

fully. What is the meaning then of Solomon? Eccles. vii. 16, 'Be not righteous overmuch.' There may be too much of that which is but pretended righteousness. The best fall short of what God's word and the necessities of their souls require. The world accuseth them of preciseness, but their consciences accuse them of negligence.

(1.) God's precepts are very strict: Mat. xxii. 37, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.' God is to be loved without measure and limitation. 'To think this is too strict is to blaspheme his holy law.

(2.) Patterns of holiness are very high. God's worthies: Heb. xii. 1, 'Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.' The angels: Mat. vi. 10, 'Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.' God himself: 1 Peter i. 15, 'But as he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.' Wherein then is this over-righteousness? I answer—Not in the end, not in necessary diligence about the means; but when the means are not proportioned to the end, but one duty shuts out another; in some things the devil may tempt us to over-doing

[3.] Another strict principle is, that the least sin allowed makes our sincerity questionable: James ii. 10, 'For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' It is good to stand at the greatest distance from sin; to go too near the brink is dangerous: 1 Thes. v. 22, 'Abstain from all appearance of evil.' They that do all that they may do usually do more than they should. Small sins may procure great trouble, if God sets them home upon the conscience.

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## SERMON XIX.

*Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*—EPII. v. 16.

THESE words contain a new direction to the children of light. Two things there are in it—(1.) A duty, 'Redeeming the time;' (2.) The reason of it, 'Because the days are evil.'

First, In the duty there is the act and the object. Both must be explained.

1. The act, *ἐξαγοραζόμενοι*, buying; or, as we render it, 'redeeming.' Grotius and some others conceive it may be explained by the words of Nebuchadnezzar to the astrologers, as they are rendered by the Septuagint, Dan. ii. 8, 'Ye would gain the time,' *ὅτι καιρὸν ὑμεῖς ἐξαγοράζετε*. And others think the meaning is, that by their wary carriage they should shift off dangers, and gain as much time as they could to honour God in the world. To this purpose also they draw in that, Col. iv. 5, 'Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.' But besides that this exposition would

bereave us of a very practical lesson, it seemeth not proper to this place.

[1.] Because the drift of the apostolical writings is to draw men to a contempt of life, and to a cheerful suffering of persecutions, not to clancular arts how to shift them.

[2.] Because it is drawn from the consideration of their being 'children of light,' or 'light in the Lord,' and the obligation that lieth upon them of 'walking as children of light;' and that will rather enforce a holy conversation for the conviction of heathens, than a wary carriage to shun their rage, and a trouble for their own safety. Well, then, what is the meaning of 'redeeming the time,' or buying the time? The term is proper to civil contracts, but is here applied morally.

(1.) In buying there is some price paid; we part with one thing to obtain another; so we must part with anything less than it rather than lose time; as Prov. xxiii. 23, 'Buy the truth, and sell it not.' No temporal conveniency is too dear to be parted with to get truth and retain truth. As merchants stand upon no rate or price if they may get such wares into their hands as they may make benefit of, so time is such a precious commodity, and so useful to us in order to eternity, that we should not stand upon ease, carnal pleasures, and worldly conveniences, that we may purchase it.

(2.) *Emptum cedit in jus emptoris*, that which is bought belongeth to the buyer; and so the Greek scholiast, ἀγοράζω τον καιρόν ἐστιν ἴδιον ποιεῖν, so buy time to make it your own for spiritual advantages. But our translation useth the word *redeem*, which implieth another metaphor, namely the recovery of a mortgage, or the redeeming of what hath been lost or pawned out; and so it noteth our former improvident misspence of time. We have, as it were, mortgaged it to Satan, to the world, and to vanity, and now should redeem it out of the hands of these engrossers, and by future diligence recover our former neglect.

2. The object, τὸν καιρόν, 'the time.' The word properly signifieth the season and opportunity, but yet it is the usual word for time in scripture, for to a christian all time is season. Time in general is but short: 1 Cor. vii. 29, 'But this I say, brethren, the time is short.' But the season or opportunity, which is the flower of time, is shorter; therefore this must not be slipped: Gal. vi. 10, 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men.' There are special seasons of getting, or doing of good, and they continue not long with us; they are always in passing, and being passed, will not possibly return; therefore we should take them when they are fairly offered.

Secondly, The reason by which this duty is enforced, 'Because the days are evil.' Herein I shall—(1.) Give the meaning of the phrase; (2.) The force of the consequence.

1. For the meaning of the phrase.

[1.] It may be understood of the whole course or race of man's life: Gen. xlvii. 9, 'And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been.' They are few in themselves, but especially in comparison with eternity; and they are evil in regard of

sin and misery. In heaven they are neither few nor evil; here it is a mercy they are few, because they are evil. Time in itself is neither good nor evil, but in regard of the accidents of time, as it is encumbered with variety of vexations, cares, and miseries, so our days may be called evil. And in this sense we must take that of our Saviour, Mat. vi. 34, 'Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.' Every day bringeth evil enough and sorrow enough to exercise us. Therefore you had need to lay up for a better life, for you have but sorry evil days here.

[2.] More properly and specially it relateth to the times the apostle wrote in, which were hard and calamitous, and full of danger, because of the wickedness of those among whom they lived. There were many enemies then, both to christian verity and piety. They lived among heathens, and troubles every day grew more sore and fierce, as also near and close. Paul himself felt the smart of them. This epistle was written out of prison; so that these days were evil indeed.

2. The force of the consequence. You may conceive it many ways.

[1.] Because others vainly misspend time, christians should be more careful to redeem it. The worse the times are, the better should we be, as fountain water is hottest in the coldest weather, and stars shine brightest in the darkest night. This consideration is not amiss, for they were to 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them;' that is, in their practice; and christians are to 'shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and froward generation,' Phil. ii. 15. God's children are best in the worst times, more strict and watchful when sin aboundeth. The world saith it is an evil time; we must do as much as we can to reclaim their lukewarmness. Let us rather labour to do good than complain of the evil of the times, and so seek to make them better.

[2.] Adversity maketh men serious. It was the aggravation of Abaz's sin, that he was the worse for his misery, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. If ever a man would be serious and circumspect, it should be in his misery: Heb. xii. 10, 'For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.'

[3.] With relation to the heathens among whom they lived, he adviseth them to redeem the time: Col. iv. 5, 'Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.' Men that live a profane life themselves, as the unconverted heathens did, take all occasions to speak evil of religion, or of those that embrace a different course. Give them no advantage, but by your sedulous diligence in the heavenly life keep up a full testimony in their consciences against that which they practise.

[4.] Some are so bad and froward, that they would take away liberty, estates, yea, life itself from you, and with it all occasions of doing and receiving good. You carry your own lives in your hands, and the lives of many of God's precious instruments are in danger; and therefore before means and opportunities be wholly lost, redeem the time. This I take to be the principal consideration; and other scriptures enforce it: Eccles. xi. 2, 'Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.' It is wisdom to do God's work in God's time. We may die, or our estates or our

liberty be taken from us ; it is good to be aforehand with the times, and take the season while it lasteth : John ix. 4, ' I must work the works of him that sent me whilst it is day ; the night cometh, when no man can work.' Opportunities being lost, they are not easily if at all recovered : John xi. 9, ' Are there not twelve hours in the day ? ' There is a prefixed time. A man would not neglect the daytime to go about his business. As long as providence continueth the occasions and opportunities of exercising our functions and abilities, we should not alarm ourselves with needless fears, but be quickened to the more serious diligence. When God hath a mind to use us, he can secure us and keep us safe : John xii. 35, ' Yet a little while is the light with you, walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you ; ' and ver. 36, ' While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be children of the light ; ' that is, I am not long to stay with you as the light of the world ; make use of me while you have me, or else you are like to be left in a blind unhappy condition for ever. Get your knowledge complete, directions sure, that you may live like christians when I am gone. The scriptures are so full and so apposite, that we need no more to explain the words.

*Doct.* That it is the duty of christians to look to the due improvement of the time and season.

I shall draw out the force of the apostle's exhortation in this method—

1. The commodity that we are to buy, and that is, time and season.
2. The use we are to put it to, that is, to glorify God, and save our souls.

3. The encouragements to the bargain.

I. The commodity or thing to be bought, *καιρός* ; the word signifieth time and season, the general and particular opportunity.

1. Time. Our whole life is but the larger season ; it is not time that you may spend as you list, but it is opportunity given you for the great work and business of your souls.

[1.] If you have not begun already by conversion, it must not be delayed and left to uncertainties. The sooner you begin to buy time, the better bargain you will have ; for every man would have as much for his money as possibly he can, therefore take the market while it is at the best : Ecces. xii. 1, ' Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.' While the effects of his creating bounty are fresh in our sense and feeling, as they are in the flower and vigour of youth, then let us remember the duty, love, and service we owe to our Creator. Then we have more advantages to serve him, senses lively, affections tender, wits more nimble and acute. If there must be a change, it is better it should be sooner than later ; a twig is more easily bent than a bough or the limb of a tree. By degrees we grow stiff and habituated to sin : Jer. xiii. 23, ' Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.' David was not of their opinion that think that religion doth not become us while we are young : Ps. cxix. 9, ' Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way ? ' Many think devotion is better received when their youthful heats are spent. No ; then there is more need of its grave precepts to check the fervour of youthful lusts (as the putting in

of cold water stays the boiling of the hot), and to mortify the flesh and rule the senses. Where nature hath disabled the body, there is somewhat the less for grace to do. The scriptures always call for a present obedience: 'To-day, if you will hear his voice,' Heb. iii. 7. A man cannot set forth too soon in his journey to heaven. There is little love to God, to think of repenting when we can sin no longer; you can be contented that God should be longer dishonoured and disobeyed, provided that at length you may be saved. No; it is best and most acceptable when you seek the Lord betimes, and give him the kindness of your youth. We have the whole duration of God to reflect upon for our comfort: Ps. xc. 2, 'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world: even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God,' compared with Ps. ciii. 17, 'But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him; and his righteousness unto children's children.' And shall we adjourn and put off God to an odd corner of our lives, to the decrepitness of old age; and when the devil hath feasted on your youth, give him the fragments of the table? It is an honour to us as well as to God to begin betimes. We read of Mnason of Cyprus, 'an old disciple,' Acts xxi. 16, and of Epenetus, 'the first-fruits of Achaia unto Christ,' Rom. xvi. 5; and of Andronicus and Junia, 'who are of note (honourable) among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me,' Rom. xvi. 7. It is good to have the priority and precedency in grace. When some believe in Christ sooner, others later, it is the mighty effect of God's goodness to us, and no small privilege, that we believe sooner than others, that we are freed from the slavery of Satan and our own lusts, and have our great concerns the sooner put out of hazard. The apostle took notice of those 'who first trusted in Christ,' Eph. i. 12, as having a prerogative and degree of honour above others.

[2.] After you are once admitted into the evangelical estate, your whole time should be redeemed and spent for God: Luke i. 75, 'In holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives.' Not now and then only; your whole time is God's, though not to be spent in one sort of duties; not only in duties of immediate worship, but in the duties of your callings also, but still to God: Rom. vi. 10, the example of Christ is urged, 'in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.' God must be ultimately and terminatively at the end of every action, though some things that we do may nextly and immediately concern ourselves or others. Acts of direct worship concern God immediately, other acts of our callings, yea, and recreations, concern God ultimately. A christian's end is the measure of all his actions, and he must do nothing impertinent thereunto, or inconsistent therewith. If christians did mind this, what a spirit of holiness would it awaken and breed in us! So Gal. ii. 20, 'The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.' I must not only hear or pray in faith, but trade in faith, yea, take food and physic in faith, and eat and drink in faith. Grace must still act, and elevate, and raise the intention to God, and overrule the rational life to higher ends: Zech. xiv. 20, 21, 'In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness to the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls

before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts.' Not only sacred, but common actions must have God's impress upon them. Thus figuratively doth he describe the holiness of the gospel. We are never sincere and upright with God till we turn all our second-table duties into first-table duties, and perform all our actions in the fear and love and for the glory of God: 1 Peter i. 17, 'Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.' Our whole conversation must be seasoned with grace. As God discovereth his divine power in the least of his creatures, in the framing of a gnat as well as in the sun, so must a christian show himself a christian in all his actions, in his devotions, in his business, and in his recreations: Acts xxvi. 7, 'Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.' But could they always serve God? There is something else to be done, eating, drinking, caring for our bodily interests, industry in our callings. The expression noteth the constancy of their worship; they did every day and every night consecrate some part of their time to the worship of God, and kept themselves in an aptitude for prayer and other holy duties as occasion did require. But also it showeth not only their constancy, but their integrity; when employed in works of charity, or their vocation, they did in all their actions study to honour God: 1 Cor. x. 31, 'Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, let us do all to the glory of God.' Eating and drinking is an offering; but it is not a meat-offering and drink-offering to the belly, or sensual appetite, but a service to God: 'Do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,' Col. iii. 17. In all these actions we must study to approve ourselves to God. A christian hath many works to do, to examine his title and right to eternal life, to be much in penitent exercises, to be bewailing sin and begging mercy, to instruct his children and servants, in the sanctified labours of his outward calling; but night and day he is serving God.

2. The season: buy it whatever it cost you. The season of receiving good and of doing good.

[1.] Of receiving good, and that—

(1.) From God. God's seasons and opportunities must not be over-slipped. There are special times when God, by a fair concurrence of all circumstances, maketh nearer approaches to a sinner than at other times: Isa. lv. 6, 'Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near.' God's times are not at the beck of our desires; he will be observed in his near approaches, as when he is ministerially near by pressing exhortations; this season must not be carelessly past over: John xii. 36, 'While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be children of the light.' Christ speaketh there of his own personal ministry. So when God is preparatorily near by the checks of conscience and the convictions of his Holy Spirit: Prov. i. 23, 'Turn ye at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you.' It is dangerous to let such convictions die away in our hearts, as Felix stifled gripes of conscience. No iron so hard as that which hath been often heated and often quenched, and none so hardened in sin as they that have lost the advantage of a sound conviction. So when he is savingly near by the

drawings of his Spirit, we should not delay and put off such a work of concernment as our return to God is; his treaty of peace may soon break up, and the covenant be out of your reach. When he draweth you should run, Cant. i. 4; when he knocketh, you should open, Rev. iii. 20. And sometimes we feel that he knocketh hard and loud. When the wind blows, we should loose the sails, John iii. 8; when the waters are stirred, we should put in for cure, John v. 4. Set about the business before these motions cool, and lose their efficacy. When the spouse would not open to her beloved, it cost her afterwards many a weary step and bitter sigh, Cant. v. 6, 7. Many times God doth as it were call us by name, by speaking to our case and condition. Now it is dangerous to let that time slip when God doth as it were single thee out to make thee an object of his grace. Remember the Spirit doth not always strive with sinners: Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.'

(2.) To receive good from men; as when God in his providence casteth you upon the company of wise and holy persons, and you have excellent advantages of being built up in your most holy faith; as when the disciples had Christ's company and personal presence with them: John xii. 35, 'Yet a little while is the light with you; walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you.' And elsewhere he chideth them for profiting no more by his converse with them: John xiv. 9, 'Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?' That they knew so little of the dignity of his person and office. So elsewhere he reproves Martha, who was so busily employed about the service of the entertainment, while Mary sat at his feet (the posture of hearers) and heard his gracious words, Luke x. 41, 42. In good company we have a fairer opportunity of exhorting and quickening one another, of getting doubts resolved, and scruples answered. Solomon telleth us, Prov. xx. 5, 'Counsel in the heart of man is like a deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.' We must improve these seasons of receiving good to our souls: Rom. i. 12, 'That I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.'

[2.] Of doing good. There are special seasons of performing our duty to God and man.

(1.) To God. Many times we are strangely influenced and acted by the impulsion of the Spirit; now upon such occasions we should not hang off: Ps. xxvii. 8, 'When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.' God speaketh to us by the injection of holy thoughts and the secret excitations of his grace, and we speak to him by real and ready returns of obedience.

(2.) For doing good to men, to their souls and bodies. We should take all occasions of drawing others from their sins, and gaining them to Christ. If we lose time, we should not lose opportunity. Sometimes providence puts an opportunity in our mouths, as Nehemiah had of speaking to the king concerning Jerusalem that lay waste: Neh. ii. 5, 'And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldst send me into Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchre, that I may build it.' So Esther iv. 14, 'Who knoweth but thou art come to the kingdom

for such a time as this?' Some seem to be made and raised up by providence for such a turn. We read of Paul, Acts xvii. 16, 'His spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry.' Impulse of spirit, though it make not new duties, yet it determineth the circumstances of a duty already known. Sometimes a word in season doth mightily prevail for instructing, comforting, and converting of others. So we must not neglect the seasons of visiting, feeding, clothing, when God casteth us upon the occasion: 1 John iii. 17, 'But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' When Christ so happily met with the woman of Canaan, he falleth a-talking with her for the good of her soul, John iv. 7. But for improving the season, more afterwards. Let it suffice to intimate now, that everything is beautiful in its season: Eccles. iii. 17, 'There is a time for every purpose, and for every work.' Blood out of its proper vessels soon corrupts; so things done out of their season do more hurt than good.

II. The use we must put it to when we have gotten this commodity into our hands. It is a precious commodity; you should never let it go but for something better than itself. There are two great ends, the glorifying of God, and the saving of our own souls.

1. One great end in employing our time is the glorifying of God: John xvii. 4, 'I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.' So should every christian say when he cometh to die. Christ had his work, and we have ours. Christ's work was the work of mediation; ours the work of constant service and thankfulness. We must employ all our talents of gifts, place, and relation, to God's glory. All things glorify God in the event, the wrath of man not excepted; but this must be our choice and scope: 'The wrath of man shall praise thee,' Ps. lxxvi. 10. The fierce endeavours of his enemies; it is no thanks to them, but to the wisdom of his providence; it doth not lessen their fault nor punishment. But we must actively glorify God, not passively and objectively only. We are made for this end: Prov. xvi. 4, 'The Lord hath made all things for himself.' And we are made new creatures for this end: Eph. i. 12, 'That we should be to the praise of his glory.' The saints above spend all their time in glorifying God without difficulty, strife, and danger; it cost them no shame nor pain, neither trouble nor loss of life or limb; but we must glorify him upon earth in the midst of opposition, if we would be glorified with him in heaven, and be out of gunshot as they are. We are more careful of events than duties. When the days are evil we are apt to inquire, Lord, what wilt thou do for thy great name? Do not ask what God will do, but consider what you must do. You must glorify him though he be dishonoured by others; and you should trouble yourselves more with what you should do than what shall become of you.

2. The other great end is the saving of our own souls; that is the use of our time: 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.' Because the apostle's words give me a fit method, I shall a little insist on them.

[1.] Our great work is to enter into God's peace, to be found of him



in a renewed and reconciled estate. This is of unspeakable importance, and this is *opus diei in die suo*, the business of our day: Luke xix. 42, 'If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace;' and Luke ii. 14, 'Peace upon earth.' The day was given you to make your peace. All mankind was lost in Adam; God will give them a day to come in and recover themselves. Some men have but thirty, some forty, some fifty, some sixty years; but alas! the most part do not mind the work of the day. Surely this is your great business. It is a work worthy your time, and all the labour you bestow upon it. It is a most necessary work: Luke x. 42, 'One thing is needful.' It is a most excellent work to be in a state of amity with God, to have the great breach made up, and difference compromised: Rom. v. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God.' And the 11th verse, 'We have joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.' It is a most profitable work, for it procureth us the blessings of this life, and of a better: Mat. vi. 33, 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;' 1 Tim. iv. 8, 'Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' It is better for soul and body: 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' How comfortable will it be when we go out of the world, to say with Christ, John xvii. 4, 'I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do;' with Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all them also that love his appearing;' with Hezekiah, Isa. xxxviii. 3, 'Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.' It is a great contentment to a mariner, after a dangerous voyage, to come safe ashore.

[2.] 'Without spot.' This relateth to the soul, and the filthiness contracted by sin. This is your business, to get out your deep and inveterate stain. You began as soon as you made conscience of your baptism, and you never leave till it be perfected in glory: 2 Peter i. 4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust;' 1 John iii. 3, 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as Christ is pure.'

[3.] The third word, 'without blame,' relateth to the conversation: Eph. i. 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.' Carry on a blameless conversation in the world, obnoxious to no just reproof, that neither by the omission of any known duty, nor by the commission of any known sin, you may give others just cause of offence; but be always working out your salvation with fear and trembling.

## SERMON XX.

*Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*—EPH. v. 16.

THIRDLY, I shall now proceed to the encouragements to the bargain to redeem time and season.

First, Let me press you to redeem the time.

1. Too much time hath been spent already: 1 Peter iv. 3, 'For the time past of our life may suffice us.' In infancy we were in no capacity to act grace; we lived the life of sense rather than reason, and did only feed and sleep. When we began to bewray our reason, we showed the folly that was bound up in our hearts, and since that we have spent a great deal of precious time in sin. Now as travellers that have stayed long in their inn mend their pace, and ride as much in an hour as before in two, so because we have spent much time already, we should redeem time: Rom. xiii. 12, '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;' the text that converted Augustine, who opened the bible in this place, when he heard a voice, saying, *Tolle, lege*. We have all been too long disputing and traversing the case with God; it is good to come to a resolution, and break off the old, vain, sinful, carnal way of living, that we may at length set about the work of godliness.

2. We are to be accountable to God for time. When he cometh to reckon with his people, time is one of the circumstances mentioned, either for the aggravating sin or commending his mercies: Ps. xcv. 10, 'Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.' God might have reckoned with you twenty, thirty, forty years ago, with honour enough to his justice; but he hath borne with you all this while. So for commending his mercies: Luke xiii. 7, 'Then said he unto the dresser of the vineyard, Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree.' When the scripture speaketh in such cases *numeris rotundis*, in round numbers, as ten, twenty, or the like, we need not inquire after the interpretation, but it signifies a long time. But when there is *numerus impar*, an uneven number, why is it three years rather than four or six? I answer—Look to the harmony of the evangelists, and you will find that after Christ's baptism he had spent three years in the ministry, and was now entering upon his fourth year. God keepeth an exact account how long we have learned of him: Heb. v. 12, 'For when for the time ye ought to be teachers of others, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God;' Jer. xxv. 3, 'From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day (that is, the three and twentieth year), the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you.' God keepeth an exact account; full three and twenty years had he been reclaiming them. All these things are but pledges of the great process at the day of judgment. God will call you to an account, not simply for your mercies and sins, but for the time you have spent, so long patience, so much means. Oh, then, reflect upon thine own heart: I must die, and give an account for all

my time, and I cannot give an account of one day among a hundred ; my time hath been spent in foolish mirth, troublesome cares, and idle company, in vain sports and recreations. Pass a reckoning upon your time for the present, and if you cannot answer conscience, you cannot answer God. So much in meals and banquets, so much in sleep, so much in sports and recreations, so much in worldly business ; and then think how little a remainder is there for God. I remember an account of a phantastic in Plutarch, that gave thus much time to his barber, thus much to his perfumer, tailor, cook, and half to his philosopher.

3. That time is only yours which is spent well, in pleasing God, and doing good ; for that time is bought and redeemed which otherwise is lost to you. We lose all that time which is not spent in the love and service of God. Strictly and properly we are never said to live as long as we are alienated from the life of God. A man may abide long in the world, till he be eaten out by his own rust, or droppeth like rotten fruit ; but he cannot be said to live long ; as a man may be long at sea, but is tossed to and fro by the waves, yet he cannot be said to make a long voyage when driven back into the port out of which he came at first. The apostle saith, 1 Tim. v. 6, 'But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.' Her time is useless, lost as to all spiritual purposes. You are a loser by that day in which you have not done or received some good.

4. Time is not ours to dispose of at pleasure. A christian, when he giveth up himself to God, he giveth up everything that is his to God, time and strength as well as body and soul ; he hath nothing at his own dispose, so that he hath nothing that he is absolute master of to use it as he pleaseth : 1 Cor. vi. 15, 'Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a harlot ?' My time is not mine, but Christ's. It is sacrilege to rob God of what is consecrated to him. My *το ζην*, to live is Christ, Phil. i. 21.

5. Time is a precious commodity, worth the looking after. The devil values it ; if he can cheat you of your time, he can cheat you of your souls ; for when conviction is strong, and all your prejudices are borne down, and his outworks taken, excuses and self-flatteries vanish. The last thing that he is loath to let go is time ; his game is to cheat you of to-day, and so of the next day. God saith, 'To-day,' Heb. iii. 13 ; and the devil saith, Not to-day, but at a more convenient season ; as Felix put off Paul, Acts xxiv. 25, 'When I have a more convenient season, I will call for thee,' as to be rid of a troublesome creditor, we promise future payment. *Modo et modo non habent modum*—the sinner's morrow will never come. In hell they know the worth of time. Dying men that are affrighted in conscience discover the passions of the damned. What would they give for one year, one month longer, yea, for one week, or one day more ! But all the wealth in the world will not purchase a day.

6. The present time is the best : Ps. cxix. 60, 'I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments.' Ludovicus Cappellus telleth us of a Jewish rabbin, who being asked when a man should repent, answered, One day before his death ; that is, presently, this day ; it may be your last in the world : 'Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation,' 2 Cor. vi. 2. Heaven and hell is in

the case; heaven is to be gotten or lost. Speed is necessary. We are commanded to 'fly from the wrath to come,' Mat. iii. 7, and to 'fly for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us,' Heb. vi. 18. Your business is to avoid everlasting death, and to prepare for everlasting life.

7. You have no time but what may be serviceable for some good use. There is no time wherein thou dost not enjoy some blessing to provoke thee to thankfulness, or hast not some sin to be mortified, or some good work to be done. David had his morning meditation, Ps. xix., and his evening thoughts: Ps. viii. 3, 'When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained;' and his night meditations when he could not sleep: 'My reins also instruct me in the night season,' Ps. xvi. 7. When the rain falleth: Job xxxvii. 7, 'He sealeth up the hand of every man, that all men may know his work.' We have a great deal of work to do in a short time.

8. We have much work to do, therefore let us spend it in matters that most concern us. We all complain of the shortness of time, and yet every one hath more time than he useth well. We should rather complain of the loss of time than the want of time. *Vitam non accepimus brevem, sed facimus; nec tam inopes temporis sumus, quam prodigi.* We do not want time so much as waste it; much more might be done for God than ever yet hath been done, if we were serious and diligent. We make our lives shorter than they are by interposing so many unnecessary diversions, and spending so much time as we do in vanity and folly and needless recreations. Every man should call himself to an account how he spendeth his precious hours: Isa. lv. 2, 'Wherefore do you spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?' What do I spend my time and labour upon? Works of absolute necessity must be first done and most minded: 'One thing is needful,' Luke x. 42; this is *unum necessarium* and *unum magnum*, the one thing and the great thing: Phil. iii. 13, 'This one thing I do;' that is, that we may become better christians every day. Next to that, other things must be regarded in their order, and place, and according to their weight. In the general, use time well. If it be short, do not make it shorter by your negligence and improvident misspending of it. A thing that is hired for a while, it is a loss to us if it be not used and employed; as a horse that is bargained for if he be kept idle, or money taken up at interest. So it is with time lent us by God for a while; we pay dear for it if we use it not, and improve it not for God. It is good to see what advantage we make of time daily. One could say when he heard the clock strike, Now I have another hour to answer for. Many of the heathens pressed a review at night, *τὴ παρεβῆν*; Wherein have I transgressed? Seneca, *quotidie apud me causam dico*, it was his practice still to arraign himself, What vice have I resisted? what disease of the mind have I cured? *qua parte melior e?* wherein art thou bettered and improved? In the story of the creation God reviewed every day's work, and saw that it was good. Surely these or such like should be our night questions, What have I done to-day? what advantage have I made of time that I may not lose it? what glory have I brought to God? what good have I done to others? wherein have I profited my own soul?

9. The slight price we are to give for time. You part with nothing but what is better lost than kept; with a little ease of the flesh, vain pleasure which passeth away as the wind, a little worldly profit, which at death will be of no use to thee. Now these are of no worth in comparison of time.

[1.] The ease of the flesh, what is that to the gain of the soul? Pains must be endured first or last. Now what a foolish thing is it to go to hell to save a little labour? to live in endless pains, because we are loath to put ourselves to the trouble of prayer and other holy duties for a little while, or to work out our salvation with fear and trembling? The body was made for labour, and is the more active the more it is exercised, as wells are the sweeter for draining, whereas its necessities and infirmities are multiplied and increased by a fond indulgence. Therefore do not spare the body and stand upon a little ease. God's children have given up their bodies to him as well as their souls: Rom. vi. 13, 'But yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God;' and Rom. xii. 1, 'That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.' And what is given up to him must be used for him, though it be with some pain and self-denial; and the least part of self-denial is the labour of holy duties. It is said, Dan. iii. 28, they 'yielded their bodies that they might not worship any god but their own God.' If they yielded their bodies to such cruel tortures, are we not ashamed to complain of the toil and burden of a little service done to God, which also carrieth its own comfort and solace along with it? A christian, whether he looketh backward or forward, upward or downward, seeth no reason to insist upon the ease of the body. Look backward; what pains did Christ endure in his body! his face spit upon and buffeted, his hands and feet nailed to the cross, his head crowned with thorns. In his life he neglected his refreshings, when hungry, to do good to souls, John iv.; and shall we be so delicate and tender of the body as not to endure a little pains for God's sake? If we look forward, this earthly tabernacle must be dissolved, 2 Cor. v. 1, a poor clay house, that must be crumbled into dust; it is better to be worn out with labour, than eaten out with rust. Ay! but look a little further; it shall be raised up a glorious body, and then it will be no grief of heart to us that we have lived fruitfully and painfully in the exercise of godliness, and been much in fasting and prayer; though you have deprived your bodies of some delight and pleasure which others take, then you shall find all recompensed to you. Those knees which were made hard like camels' hoofs (as it was said of James) by kneeling in your daily addresses to God in prayer shall then be a testimony of your diligence; those spirits that have wasted in godly exercises shall then be recompensed to you; and when those that lived in vanity, ease, and idleness, shall be full of horror and amazement, you shall lift up your heads with joy. Look upward; we hope this body shall be one day in heaven; there is the place of your rest from all that is painful and troublesome: Rev. xiv. 13, '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 shall follow them.' Then the body shall become an ever-

lasting temple, wherein the soul fully sanctified shall ever dwell, and never part more; then we shall not begrudge the labours of the body in prayer, preaching, and other holy duties. Look downward; the bodies and souls of the wicked are cast into hell fire: Mat. x. 28, 'Fear not them that can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' There are pains immediately inflicted on the body, not only such as result from the agonies and horrors of the soul. Well, then, better take pains for a while than to endure pains for evermore, to be held in the bands of duty than in chains of darkness.

[2.] Vain pleasures and delights, which spend time immeasurably. All pleasure should be used with fear and caution, lest it strengthen the sensual inclination, and enchant our minds and hearts, and divert us from God and heaven. Now this vain pleasure and delight is inconsiderable in itself, for it is short, gone as soon as come, like a wind it passeth away. If it leave anything behind it, it is a sting in the conscience, for obeying appetite before reason, or spending our time so unprofitably for a thing of nought: Prov. xiv. 13, 'Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness;' and therefore elsewhere it is compared to the 'crackling of thorns under the pot,' Eccles. vii. 6, that maketh a great blaze and a loud noise, none of the most pleasing, but soon vanisheth. So all their songs, jests, frothy discourses, mimical and antic practices, they do not good, rather much hurt. Therefore to be so caught with empty and light pleasures, so as to neglect the glory of God and saving our own souls, is extreme madness. It is misbecoming a man, an active creature, and made for business: Eccles. ii. 2, 'I said of laughter, It is mad, and of mirth, What doeth it?' What solid good or considerable profit bringeth it to us? A man maketh himself a brute when he giveth his heart to it and maketh it the business of his life. Tully saith he is unworthy the name of a man *qui unum diem velit esse in voluptate*, who would spend one day in pleasure. Surely much more it misbecometh a christian: James v. 5, 'Ye have lived in pleasure upon earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.' For a christian, that looketh for everlasting pleasures in another world, to set his heart upon the poor pitiful delights and joys of this earth, and to live delicately and luxuriously, and to forget God and heaven, and all serious preparation for the world to come, what is it but to defy his christianity, and live as a carnal worldling, to seek his joys in the place of his exile and banishment? yea, to carry himself like a beast appointed for the shambles, rather than to carry himself as an heir of glory? and therefore to part with this vain mirth should not be tedious. Part with it we must, because it spendeth much time, and diverts the heart from better cares; and it should be no grievous thing, considering how unreasonable it is to frolic it in the midst of so many sins and dangers.

[3.] Worldly profits and emoluments, which at death will be of no use to us: Mat. xvi. 26, 'For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' The soul may be lost by sins of omission as well as commission. If our worldly projects have distracted our minds, and bereft us of our time, oh, how grievous will the

thought and remembrance of it be at the hour of death ! Job xxvii. 8, ' For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul ? ' Jer. xvii. 11, ' As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.' Therefore, though we overlook some worldly conveniences, yet if we gain time, we have made a good purchase. Why should we be greedy of wealth and prodigal of time ? All the wealth in the world will not purchase one day longer, nor procure a little respite for us, when God requireth our souls from us. And in the other world it is of no use to us ; our works follow us there, but our wealth doth not : Eccles. v. 15, ' As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour which he may carry in his hand.' We must go out of the world, and shall survive the present estate, and then all that we have heaped up cannot stead us in that other world. Oh, how much better is it then to redeem the time, to mind such things as will be serviceable to us in the country to which we are a-going, and to seek after these things here below with weanedness and moderation, that we may have time and a heart for better things ! 1 Cor. vii. 29-31, ' But this I say, brethren, 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 buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as not abusing it ; for the fashion of this world passeth away.'

10. The necessity should quicken us, because there are many things which are apt to steal away and engross our time, and therefore must be redeemed ; as—

[1.] Sloth and idleness. Some are loath to be put to the trouble of any serious work ; though their time hangeth on their hands, and they know not what to do with themselves or with their time, yet they spend it in roving thoughts or trivial actions, being unfit for aught that is serious ; they lie open to temptations, especially the temptation of mispending time. Now it is no hard bargain to exchange a sin for a duty, to part with our sloth and do our proper work. Sloth is an averseness from labour, through a carnal love of ease or indulgence to the flesh ; and if this labour be to be exercised about our most necessary duties, it is the more culpable. Sluggishness is so contrary to reason (and by the sentiment of nature a slothful servant is an evil servant), that the most backward cannot allow themselves in their negligent and careless course of living without some pretences and excuses. One is, they desire better things ; but ' the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing,' Prov. xiii. 4. And why ? Another proverb will tell you that ' his hands refuse to labour,' Prov. xxi. 25. Another is, there is some difficulty they must grapple with : Prov. xx. 4, ' The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold ; therefore shall he beg in harvest.' Ploughing is when the season begins to grow wet and cold : ' The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way ; I shall be slain in the street,' Prov. xxii. 13. In those countries lions raged in the night ; sometimes they came into the towns and villages to seek their prey : Prov. xv. 19, ' The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns,

but the way of the righteous is plain.' Every little opposition and difficulty will put him by a duty; he goes about it as if all the way were strewed with thorns, and he multiplies his fears and difficulties. Something is out of the way when he should do anything for God and the good of others. So Prov. xxvi. 16, 'The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.' Though they do nothing for God and eternal life, yet they seem to be wise, carp at the diligence of others, and excuse their own negligence; and withdrawing themselves from labour and danger, accuse others as fools and melancholy persons, and so condemn what they should imitate, though others be as wise as the counsellors of princes. Seven was their number in the oriental countries: Esther i. 14, 'The seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom.' Now the soul being thus disposed, time must needs run on, and our great work left undone.

[2.] Vain and sinful pleasures and carnal sports. These rob us of our time, not only as there is a great deal spent in them, but chiefly as they taint our hearts, that we never truly mind the glory of God nor eternal happiness: Isa. v. 12, 'And the harp and the viol, the tabret and the pipe, and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.' While men excessively abound in all manner of delights, nothing is to be seen or heard among them that is savoury or serious; they give themselves wholly to a dissolute or voluptuous course of life. These cannot mind the improvement of time. Their principle is, Isa. xxii. 13, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.' Whatever they do, they are still losing time, for they look only to present things, and have no design of living with God in heaven: Job xxi. 13, 14, 'They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.' Their carnal mirth excludeth all sense of the need of God or care of the world to come; for this little vanishing pleasure they hazard eternal joys: Luke xii. 19, 'And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.' They are only taken up with sensitive or sinful joys, and so post on the faster to their eternal misery, till one moment puts an end to all their joy for ever. Now since these vain delights tempt us to slight God, and religion, and eternal life, and the preparations necessary, we must be the more careful.

[3.] Worldly distractions; these divert our cares and thoughts from the most necessary things. Our worldly business ought to be minded with a due regulation and subordination to our great end. It is our work given us to do, but usually men are excessive: Ps. cxxvii. 2, 'They rise early, and go to bed late, and eat the bread of sorrows.' They rack their minds, and waste their spirits, and make this their main care, as if time were only given them, and they were made for nothing else, but to get wealth and heap up treasure to themselves. No; things indifferent must give way to things absolutely necessary, things less necessary to things more necessary, and all to things absolutely necessary: Mat. vi. 33, 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;'



Luke x. 42, 'One thing is needful.' And therefore great things must be most minded by us, other things in a due proportion.

[4.] Vain company; they steal a jewel from us they can never restore, which is our precious time. There are some sinful companions we are never likely to be the better for; and if they be not likely to be the better for us, we must not be familiar with them, but shun them: Ps. cxix. 115, 'Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God.' There are others who entertain us with idle chatting and censuring: 1 Tim. v. 13, 'And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things they ought not;' that is, they fall into loose discourse, censuring and meddling with other folk's matters. Now in all these cases a christian should not be careful to please others to the wrong of his own soul. *Non nascitur aliis qui mortuus est sibi.* He that is to die for himself, and give account for himself, is not born to humour others with the loss and prejudice of his great affairs. In the general the rule is, that we should spend time in nothing that must be repented of; and all talk that is impertinent and inconsistent with our duty is of that nature.

Secondly, Why we must redeem the season.

1. Because all things are beautiful in their season. It is said, Ps. i. 3, that the good man 'is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.' Now fruit in its season is a carriage answerable to all providences: Mat. ix. 15, 'And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.' Ps. lvi. 3, 'At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.' When fears are apt to surprise us, we are to establish our hearts with the fear of God. So Rom. xii. 15, 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep;' an allusion to the two gates of the temple, *Quarum una erat sponsorum, altera lugentium, utrisque convenientia dicebant Levitæ*—Grotius.

2. Because the season may soon slip out of our hands: Gal. vi. 10, 'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith.' Take and seek all occasions of doing good. To take the season relates to the necessities of others; to seek the season relates to our own capacity and ability; both together bind the duty stronger on us. He may die, and you may be discouraged and disabled; and therefore take the present opportunity, while it lasts, to do all the good you can. Suppose it be to relieve others' bodily necessities: Prov. iii. 28, 'Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee.' We must not defer a benefit. Some are like hogs, good for nothing till they are dead; they will not part with anything till they are incapable of the use of it any longer. So for exhorting: Heb. iii. 13, 'But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day.' So for serving public good: Acts xiii. 36, David, 'after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep.' They that mind to do good in the world engage themselves in a warfare, and the loss of our season is no small part of the enemy's conquest.

3. This is wisdom. Some are wise in time, others too late; as the foolish virgins; they saw a necessity of getting oil into their vessels, but it was too late, Mat. xxv. 10. But the godly make much of time before it is lost. Alas! we have no security of the next day but our own word; and he hath nothing to secure him that hath only his own overweening presumptions to secure him: 'Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee,' Luke xii. 20. The greatest folly is seen in the loss of time and season. It is ill being taken unprovided.

4. The foresight and provision of the creatures may shame us. God will not only teach careless men by his prophets and messengers, but by his creatures. There is a great deal of morality lieth hid in the bosom of nature if we had the skill to find it out. In this business of redeeming the time we are sent to the pismire: Prov. vi. 6-8, 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.' This little creature is as it were put into the pulpit to preach to man; as Christ elsewhere sendeth us to the fowls and lilies to learn how to trust God for food and clothing. The creatures are as it were in a glass, wherein we may not only see God's glory, but our own folly and sin. Some would have thought that there had been no use of the ant but to devour grain, and that we might have been better without such a creature than with it. If it serves for no other use, this is enough, that it is an emblem of diligence, sagacity, and industry. This wisdom is merely natural instinct, which should shame us men who are endowed with reason on purpose to provide for the time to come, especially for eternity. Solomon heighteneth this sagacity and industry, because the ant 'hath no guide, overseer, or ruler,' to show her her work, or to require it of her, or to punish her for idleness; no *ἐργοδιώκτης*. There is a God to look after us, and call us to an account, and to punish us in case of negligence; and yet in summer we do not provide for winter, and are not wise to redeem the time. So elsewhere God shameth us by the fowls of heaven: Jer. viii. 7, 'Yea, the stork in the heavens knoweth her appointed times, and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord.' They duly observe the seasons of the year for coming and going, but man doth not observe the seasons of grace or the time of wrath. In things that do more nearly concern us, we come short of the unreasonable creatures.

5. Most of the calamities of the world come for not observing and improving the season: Eccles. viii. 6, 'To every purpose there is time and judgment; therefore the misery of man is great upon him;' that is, everything hath its proper season, upon which the happy success of their undertakings doth depend, and if this be let slip, the misery of man is great upon him. The Lord vouchsafeth his blessing to actions done in his time and after his manner; therefore we need to take the season.

*Use 1.* Is reproof of several sorts of men.

1. Of them that wilfully spend their time vainly, either in doing nothing, or doing what they should not, or in doing evil: *aut nihil, aut aliud, aut male agendo.*

[1.] In doing nothing. Time and life was given us for some end and purpose; every man hath his work wherein to glorify God. Men are not made to fill up the number of things in the world, as the stones; nor to grow bulky, and increase in stature, as plants and trees; nor to taste bodily pleasures without remorse, as the beasts. We have higher faculties of reason and conscience to foresee the end and choose the means, and diligently by those means to pursue after the end. Our end is to glorify God and enjoy him; the means are the duties of our general and particular callings, and we must be diligent in both. An idle man is a burden to himself, a prey to Satan, and a grief to the Spirit of God. A burden to himself, for he knoweth not what to do with time; in the morning he saith, Would God it were evening. A prey to Satan; if the devil findeth them at leisure, he will be sure to employ them: standing pools are apt to putrefy; birds are not taken in their flight, but when they pitch and rest. They are a grief to the Spirit of God; idle men quench the vigour of nature, and therefore are incapable of the quickenings of grace. In short, the world was never made to be a hive for drones; every one hath his employment for public good. To spend the whole life in eating, drinking, and sporting is beastly or brutish: 'Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness,' were the sins of Sodom, Ezek. xvi. 49. Every member of the body hath its function and use, whereby it becometh serviceable to the whole. All have not the same office; that would make a confusion; but all have their use, and are, according to their gifts and talents, diligently to employ themselves. They are unprofitable burdens of the earth that live idle and to no use, as if their souls were only given them as salt to keep their bodies from stinking.

[2.] Those that do *aliud agere*, that is, do somewhat, but not what they should do, spend their whole time in hunting after the profits of the world, or in making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. No; there are better things to mind. Everything is lost that helpeth us not towards heaven, much more that which hindereth our progress thither. That is our first care, the glorifying God and saving our souls: Prov. iv. 7, 'Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom;' that is, heavenly wisdom.

[3.] *Male agendo*, in doing evil, or serving the lusts of the flesh. That time is lost indeed, for then you lose your souls and your time too, and do the devil's work in God's time: 1 Peter iv. 3, '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.'

2. It reproveth them that delay their conversion and return to God; as those invited to the marriage-supper did not deny, but delay, Mat. xxii. They do not say, *Non placet, sed non vacat*—I am not at leisure. Oh, it is dangerous to neglect the season. If you did thoroughly see the danger, you would see you cannot make too much haste. This great necessity that is upon us admitteth no deliberation, and therefore we should take the next opportunity. To promise ourselves a more convenient season hereafter is to be liberal at another's cost, which yet you are not sure of. The holy and heavenly life is compared to a journey; he is a foolish traveller that sets forth at night, and beginneth

his journey when the sun is setting. It is set forth by a race often; who ever heard of a race that was but a stride long? By a warfare; now who would expect to conquer when himself is weakest and his enemy strongest? Yet nothing more usual than delays and put offs; one is full of business, and when he hath a little mastered it, then he will be for a devout retirement, and will think of saving his soul: 'Suffer me first to go and bury my father,' said he in the Gospel, Luke ix. 59. Alas! when you are more leavened with a worldly spirit, religion will find little entrance. Some their youthful heats are not yet over and spent, and they think something is to be allowed to them; but when those youthful lusts and sensual inclinations are confirmed by long custom, how will you break the force of them? The misery is, God always cometh out of season to a carnal heart, or in the sinner's reckoning. We even say to him, as the devil did to Christ, 'Art thou come to torment us before the time?' Mat. viii. 29.

3. Reproof to fallen believers, who do not take the next advantage of recovering themselves by repentance. The longer sin continueth unmortified or unpardoned, the more dangerous is your case. A candle, as soon as the flame is blown out, sucketh light and is re-enchanted; but when it is grown cold and stiff, it requireth more ado. Peter's repentance presently overtook his sin: Mat. xxvi. 75, 'He went out and wept bitterly.' 'Let not the sun go down upon thy wrath, neither give place to the devil,' Eph. iv. 26, 27. It is true of reconciliation with God. If a man were unclean, he was to wash his clothes before evening. God would not let Adam sleep in his sins, but came to him in the cool of the day. If we are fallen, we should not lie in the dirt: Jer. viii. 4, 'Thus saith the Lord, Shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return?' Let not your commerce and traffic with heaven lie dead. Sin maketh you fly from God, and we hang off from him. A backward heart must be urged and pricked forward.

4. It reproveth those that withstand the special seasons of grace, when God's arms are most open to receive us. Some scriptures seem to assert a special season, that may not be had at other times: Isa. lv. 6, 'Seek the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near;' Ps. xxxii. 6, 'For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee, in a time when thou mayest be found;' Isa. xlix. 8, 'In an acceptable time have I heard thee; in the day of salvation I have helped thee;' Luke xix. 42, 'If thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes.' When this day is past, we are in danger of eternal ruin.

But to state this matter.

(1.) The time in which God will pardon and accept those that repent is as long as life; for whenever men repent, iniquity shall not be their ruin. Turn and live, sin and die, are truths that will always hold good.

(2.) The times while powerful means of grace are continued do not always last. Persons have their day and nations their day. He may take away his word from a people that reject it, and offer them his grace no more: Acts xiii. 46, 'But seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the gentiles.'

(3.) When God's motions are more powerful, these God may suspend upon our disobedience: Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' God at some times moveth the heart more strongly towards conversion than at other times. Now this time should not be lost, the day of patience, the day of offers, the day of motions. The day of patience is as long as life lasteth; the day of offers, while means and motions are continued. It is dangerous to slight either. Present time is best.

*Use 2.* Is to press you to redeem the time. All our time is due to God; and were it not for bodily necessities, it were to be spent in his immediate service. But this is the life of heaven, not of earth. A good proportion must be given to him; yea, in a sense our all. Common actions must be sacred in their intention and aim: Isa. xxiii. 18, 'And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord.' The particular time we are to spend in the immediate service of God is not expressly determined, because God trusts love, and expecteth much from a willing people, who are not wont to dispute away their duties, but practise them; and because he would leave something to the conduct of the Spirit, and a due latitude to men's several conditions and occasions. And though there be not express directions, yet injunctions are very large and comprehensive: 1 Thes. v. 17, 'Pray without ceasing.' We have worthy patterns: Ps. cxix. 147, 'I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried;' and ver. 164, 'Seven times a day do I praise thee.' Therefore you must do what will stand with love, with your manifold necessities, and spiritual welfare and advantage, and the special seasons God offereth in his providence. For means—

1. Be sure the body be not a clog to the soul: Luke xxi. 34, 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be over-charged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of the world.' When you gratify the body, you make way for a gross neglect of the soul.

2. Love to God, that keepeth the heart liberal and open upon all occasions of duty.

3. The heavenly mind. Are you in good earnest? Would you go to heaven, and dwell with God for ever? The children of this world are wise in the course of their affairs, what time to redeem, and what advantages to take. If you were more heavenly-minded, you would be wiser in your affairs for a heavenly life.

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## SERMON XXI.

*Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.—EPH. v. 17.*

THESE words are an inference from the whole discourse, begun ver. 8; more especially from the two last exhortations, to 'walk circumspectly,' and 'redeem the time;' 'wherefore be ye not unwise,' &c. Observe here—