

The End of Time



Isaac Watts

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“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, that there should be time no longer.” Rev. 10:5, 6.

This is the oath and the solemn sentence of a mighty Angel who came down from heaven, and by the description of Him in the first verse, He seems to be the *Angel of God’s presence, in whom is the name of God*, even our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who pronounced and sware that *“Time should be no longer;”* for all seasons and times are now put into His hand, together with the book of His Father’s decrees, (Rev. 5:7, 9). What special age or period of time in this world the prophecy refers to, may not be so easy to determine; but this is certain, that it may be happily applied to the period of every man’s life; for whensoever the term of our continuance in this world is finished, *our time*, in the present circumstances and scenes that attend it, *shall be no more*. We shall be swept off the stage of this visible state into an unseen and eternal world. *Eternity* comes upon us at once, and all that we enjoy, all that we do, and all that we suffer in *time*, *shall be no longer*.

Let us stand still here, and consider in the first place what awful and important thoughts are contained in this sentence, what solemn ideas should arise to the view of mortal creatures, when it shall be pronounced concerning each of them, that *time shall be no more*.

1. *The time of the recovery of our nature from its sinful and wretched state shall be no longer*. We come into this world fallen creatures, children of iniquity, and heirs of death; we have lost the image of God who made us, and which our nature enjoyed in our first parents; and instead of it we are changed into the image of the Devil in the lusts of the mind, in pride and malice, in self-sufficiency and enmity to God; and we have put on also the image of the brute in sinful appetites and sensualities, and in the lusts of the flesh; nor can we ever be made truly happy till the image of the blessed God be restored upon us, till we are made holy as He is holy, till we have a divine change past upon us, whereby we are

created anew and reformed in heart and practice. And this life is the only time given us for this important change. If this life be finished before the image of God be restored to us, this image will never be restored; but we shall bear the likeness of devils for ever; and perhaps the image of the brute too at the resurrection of the body, and be further off from God and all that is holy than ever we were here upon earth.

Of what infinite importance is it then to be frequently awakening ourselves at special seasons and periods of life to inquire, whether this image of God is begun to be renewed, whether we have this glorious change wrought in us, whether our desires and delights are fixed upon holy and heavenly things, instead of those sensual and earthly objects which draw away all our souls from God and heaven. Let it appear to us as a matter of utmost moment to seek after this change; let us pursue it with unwearied labours and strivings with our own hearts, and perpetual importunities at the throne of grace, lest the voice of Him who swears that, *there shall be time no longer*' should seize us in some unexpected moment, and lest He swear in His wrath concerning us, "*let him that is unholy be unholy still, and let him that is filthy be filthy still.*"

2. When this sentence is pronounced concerning us, the season and *the means of restoring us to the favour and love of God shall be no longer.* — We are born children of wrath, as well as the sons and daughters of iniquity (Eph. 2:2). We have lost the original favour of our Maker, and are banished from His love, and the superior blessings of His goodness; and yet blessed be the Lord, that we are not at present for ever banished beyond all hope. This *time of life* is given to us to seek the recovery of the love of God by returning to Him according to the gospel of His Son. Now is pardon and peace, now is grace and salvation preached unto men, to sinful wretched men, who are at enmity with God, and the objects of His high displeasure. Now the voice of mercy calls to us, "*This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation*" (2 Cor. 6:2). *Today, if ye will hear His voice, let not your hearts be hardened to refuse it.* Now the fountain of the blood of Christ is set open to wash our souls from the guilt of sin. Now all the springs of His mercy are broken up in the ministrations of the gospel. Now *God is in Christ*

reconciling sinners to Himself, and He has sent us, His ministers, to entreat you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God; and we beseech you in His name, continue not one day, nor one hour longer in your enmity and rebellion, but be ye reconciled to God your Creator, and accept of His offered forgiveness and grace (2 Cor. 5:20).

The moment is hastening upon us when this mighty Angel, who manages the affairs of the kingdom of providence, shall swear concerning every unbelieving and impenitent sinner that *the time of offered mercy shall be no longer, the time of pardon and grace and reconciliation shall be no more.* The sound of this mercy reaches not the regions of the dead; those who die before they are reconciled, they die under the load of all their sins, and must perish for ever, without the least hope or glimpse of reconciling or forgiving grace.

3. At the term of this mortal life, *the time of prayer and repentance and service for God or man in this world shall be no longer.* "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. 9:10): whither we are all hastening. Let every sinful creature therefore ask himself, Have I never yet begun to pray? Never begun to call upon the mercy of the God that made me? never begun to repent of all my crimes and follies? nor begun in good earnest to do service for God, nor to honour Him amongst men? Dreadful thought indeed! when it may be the next hour we may be put out of all capacity and opportunity to do it for ever! As soon as ever an impenitent sinner has the veil of death drawn over him, all his opportunities of this kind are for ever cut off. He that has never repented, never prayed, never honoured his God, shall never be able to pray nor repent, nor do any thing for God or His honour through all the ages of his future immortality. Nor is there any promise made to returning or repenting sinners in the other world, whither we are hastening. *As the tree falls, when it is cut down, so it lies, and it must for ever lie, pointed to the north or to the south, to hell or heaven (Eccl. 11:3).*

And indeed there is no true prayer, nor sincere repentance can be exercised after this life: for the soul that has wasted away all its time given for repentance and prayer is, at the moment of death, left

under everlasting hardness of heart: and whatsoever enmity against God and godliness was found in the heart in this world, is increased in the world to come, when all manner of softening means and mercies are ever at an end. This leads me to the next thought.

4. *How wretched soever our state is at death, the day of hope is ended, and it returns no more.* Be our circumstances ever so bad, yet we are not completely wretched while the time of hope remains. We are all by nature miserable because of sin, but it is only despair that can perfect our misery. Therefore fallen angels are sealed up under misery, because there is no door of hope opened for them. But in this life there is hope for the worst of sinful men: there is the word of grace and hope calling them in the gospel. There is the voice of divine mercy sounding in the sanctuary, and *blessed are they that hear the joyful sound!* but if we turn the deaf ear to the voice of God and His Son, and to all the tender and compassionate entreaties of a dying Saviour, hope is hastening to its period; for this very Angel will shortly swear, that this joyful sound shall be heard no longer.

He comes now to the door of our hearts, He sues there for admittance. "Open unto Me, and receive Me as your Saviour and your Lord; give Me and My gospel free admission, and I will come in and bestow upon you the riches of My grace and all My salvation. Open your hearts to Me with the holy desires and humble submission of penitence, and receive the blessings of righteousness, and pardon, and eternal life." He now invites you to return to God, with an acknowledgment and renunciation of every sin, and He offers to take you by the hand, and introduce you into His Father's presence with comfort. This is a day of hope for the vilest and most hateful criminals; but if you continue to refuse, He will shortly swear in His wrath you shall never enter into His kingdom, you shall never taste of the provisions of His grace, you shall never be partakers of the blessings purchased with His blood. *I swear in My wrath, saith the Lord, they shall not enter into My rest* (Heb. 3:18).

O the dreadful state of sinful creatures who continue in such obstinacy, who waste away the means of grace and the seasons of hope, week after week, and month after month, till the day of grace and hope is for ever at an end with them! Hopeless creatures! under

the power and the plague of sin, under the wrath and curse of a God, under the eternal displeasure of Jesus, who was once the minister of His Father's love! and they must abide under all this wretchedness through a long eternity, and in the land of everlasting despair. But I forbear that theme at present, and proceed.

5. At the moment of our death, *the time of our preparation for the hour of judgment, and for the insurance of heaven and happiness, shall be no longer.* Miserable creatures, that are summoned to die thus unprepared! This life is the only time to prepare for dying, to get ready to stand before the Judge of the whole earth, and to secure our title to the heavenly blessedness. Let my heart inquire, "Have I ever seriously begun to prepare for a dying hour, and to appear before the Judge of all? Have I ever concerned myself, in good earnest to secure an interest in the heavenly inheritance, when this earthly tabernacle shall be dissolved? Have I ever made interest for the favour of God, and a share of the inheritance of the saints, by Jesus the great Mediator, while He afforded life and time?"

Death is daily and hourly hastening upon us. Death is the *king of terrors*, and will fulfil all his name to every soul that is unprepared. It is a piece of wisdom then for every one of us, since we must die, to search and feel whether death has lost its sting or not: whether it be taken away by the blood of Christ? Is this blood sprinkled on my conscience by the humble exercise of faith on a dying Saviour? Are the terrors of death removed, and am I prepared to meet it by the sanctifying influences of the blessed Spirit? Have I such an interest in the covenant of grace as takes away the sting of death, as turns the curse into a blessing, and changes the dark scenes of death into the commencement of a new and everlasting life? This is that preparation for dying for which our time of life was given us; and happy are those who are taught of God to make this use of it.

Judgment is making haste towards us! months and days of divine patience are flying swift away, and the last great day is just at hand. Then we must give an account of *all that has been done in the body, whether it has been good or evil.* And what a dismal and distressing surprise will it be, to have the Judge come upon us in a blaze of glory and terror, while we have no good account to give at

His demand. And yet this is the very end and design of all our time, which is lengthened out to us on this side the grave, and of all the advantages that we have enjoyed in this life, that we may be ready to render up our account with joy to the Judge of all the earth.

Heaven is not ours by birth and inheritance, as lands and houses on earth descend to us from our earthly parents. We, as well as they, are by nature unfit for heaven, and children of wrath; but we may be born again; we may be born of God, and become heirs of the heavenly inheritance through Jesus Christ. We may be renewed into the temper and spirit of heaven; and this life is the only season that is given us for this important change. Shall we let our days and years pass away, one after another in long succession, and continue the children of wrath still? Are we contented to go on this year as the last, without a title to heaven, without a divine temper, and without any preparation for the business or the blessedness of that happy world?

6. When this life comes to an end, *the time of all our earthly comforts and amusements shall be no more*. We shall have none of these sensible things around us, to employ or entertain our eyes or our ears, to gratify our appetites, to sooth our passions, or to support our spirits in distress. All the infinite variety of cares, labours, and joys which surround us here, shall be no more. Life, with all the busy scenes and the pleasing satisfactions of it, dissolve and perish together. Have a care then that you do not make any of them your chief hope, for they are but the things of time, they are all short and dying enjoyments.

Under the various calamities of this life we find a variety of sensible reliefs, and our thoughts and souls are called away from their sorrows by present business, or diverted by present pleasures. But all these avocations and amusements will forsake us at once, when we drop this mortal tabernacle. We must enter alone into the world of spirits, and live without them there.

Whatsoever agonies or terrors, or huge distresses, we may meet with in that unknown region, we shall have none of these sensible enjoyments to soften and allay them, no drop of sweetness to mix with that bitter cup, no scenes of gaiety and merriment to relieve the gloom of that utter darkness, or to sooth the anguish of that

eternal heartache. O, take heed, my friends, that your souls do not live too much on any of the satisfactions of this life! That your affections be not set upon them in too high a degree, that you make them not your idols and your chief good, lest you be left helpless and miserable under everlasting disappointment, for they cannot follow you into the world of souls. They are the things of time, and they have no place in eternity. Read what caution the apostle Paul gives us in our converse with the dearest comforts of life (1 Cor. 7:29). *The time is short; and let those who have the largest affluence of temporal blessings, who have the nearest and kindest relatives, and the most endearing friendships, be mortified to them, and be, in some sense, as though they had them not, for ye cannot possess them long.* St. Peter joins in the same sort of advice. *“The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober”* (1 Pet. 4:7), be ye moderate in every enjoyment on earth, and prepare to part with them all, when the Angel pronounces that *time shall be no longer*: His sentence puts an effectual period to every joy in this life, and to every hope that is not eternal.

Thus we have taken a brief survey of what are the solemn and awful thoughts relating to such mortal creatures in general, which are contained in this voice or sentence of the Angel, *That time shall be no longer*.

In the second place, let us proceed further, and inquire a little *what are those terrors which will attend sinners, impenitent sinners, at the end of time.*

1. *A dreadful account must be given of all this lost and wasted time.* When the Judge shall ascend His throne in the air, and all the sons and daughters of Adam are brought before Him, the grand inquiry will be. What have you done with all the time of life in yonder world? “You spent thirty or forty years there, or perhaps seventy or eighty, and I gave you this time, with a thousand opportunities and means of grace and salvation. What have you done with them all? How many sabbaths did I afford you? How many sermons have ye heard? How many seasons did I give you for prayer and retirement, and converse with God and your own souls? Did you improve time well? Did you pray? Did you converse with your souls and with God? Or did you suffer time to slide away in a

thousand impertinences [trivialities], and neglect the one thing necessary?"

2. *A fruitless and bitter mourning for the waste and abuse of time* will be another consequence of your folly. Whatsoever satisfaction you may take now in passing time away merrily, and without thinking, it must not pass away so for ever. If the approaches of death do not awaken you, yet judgment will do it. Your consciences will be worried with terrible reflections on your foolish conduct.

O could we but hear the complaints of the souls in hell, what multitudes of them would be found groaning out this dismal note. "How hath my time been lost in vanity, and my soul is now lost for ever in distress! How might I have shone among the saints in heaven, had I wisely improved the time which was given me on earth, given me on purpose to prepare for death and heaven?" Then they will for ever curse themselves, and call themselves eternal fools, for hearkening to the temptations of flesh and sense, which wasted their time, and deprived them of eternal treasures.

3. Another of the terrors which will seize upon impenitent sinners at the end of time will be *endless despair of the recovery of lost time, and of those blessings whose hope is for ever lost with it*. There are blessings offered to sinful miserable men in time, which will never be offered in eternity, nor put within their reach for ever. The gospel hath no calls, no invitations, no encouragements, no promises for the dead, who have lost and wasted their time, and are perished without hope. The region of sorrow, whither the Judge shall drive impenitent sinners, is a dark and desolate place, where light and hope can never come; but fruitless repentance, with horrors and agonies of soul, and doleful despair, reigns through that world, without one gleam of light or hope, or one moment of intermission. Then will despairing sinners gnaw their tongues for anguish of heart, and curse themselves, with long execrations, and curse their fellow sinners, who assisted them to waste their time, and ruin their souls.

4. The last terror I shall mention which will attend sinners at the end of time, is an *eternal suffering of all the painful and dismal consequences of lost and wasted time*. Not one smile from the face of God for ever; not one glimpse of love or mercy in His

countenance; not one word of grace from Jesus Christ, who was once the chief messenger of the grace of God; not one favourable regard from all the holy saints and angels; but the fire and brimstone burn without end, *and the smoke of this their torment, will ascend for ever and ever before the throne of God and the Lamb.*

Who knows how keen and bitter will be the agonies of an awakened conscience, and the vengeance of a provoked God, in that world of misery? How will you cry out, “O what a wretch have I been, to renounce all the advices of a compassionate father, when he would have persuaded me to improve the time of youth and health! Alas, I turned a deaf ear to his advice, and now time is lost, and my hopes of mercy for ever perished. How have I treated with ridicule, among my vain companions, the compassionate and pious counsels of my aged parents, who laboured for my salvation! How have I scorned the tender admonitions of a mother, and wasted that time in sinning and sensuality which should have been spent in prayer and devotion! And God turns a deaf ear to my cries now, and is regardless of all my groanings.” This sort of anguish of spirit, with loud and cutting complaints, would destroy life itself, and these inward terrors would sting their souls to death, if there could be any such thing as dying there. Such sighs, and sobs, and bitter agonies would break their hearts, and dissolve their being, if the heart could break, or the being could be dissolved. But immortality is their dreadful portion, immortality of sorrows to punish their wicked and wilful abuse of time, and that waste of the means of grace they were guilty of in their mortal state.

I proceed, in the last place to consider what reflections may be made on this discourse, or what are some of the profitable lessons to be learned from it.

Reflection 1. We may learn with great evidence *the inestimable worth and value of time, and particularly to those who are not prepared for eternity.* Every hour you live is an hour longer given you to prepare for dying, and to save a soul. If you were but apprised of the worth of your own souls, you would better know the worth of days and hours, and of every passing moment, for they are given to secure your immortal interests, and save a soul from everlasting misery. And you would be zealous and importunate in

the prayer of Moses, the man of God, upon a meditation of the shortness of life, “*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*” (Psa. 90:12). So teach us to consider how few and uncertain our days are that we may be truly wise in preparing for the end of them.

It is a matter of vast importance to be ever ready for the end of time, ready to hear this awful sentence confirmed with the oath of the glorious Angel, that *time shall be no longer*. The terrors or the comforts of a dying bed depend upon it: the solemn and decisive voice of judgment depends upon it: the joys and the sorrows of a long eternity depend upon it. Go now, careless sinner, and in the view of such things as these, go and trifle away time as you have done before, time, that invaluable treasure. Go and venture the loss of your souls, and the hopes of heaven and your eternal happiness, in wasting away the remnant hours or moments of life; but remember the awful voice of the Angel is hastening towards you, and the sound is just breaking in upon you, that *time shall be no longer*.

Reflection II. *A due sense of time hastening to its period will furnish us with perpetual new occasions of holy meditations.*

Do I observe the declining day and the setting sun sinking into darkness? So declines the day of life, the hours of labour, and the season of grace. O may I finish my appointed work with honour before the light is fled! May I improve the shining hours of grace before the shadows of the evening overtake me, and my time of working is no more.

Do I see the moon gliding along through midnight, and fulfilling her stages in the dusky sky? This planet also is measuring out my life, and bringing the number of my months to their end. May I be prepared to take leave of the sun and, moon, and bid adieu [goodbye] to these visible heavens, and all the twinkling glories of them! These are all but the measures of my time, and hasten me on toward eternity.

Am I walking in a garden, and stand still to observe the slow motion of the shadow upon a dial there? It passes over the hour-lines with an imperceptible progress, yet it will touch the last line of daylight shortly. So my hours and my moments move onward

with a silent pace; but they will arrive with certainty at the last limit, how heedless soever I am of their motion, and how thoughtless soever I may be of the improvement of time, or of the end of it.

Does a new year commence, and the first morning of it dawn upon me? Let me remember that the last year was finished, and gone over my head, in order to make way for the entrance of the present. I have one year the less to travel through this world, and to fulfil the various services of a travelling state. May my diligence in my duty be doubled, since the number of my appointed years is diminished?

Do I find a new birthday in my survey of the calendar, the day wherein I entered upon the stage of mortality, and was born into this world of sins, frailties, and sorrows, in order to my probation for a better state? Blessed Lord, how much have I spent already of this mortal life, this season of my probation, and how little am I prepared for that happier world? How unready for my dying moment? I am hastening hourly to the end of the life of man which began at my nativity; am I yet born of God? Have I begun the life of a saint? Am I prepared for that awful day which shall determine the number of my months on earth? Am I fit to be born into the world of spirits through the strait gate of death? Am I renewed in all the powers of my nature and made meet to enter into that unseen world, where there shall be no more of these revolutions of days and years, but one eternal day fills up all the space with divine pleasure, or one eternal night with long and deplorable distress and darkness?

When I see a friend expiring, or the corpse of my neighbour conveyed to the grave, alas! their month and minutes are all determined, and the seasons of their trials are finished for ever. They are gone to their eternal home, and the estate of their souls is fixed unchangeably. The Angel that has sworn their *time shall be no longer*, has concluded their hopes, or has finished their fears and, according to the rules of righteous judgment, has decided their misery or happiness for a long immortality. Take this warning, O my soul, and think of thy own removal.

Are we standing in the churchyard, paying the last honours to the

relics of our friends? What a number of hillocks of death appear all round us? What are the tombstones but memorials of the inhabitants of that town, to inform us of the periods of all their lives, and to point out the day when it was said to each of them, *your time shall be no longer*. O may I readily learn this important lesson, that my turn is hastening too; such a little hillock shall shortly arise for me on some unknown spot of ground; it shall cover this flesh and these bones of mine in darkness, and shall hide them from the light of the sun, and from the sight of man, till the heavens be no more.

Perhaps some kind surviving friend may engrave my name, with the number of my days, upon a plain funeral stone, without ornament, and below envy. There shall my tomb stand among the rest as a fresh monument of the frailty of nature and the end of time. It is possible some friendly foot may now and then visit the place of my repose, and some tender eye may bedew the cold memorial with a tear: one or another of my old acquaintance may possibly attend there, to learn the silent lecture of mortality from my gravestone, which my lips are now preaching aloud to the world. And if love and sorrow should reach so far, perhaps, while his soul is melting in his eye-lids, and his voice scarce finds an utterance, he will point with his finger, and show his companion the month and day of my decease. O that solemn, that awful day which shall finish my appointed time on earth, and put a full period to all the designs of my heart, and all the labours of my tongue and pen!

Think, O my soul, that while friends or strangers are engaged on that spot, and reading the date of thy departure hence, thou wilt be fixed under a decisive and unchangeable sentence, rejoicing in the rewards of time well-improved, or suffering the long sorrows which shall attend the abuse of it, in an unknown world of happiness or misery.

Reflection III. We may learn from this discourse the stupid folly and madness of those who are terribly afraid of the end of time whensoever they think of it, and yet they know not what to do with their time as it runs off daily and hourly. They find their souls unready for death, and yet they live from year to year without any further preparation for dying. They waste away their hours of

leisure in mere trifling; they lose their seasons of grace, their means and opportunities of salvation, in a thoughtless and shameful manner, as though they had no business to employ them in. They live as though they had nothing to do with all their time but to eat and drink, and be easy and merry. From the rising to the setting sun you will find them still in pursuit of impertinences. They waste God's sacred time as well as their own, either in a lazy, indolent, and careless humour, or in following after vanity, sin, and madness, while the end of time is hastening upon them.

What multitudes are there of the race of Adam, both in higher and lower ranks, who are ever complaining they want leisure! And when they have a release from business for one day or one hour, they hardly know what to do with that idle day, nor how to lay out one of the hours of it for any valuable purpose? Those in higher stations and richer circumstances have most of their time at their own command and disposal; but by their actual disposal of it, you plainly see they know not what it is good for, nor what use to make of it; they are quite at a loss how to get rid of this tedious thing called time, which lies daily as a burden on their hands. Indeed, if their heartache, or their face grow pale, and a physician feel their pulse, or look wishfully on their countenance; and, especially, if he should shake his head, or tell them his fears that they will not hold out long, what surprise of soul, what agonies and terrors seize them on a sudden for fear of the end of time! They are conscious how unfit they are for eternity. Yet when the pain vanishes, and they feel health again, they are as much at a loss as ever what to do with the remnant of life.

O the painful and the unhappy ignorance of the sons and daughters of men, that are sent hither on a trial for eternity, and yet know not how to pass away time! they know not how to wear out life, and get soon enough to the end of the day. They doze their hours away, or saunter from place to place, without any design or meaning. They inquire of every one they meet, what they shall do to *kill time* (as the French phrase is), because they cannot spend it fast enough. They are perpetually calling in the assistance of others to laugh, or sport, or trifle with them, and to help them off with this dead weight of time, while at the same moment, if you do but

mention the end of time, they are dreadfully afraid of coming near it. What folly and distraction is this? What sottish inconsistency is found in the heart and practice of sinful men, "*The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.*" (Eccl. 9:3).

O that these loiterers would once consider that time loiters not; days and hours, months and years, loiter not; each of them flies away with swiftest wing, as fast as succession admits of, and bears them onward to the goal of eternity. If they delay and linger among toys and shadows, time knows no delay; and they will one day learn, by bitter experience, what substantial, important, and eternal blessings they have lost by their criminal and shameful waste of time. The apostle Peter assures them (2 Pet. 2:3). Though they slumber and sleep in a lethargy of sin, so that you cannot awaken them, yet *their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.* The awful moment is hastening upon them, which shall teach them terribly the true value of time. Then they would give all the golden pleasures, and the riches and the grandeur of this world, to purchase one short day more, or one hour of time, wherein they might repent and return to God, and get within the reach of hope and salvation. But time, and salvation, and hope, are all vanished and fled, and gone out of their reach for ever.

Reflection IV. Learn from such meditations as these, *the rich mercy of God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in giving us so long a warning before He swares that time shall be no more.* Every stroke of sickness is a warning-piece that life is coming to its period; every death amongst our friends and acquaintances is another tender and painful admonition, that our death also is at hand. The end of every week, and every dawning Sabbath, is another warning. Every sermon we hear of the shortness of time, and the uncertainty of life, is a fresh intimation that the great Angel will shortly pronounce a period upon all our time. How inexcusable shall we be if we turn the deaf ear to all these warnings? Peter advises us, *to count the long-suffering of the Lord for salvation* (2 Pet. 3:15) and to secure our eternal safety, and our escape from hell during the season of His lengthened grace.

Alas! how long has Jesus, and His mercy, and His gospel, waited

on you, before you began to think of the things of your everlasting peace! And if you are now solemnly awakened, yet how long has He waited on you with fresh admonitions, and with special providences, with mercies and judgments, with promises and invitations of grace, with threatenings and words of terror, and with the whispers and advices of His own Spirit, since you began to see your danger! And after all, have you yet sincerely repented of sin? Have you yet received the offered grace? Have you given up yourselves to the Lord and laid hold of His salvation? *This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation* (2 Cor. 6:2) "*To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts,*" (Heb. 3:7, 8) &c. It is never said through all the bible, that *to-morrow is the day of grace*; nor *to-morrow is the time of acceptance*: it is the present hour only that is offered. Every day and every hour is a mercy of unknown importance to sinful men. It is a mercy, O sinners, that you awaked not this morning in hell and that you were not fixed, without remedy, beyond the reach of hope and mercy.

Reflection V. Learn from this discourse what *a very useful practice it would be, to set ourselves often before hand, as at the end of time*, to imagine our selves just under the sound of the voice of this mighty Angel, or at the tribunal of Christ, and to call our souls to a solemn account, in what manner we have past away all our leisure time hitherto. I mean, all that time, which hath not been laid out in the necessities of the natural life, for its support and its needful refreshment, or in the due and proper employments of the civil life: both these are allowed and required by the God of nature and the God of providence, who governs the world. But what hast thou done, O man; O woman, what hast thou done with all the hours of leisure which might have been laid out on far better employments, and to far nobler purposes? Give me leave to enter into particulars a little, for generalities do but seldom convince the mind, or awaken the conscience, or affect the heart.

1. Have you not slumbered or squandered away too much time without any useful purpose or design at all? How many are there, that when they have morning hours on their hands, can pass them off on their beds, and lose and forget time in a *little more sleep and a little more slumber*; a few trivialities with breakfast and dressing,

wear out the morning without God. And how many afternoon and evening hours are worn away in such sauntering idleness as I have described, that when the night comes they cannot review one half hour's useful work from the dawn of the morning to the hour of rest. Time is gone and vanished, and as they know not what to do with it while it was present, so now it is past they know not what they have done with it. They keep no account of it, and are never prepared to come to a reckoning. But will the great Judge of all take this for answer to such a solemn inquiry?

2. Have you never laid out much more time than was needful in recreations and pleasures of sense? Recreations are not unlawful, so far as they are necessary and proper to relieve the fatigue of the spirits, when they are tired with business or labour, and to prepare for new labours and new businesses. But have we not followed sports without measure and without due limitation? Hath not some of that very time been spent in them which should have been laid out in preparing for death and eternity, and in seeking things of far higher importance?

3. Have you not wasted too much time in your frequent clubs, and what you call *good company*, and in places of public resort? Hath not the tavern or the coffee-house, or the ale-house, seen and known you from hour to hour, for a whole evening, and that sometimes before the trade or labours of the day should have been ended? And when your bible and your closet, or the devotion of your family, have sometimes called upon your conscience, have you not turned the deaf ear to them all?

4. Have not useless and impertinent [unimportant] visits been made to no good purpose, or been prolonged beyond all necessity or improvement? When your conversations runs low, even to the dregs, and both you and your friends have been at a loss what to say next, and knew not how to fill up the time, yet the visit must go on, and time must be wasted. Sometimes the wind and the weather, and twenty insignificancies, or (what is much worse) scandal of persons or families, have come into your relief, that there might not be too long a silence; but not one word of God or goodness could find room to enter in and relieve the dull hour. Is none of this time ever to be accounted for? And will it sound well in the ears of the

great Judge, “We ran to these sorry topics, these slanderous and backbiting stories, because we could not tell what to talk of, and we knew not how to spend our time?”

5. Have you not been guilty of frequent and even perpetual delays, or neglects, of your proper necessary business in civil life, or in the solemn duties of religion, by busying yourselves in some other needless thing under this pretence, it is time enough yet?

Have you learned that important and eternal rule of prudence, never delay till to-morrow what may be done to-day; never put off till the next hour what may be done in this? Have you not often experienced your own disappointment and folly by these delays? And yet have you ever so repented, as to learn to mend them? Solomon tells us, (Eccl. 3:1). *There is a time for every purpose, and every work under the sun:* a proper and agreeable time for every lawful work of nature and life; and it is the business and care of a wise man to do proper work in proper time; but when we have let slip the proper season, how often have we been utterly disappointed? Have we not sustained great inconveniences? And sometimes it hath so happened, that we could never do that work or business at all, because another proper season for it hath never offered? Time hath been no more. Felix put off his discourse with Paul about the *faith of Christ, and righteousness, and judgment to come, to a more convenient time;* which probably never came (Acts 24:25). And the Word of God teaches us that if we neglect our salvation in the present day of grace, the Angel in my text is ready to sware, that *time shall be no longer.*

Here permit me to put in a short word to those who have lost much time already.

O my friends, begin now to do what in you lies to regain it, by double diligence in the matters of your salvation, lest the voice of the archangel should finish your time of trial and call you to judgment before you are prepared.

What time lies before you for this double improvement, God only knows. The remnant of the measure of your days are with Him, and every evening the number is diminished: let not the rising sun upbraid you with continued negligence. Remember your former abuses of hours, and months, and years, in folly and sin, or at best in

vanity and trifling. Let these thoughts of your past conduct lie with such an effectual weight on your hearts, as to keep you ever vigorous in present duty. Since you have been so lazy and loitering in your Christian race in time past, take larger steps daily, and stretch all the powers of your souls to hasten towards the crown and the prize. Harken to the voice of God in His Word, with stronger attention and zeal to profit. Pray to a long-suffering God with double fervency. Cry aloud, and give Him no rest till your sinful soul is changed into penitence and renewed to holiness, till you have some good evidences of your sincere love to God and unfeigned faith in His Son Jesus. Never be satisfied till you are come to a well grounded hope through grace that God is your friend, your reconciled Father; that when days and months are no more, you may enter into the region of everlasting light and peace.

But I proceed to the last general remark. *Learn the unspeakable happiness of those who have improved time well, and who wait for the end of time with Christian hope.* They are not afraid, or at least they need not be afraid of the sentence, nor the oath of this mighty Angel, when He lifts up His hand to heaven and swears with a loud voice, *There shall be time no more.*

O blessed creatures, who have so happily improved the time of life and day of grace as to obtain the restoration of the image of God, in some degree, on their souls, and to recover the favour of God through the gospel of Christ, for which end time was bestowed upon them. They have reviewed their follies with shame in the land of hope. They have mourned and repented of sin ere the season of repentance was past, and are become new creatures, and their lips and their lives declare the divine change. They have made preparation for death, for which purpose life and time were given.

Happy souls indeed who have so valued time as not to let it run off in trifles, but have obtained treasures more valuable than that time which is gone, even the riches of the covenant of grace, and the hopes of an eternal inheritance in glory.

Happy such souls indeed, when time is no more with them! Their happiness begins when the duration of their mortal life is finished. Let us survey this their happiness in a few particulars.

The time of their darkness's and difficulties is no longer: the time

of painful ignorance and error is come to an end. You shall wander no more in mistake and folly. You shall behold all things in the light of God, and see Him face to face, who is the original beauty and the eternal truth. You shall see Him without veils and shadows, without the reflecting glass of His Word and ordinances, which at best give us but a faint glimpse of Him, either in His nature or wisdom, His power or goodness. You shall see Him in Himself and in His Son Jesus, the brightest and fairest image of the Father, and *shall know Him as you are known* (1 Cor. 13:10-12).

There is no more time for temptation and danger: when once you are got beyond the limits of this visible world, and all the enticing objects of flesh and sense, there shall be no more doubting and distressing fears about your interest in your Father's love, or in the salvation of His beloved Son.

There is no more time or place for sin to inhabit in you. The lease of its habitation in your mortal body must end, when the body itself falls into the dust. You shall feel no more of its powerful and defiling operations either in heart or life, for ever.

The time of conflict with your spiritual adversaries is no longer. There is no more warfare betwixt the flesh and spirit, no more combat with the world and the Devil, who by a thousand ways have attempted to deceive you and to bear you off from your heavenly hope. Your warfare is accomplished, your victory is complete, you are made overcomers through Him that has loved you. Death is the last enemy to be overcome; the sting of it is already taken away, and you have now finished the conquest, and are assured of the crown (1 Cor. 15:56, 57).

The time of your distance and absence from God is no more: the time of coldness and indifference, and the fearful danger of backslidings, is no more. You shall be made as *pillars in the temple of your God, and shall go no more out*. He shall love you like a God, and kindle the flames of your love to so intense a degree, as is only known to angels and to the spirits of the just made perfect.

There is no more time for you to be vexed with the *society of sinful creatures*. Your spirit within you shall be no more ruffled and disquieted with the teasing conversation of the wicked, nor shall you be interrupted in your holy and heavenly exercises by any

of the enemies of God and His grace.

The time of your painful labours and sufferings is no more (Rev. 14:13). *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from all their labours* that carry toil or fatigue with them. *There shall be no more complaints nor groans, no sorrow or crying;* the springs of grief are for ever dried up, *neither shall there be any more pain in the flesh or the spirit. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death"* (Rev. 21:4).

"It is finished," said our blessed Lord on the cross: *"It is finished,"* may every one of His followers say at the hour of death, and at the end of time, my sins and follies, my distresses and my sufferings, are finished for ever, and the mighty Angel swears to it, that the *time* of these evils is *no longer*. They are vanished, and shall never return. O happy souls, who have been so wise to count the short and uncertain number of your days on earth as to make an early provision for a removal to heaven. Blessed are you above all the powers of present thought and language. Days, and months, and years, and all these short and painful periods of time, shall be swallowed up in a long and blissful eternity. The stream of time which has run between the banks of this mortal life and bore you along amidst many dangerous rocks of temptation, fear and sorrow, shall launch you out into the ocean of pleasures which have no period. Those felicities must be everlasting, for duration has no limit there. *Time*, with all its measures, *shall be no more*. Amen.

Taken from 'The World to Come' by Isaac Watts

“And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven” Rev. 10:5.



“And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, that there should be time no longer” Rev. 10:6.