit of it. Amongst men, though a thing be done, yet if not in the season of it, it loses its worth and efficacy. So now prayers, tears, mourning, and crying to God for mercy—the efficacy of these things is gone, except they be done in time! For ought thou knowest, unless they be done this day or tomorrow, or very shortly, they may do thee no good at all. Therefore, *now*, use your time. God proclaims and says to every one of you this day, “Poor creatures, as ever you expect to receive mercy in the day of Christ, look to it now! For now the golden scepter is stretched forth, now is the acceptable time and the day of grace and salvation. Come in and accept of the offers...of grace and mercy now, or else you are gone forever.”

From *The Saints Treasury* (London: T. C. for John Wright, 1654),  
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**Jeremiah Burroughs (1599-1647):** Congregational preacher and theologian; born in East Anglia, East of England, UK.



Fools say that time is long, but only fools talk like that.—*Charles H. Spurgeon*

# NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*Now is the day of salvation.—2 Corinthians 6:2*

**W**E frequently hear the question discussed as to which are the best times. Some are perpetually singing the praises of the “good old times”; though, if one reads the page of history, it does not appear that the old times deserve any very special praise, unless oppression, ignorance, persecution, and abundant suffering deserve to be the theme of song. It is the common habit of the fathers, with tears in their eyes, to say, “The former days were better than these,” but we have the wisdom of Solomon on our side when we tell them they do not enquire wisely concerning this. “Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this” (Ecc 7:10). Others there be who are always boasting of the present eventful period. There was none like it: this is the era of invention and of progress, the age of liberty and of light, when slavery must cast away her fetters, and superstition must hide herself among her congenial<sup>1</sup> associates, the moles and bats. But I cannot perceive that this century is so much the age of gold as to need any very enthusiastic praises. Its greatest virtues are counterbalanced by greater sins; and the progress which has been made towards liberty has scarcely kept pace with its advance towards licentiousness:<sup>2</sup> the barriers have been broken down, it is true, but in some places the bulwarks have fallen too. Many there be who with bright eyes are looking forward to the future, and their declaration is that the “good time is coming,” if we but “wait a little longer”; if we will but look ahead, until this beast shall have been slain, that vial shall have been poured out, and the other seal shall have been broken, then it is that we shall arrive at halcyon<sup>3</sup> times. We agree with these watchful waiters: the age of gold is yet to come; the Advent<sup>4</sup> is the world’s best and brightest hope, insomuch that every lover of his kind may importunately<sup>5</sup> cry out, “Come quickly; yea, come quickly, Lord

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<sup>1</sup> **congenial** – having the same nature or disposition.

<sup>2</sup> **licentiousness** – disregard for morality; preoccupation with lustful desires.

<sup>3</sup> **halcyon** – quiet; peaceful.

<sup>4</sup> **Advent** – second coming of Christ.

<sup>5</sup> **importunately** – urgently.

Jesus.”

But there is one thought which should not leave us when talking about times and seasons, namely, that now, now, just *now*, this present flying moment, the second that is being recorded by the ticking of yonder clock, is the only time which we have to work with. I can do nothing with the days that are past, I can do nothing with the days future—yet I reach out towards them—but I cannot improve them. The past and [future] are fields far beyond the reach of my culture.<sup>6</sup> I can neither plough nor sow the future, nor can I prune and correct the past. For practical purposes, the only time I have is that which is just now passing. Did I say I had it? While I said I had it, it is gone, like the meteor that dashes down the sky, the eagle that flies afar, or the swift ships that disappear beyond the horizon.

Time present is the only time I may ever have. Ere any future shall have become present, I may be merged in eternity. As far as I know, this day may be the end of my life’s career, and when yonder sun sinks to his rest, I may sink to my rest also, so far as time is concerned. If there be more time allotted to me, yet it will never come to me in any other guise and form than as time present. I call it future now, but when I get, say, to 1866 or 1880, it will be just like these moments: it will be to me present then. Consequently, for practical purposes, however much we may speculate upon the past or the future, the present moment is the only time we have, may have, or ever can have; and it becomes important that all our thoughts should be centered upon it, if we would make our “calling and election sure” (2Pe 1:10). Our text directs us to that solemn employment, and it does so by a very telling argument.

You perceive that our text is a quotation. How ought we to value the Old Testament! If inspired men of God, who spoke by the Holy Ghost, yet quoted the Old Testament, how valuable must be its bejewelled<sup>7</sup> sentences! The apostle here quotes from the forty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, the eighth verse. In that passage the Lord God is speaking to the Messiah, speaking to our Lord Jesus Christ, and He says to Him, “In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee.” The first part, then, of this verse is a quotation from Isaiah; the second part of the verse is Paul’s commentary upon the passage, “Behold, now is the accepted time.” He takes his text from the Old Testament, but he gives us a New Testament

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<sup>6</sup> **culture** – cultivation.

<sup>7</sup> **bejeweled** – adorned with jewels; ornamented.

sermon upon it. Let us try if we can catch the apostle's meaning.

When Paul was reading in Isaiah, he perceived that the Lord Jehovah had expressly said “to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth [and who is this but the Lord Jesus?]. . . In an acceptable time have I heard thee” (Isa 49:7-8). Jesus' sighs, tears, and bloody sweat in the garden of Gethsemane did not fall unheeded; like the blood of Abel, they cried from the ground and were heard acceptably above. An answer was given. This was plainly proved by the descent of the angel to strengthen the Savior; so the prophetic words add, “In a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee” (2Co 6:2). The apostle infers from this that inasmuch as God hath accepted Christ, the representative of His people, He hath thereby ushered in an era of acceptance. Acceptance given to the Savior is, in the apostle's view, acceptance given to sinners. Inasmuch as Christ is heard—He prayed not for Himself, but for us—there is therefore an accepted time for us begun and commenced from the day when Christ went up to the tree, stretched His hands to the nails, bowed His head to death, and said, “It is finished” (Joh 19:30). Paraphrase the text thus: “I have heard Jesus, the Surety, in an acceptable time; in the day of salvation have I succoured Him, the mighty Savior; and therefore to you, my people, to you, poor lost and wandering sinners, to you, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.” If Christ had not died, there would never have been a day of salvation. If Christ had not been heard and accepted, an accepted time could never have come to us. But since He, man's representative, hath obtained favor in the eyes of God, and through His complete work hath forever settled that favor upon Himself, there is favor in the heart of God to those whom Christ represented, even to those transgressors for whom He maketh intercession.

My dear friend, it is not what *I* mean: it is what *Scripture* means. “Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!” The moment a sinner trusts in Christ, he is saved, and if thou trustest Him now, it is the day of salvation to thee.

Will you kindly look at that text? Just open your Bibles now, and look at it—you, especially, who are unconverted, whether my hearers or readers. It has two fingerposts to point to it: two *beholds*. “Behold, now is the accepted time.” Now, stop and look at that. Do you believe it? Say “Yes,” or “No.” There is another “Behold”—“Behold, now is the day of salvation.” Do you believe that? I have asked you to look at the text because I want you to look in its face, and, if you dare, say, “That is a lie.” No, you do not dare to say that. Then if you do not

dare to say so, away must go in a single moment all those excuses which you make about a hard heart, not being convinced enough, praying, reading, preparing, and so on. Now, just as the clock ticks, not as an event to take place during a quarter of an hour, but in a moment the whole thing is done: "Now is the day of salvation." And what dost thou say to this? Does God the Holy Spirit now lead thy soul to say, "Gracious Lord, I trust my soul with Thee now"? Oh! It is all done. Fly up to heaven, angels! Bear the tidings; tell the spirits, who look down anxiously watching for the spreading kingdom of the Savior, that another heir of glory is born, another prodigal has returned to his Father's house. Now! Now! Now! O God, let conquering grace get the victory! How my soul has longed over this text! And now when I get at it, I cannot handle it as I would. But, if I might, I would fain<sup>8</sup> take some of you by the hand—think that I have your hand now—and I would put this to you: I may never have another opportunity of preaching this text in your ears, for you may be gone before there is another season to hear. "Wilt thou be made whole?" (Joh 5:6). Canst thou believe? "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mar 9:23). Old Nabal said to David, "There be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master" (1Sa 25:10). A bad old fellow, but he spake a good sentence there without knowing it. Are there not some here who will break away from their old master? Are there not some who would fain be servants of Christ and no longer servants of the devil? O souls, if God has made you willing to break with Satan, to lay hold on Christ, this is not a day in which Christ will deny you, for He has expressly said [that] now He will accept you—for "now is the accepted time." "But, sir, I am a harlot steeped up to the throat in vice." Still, "Now is the accepted time." "Ah! But I have grown grey, sir; I am seventy or eighty, and have lived in sin all these years." Yes, but "Now is the accepted time." Do you believe it or not? "Oh! I have refused the invitation a thousand times over." Yes, but still, still the abundant grace of God says, "*Now* is the accepted time." I would to God some of you would decide this very morning, this very morning in your pew where you are now sitting. Now, O Spirit of the living God, waken those whom Thou hast chosen and set apart unto eternal life.

I have not time now to dwell on the other two points. Therefore, we will merely hint at them:

***Now in heaven!*** Can you think of it? Now in heaven! They now de-

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<sup>8</sup> **fain** – gladly.



light in the society of Christ; they are now blest with communion with all the glorified spirits. They are now resting from their labors, their toils, their sufferings; they are now full of joys, while to their golden harps they sing; they are just now satisfied with the favor and are full of the goodness of the Lord. They are now knowing what they knew not here, knowing even as they are known; they are now more than conquerors, waving their palm branches; they are now safely shut in from all fear of danger; they are now perfect, without taint of sin or remnant of corruption; they are now supremely blest. I merely point the finger where my wing cannot carry me, and where my eye cannot see. Such are your friends who have departed. Your wife is there now, your little infant children are there, your brother is there, your grandsire<sup>9</sup> is there, and we, if we should now die, blessed be the name of God, many of us should know what they know and taste what they enjoy in an instant.

**This is a dreary thought: *now* in hell!** Some of my hearers who listened to me last year, and in the years that are past, are now—*now*—in hell! Now, where no hope can come; now, where no gospel shall ever be preached; now, where they bitterly regret their wasted Sabbaths and despised opportunities; now, where memory holds a dreadful reign, reminding them of all their sins; now, “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mar 9:44); where they gnaw their fire-tormented tongues in vain; now, where God’s fury is manifested to the full in Tophet’s<sup>10</sup> hideous fire; now, where devils, once their tempters, become their tormentors; now, where sinners who kept jovial company help to increase the doleful miserere<sup>11</sup> of sighs, groans, weeping, and gnashing of teeth; now, accursed of God, accursed for ever and ever! And within a moment, that may be the lot of every sinner here. Within the twinkling of an eye, there is not a man or woman among us out of Christ who may not know this. One drop of blood goes wrong—a thousand chances, as we say, may cause it—and hell is your portion... “Great God! On what a feeble thread hang everlasting things!”

While we are in this danger, we are passing on to our doom: “We nightly pitch our moving tent, a day’s march nearer home.” But where is that home to be with you, unconverted ones?

When the express trains first began to run to Scotland, there was

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<sup>9</sup> **grandsire** – grandfather.

<sup>10</sup> **Tophet’s** – Hell’s.

<sup>11</sup> **miserere** – cry or prayer of “Have mercy!”

seen at the station, one evening, a gentleman tall and thin, whose cheek had the consumptive<sup>12</sup> mark upon it. The porters asked him several questions about his luggage, of which there was a good deal, and when he had been asked several times by different persons, another came up and said, "Where are you going, sir?" Being of short temper and in great haste, he said, "To hell!" A servant of Christ passed by at that moment and heard the answer. He sought to get in the same carriage and did so, but at the other end of it. And this gentleman was talking very freely to different persons upon common topics, and the man thought, "I will get a word in, if I can." So, he joined in the general tenor of the conversation until they alighted at a refreshment station, when, taking the opportunity, he said to the gentleman, "When do you expect to get to the end of your journey?" "Oh," said he, "I am going to cross at such-and-such a town by the boat tonight and hope to get to my journey's end about twelve o'clock tomorrow morning." The man said, "I think you misunderstand my question. You said, when the porter asked you just now where you were going, that you were going to a very different place." "Ah! Yes, I recollect I did," said the gentleman, "but I am sometimes very hasty." The other said to him, "Was it true? Are you going to hell? If so, when do you expect to get there?" And he began to talk to him about that sickness that he could see so certainly in his cheek and warned him that unless he sought another road and fled to Christ the only Refuge, he would certainly reach that dreadful end.

There are some in this place who, if they were labelled this morning as to where they are going, would have to be directed "to hell." You know that this is the case. And when will you get to your journey's end? Some here may live another fifty years. I pray God that that question of mine may haunt you, and if it be never blessed to you before, may it be then: "When will you get to your journey's end?" When will you arrive in hell? This morning may some of you in your hearts say, "I am journeying thither, but, by the grace of God, I have come to a dead halt, and not another inch will I go. Lord, make me ready to go to heaven, give me now to trust the Savior that I may live." May God bless these feeble words of mine to His glory and your profit. Amen.

From a sermon delivered on Sunday morning, December 4, 1864,  
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.



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<sup>12</sup> **consumptive** – pertaining to a wasting disease of the lungs.