

Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." What did the Psalmist say concerning his life? "Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee." And we find the apostles, in various parts of their writings, bearing the same testimony. And so Paul,—“Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come.” And again, Peter, to the same effect says,—“All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.”—And lastly, James has these words,—“for what is your life? It is even a vapour, which appeareth for a little and then vanisheth away.” And, moreover, it is to be observed, that these testimonies are all in accordance with our own experience of the brevity of life. It seems but as yesterday, when we think of the generation that went before us. We saw them in our boyhood. We remember their appearance.—Perhaps we can repeat their sayings, and tell their opinions of men and things. But, alas! they are now removed from us, and we see them no more,—“they have gone the way whence they shall not return.” Yea, and our own history too, would read us a lesson of the shortness of life, would we only open our ears to receive instruction. We are borne forward in silence by the current of time, and there are so many things that occupy our attention, that we almost forget the stream is in motion, and that we are drawing every moment nearer to the ocean of eternity. How brief a space has intervened since the day of our birth! Childhood and youth have passed away,—but what have they left behind them?—the joys and the sorrows we remember, as a dream when one awakes in the morning.

It is profitable to meditate on these things, until we are so enabled to apprehend the truth concerning them, that we may walk accordingly; for it is readily assented to, that we are short lived creatures. But this is not laid to heart, and it ceases to influence our conduct.—Yea, it may be used by some, as an opiate to encourage them in their folly. But the brevity of life is too serious a matter to be smoothed away by idle words. It is not imaginary, but a great reality, that we are hurrying to the end of our earthly pilgrimage. We may have sighed at the death-bed of relatives, and we may have wept when laying them in the cold mansions of the grave, but death is in our way also, and the grave is appointed for us as well as for them. Though it were certain I should be the oldest of the generation in which I live, it would still be a matter of wisdom that I should consider my latter end; for since eternity has no limit, any portion of time, however long, when measured by this scale, is but as a moment, as the twinkling of an eye. And, O! when we add to this that life is uncertain,—when we reflect, that within the year that has now closed, some of our friends and acquaintances have been hurried away from us,—and that we who are spared, have the same uncertainty concerning the period of our sojourn,—yea, that we cannot tell what a day may bring forth,—then, surely, if we have aught of wisdom, we shall meditate on these things; and knowing our own weakness, we will seek grace to keep them ever in remembrance,—saying with the Psalmist, “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days what it is, that I may know how frail I am.” Or with Moses,—“So teach us to remember our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.”