

drooping flower!—these are the emblems Scripture employs to denote the brevity of that which thousands are trifling with, and thousands more sinfully speak of "*killing*." Killing!—What would the myriads now in a lost eternity give for a few of those precious moments thus wantonly squandered? If we could listen to their voices, it would be to hear them tell, with earnest importunity, the result of their dear-bought experience, "This we say, brethren, the Time is short!"

2. Time is *precarious*.—If we had the positive assurance of a definite allotted period of time as our own, there might be some more plausible apology or excuse for procrastination regarding the soul's everlasting well-being. But when we think that we are *tenants-at-will*; that by an all-wise law of Providence, the next moment is not our own,—what madness to peril undying interests on the risk of a peradventure! It is surely foolhardiness to talk, and plan, and speculate, about to-morrow, when the sentence may be on the wing, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee!" Brethren, it is this uncertainty of existence which stamps such peculiar value, and such awful responsibility, on the present hour. We repeat it—for there is deep impressiveness in the thought,—this may be the last new year's sermon you can either read or hear! Another similar anniversary may find your place vacant in the family, or in the house of God; and the sable attire of mourning survivors will too impressively explain your absence. *This time next year!*—The winds of heaven may then be sweeping over your graves. You may then be silently reading to others the great moral which the living are so slow to hear and to learn,—“It is appointed unto all men once to die!”

What a call to be “up and doing!” We need not talk of years and anniversaries; we cannot tell even what a day or an hour, far less, therefore, what a year, may bring forth. Lying down on our nightly pillows, *we cannot calculate on to-morrow’s waking!* Remember it is at “midnight”—the hour He is least expected—“the Master cometh.” He has given “to every man his work.” What if He should come when the work is incomplete; when the laborers are steeped in guilty slumber—the Time-talent still left buried in the earth? “Occupy,” is His injunction, (that is, “be busy,”) “*till I come!*” But who can measure that little word “*till*?” It may be years hence—it may be *this night!* Oh, “blessed are those servants who, *when their Lord cometh, shall be found so doing!*”

3. Time is *irrevocable*.—Time once lost never can be recalled! A man may lose his health and get it again; a man may lose his worldly substance and regain a state of independence, if not of affluence. *Aye*, even when influence and character are damaged and impaired, by a course of upright and honorable dealing these may be replaced in

the esteem of the world. But *Time past is irredeemable!* And yet, in another and more awful sense, it is *not* beyond recall! We talk of time being “*gone*,” but it is not so. We may have consigned its unnoted and unvalued moments to oblivion, but the Book of God has not! With its use or abuse there are connected weighty responsibilities; and there is a day coming when every wasted hour will recoil on the traitor to his trust! Even with regard to this world, how solemnly is time *past* interwoven with time *present!* What *we have* been, goes far to determine the question, what *we are*. Former habits, former resolutions, and former principles, are the germs of existing character. The past can thus never be dissociated from the present—it is indissolubly linked with it by its momentous moral effects for good or for evil.

Brethren, seek in the Scripture sense of the term to “redeem” that time which, in another sense, *cannot* be redeemed. Let Time be husbanded and improved in the future, if Time has been neglected and abused in the past. “*Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear!*” Let this monitory word follow you into the world. Let it whisper its warning voice amidst the bustle of the world’s engagements and the hum of its industry, and leave the solemn impress of its influence on your lives and conversation. Oh! be assured a *deathbed* is not the time for “the girding of the loins and the trimming of the lamps”—when the mind is agitated, and the frame prostrated, and the strength gone, and the soul is hovering on the confines of immortality! “*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.*”

But, over and above all these, we observe,—

4. Time has *Momentous interests depending on it.*

Time is not mere holiday ground for the creature of a day! Time is not a passing arena for discussing politics, and pushing merchandise, and amassing gold! Time is the nursery of a momentous future; it is the training school of an Immortal Being! It is the battle-field of the soul! It is the instalment of a great hereafter! In other words, time is the preparation for

ETERNITY!

What is Eternity?—We observe,

1. Eternity is *endless*.—All other epochs are capable of calculation and measurement; but this baffles all human arithmetic. It is commensurate with the being of God Himself. It is “the life-time of the Almighty!” The grains of sand, the drops of the ocean, the notes of the sunbeam, the leaves of the forest, the stars of heaven,—have all been taken to illustrate its magnitude; but though these were added and multiplied a thousand times over, the mighty aggregate would be but a puny item in comparison with what they sought to describe—ETERNITY! And