

THE SPUR
NO. 1119

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”
Ecclesiastes 9:10

I FIND that these words, and those which precede them, have been considered by some to be a sarcastic address to those persons of an epicurean spirit who consider this world to be everything and will not believe that there is a world to come. They are bidden to eat the fat and drink the sweet, and enjoy life while they can. And if they have anything that they wish to do, to get it done as quickly as they can, because there is no work nor device in the grave.

If this be the meaning, we must regard it as spoken to them from their own standpoint, and so it is tantamount to their favorite maxim, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” It is possible that the royal preacher intended our text to be a sarcasm, but I do not think so. I think the common interpretation is the true one and that would make it run parallel with the saying of our Lord, “Work while it is called day; for the night cometh wherein no man can work.”

It is an address to men, commending to them promptness, determination, and practical earnestness. Inasmuch as they have but one life here on earth, they should give diligence to accomplish all the right purposes which they have formed for this world, seeing that once dead, they cannot return, neither in the grave can they carry out any of their resolves, they should do quickly what they mean to do.

May God give us grace to make a right use of this exhortation.

First, we shall give this passage *an evangelical voice to the unconverted*. And secondly, we shall find in it *a stimulating voice to the people of God*.

I. First, we shall give it AN EVANGELICAL VOICE TO THE UNCONVERTED, and it will be necessary for us to say that there is nothing for the unconverted man to do, by way of work or device with his hand, in order to his being saved.

And therefore, we do not address him, and say to him, “Do what thy hand findeth to do, in order that thou mayest be saved by it.” That would be false doctrine and would tend to put the anxious seeker upon the wrong track. The Gospel regards the unconverted man as dead in trespasses and sins, and it tells him that, first of all, he must be quickened by a new life—he must be born again, in fact, or else he is not capable of those actions which would be acceptable with God. Neither if he were capable of them would the performance of them be the way of salvation, for we are expressly told that our salvation is not of works.

Salvation from sin and justification before God, come to us in connection with the work of the Holy Spirit within us leading us to faith in Jesus—and so salvation is entirely and alone of the grace of God. Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ are the evidences of saving grace, and are at once the gifts of God and the works of the renewed mind.

Looking at this present moment upon faith, repentance, prayer, and the seeking of the Lord, as being *our* works when God’s grace has wrought them in us, we would say to every unconverted person, “It is high time that you should begin to think about the solemn interests of your soul, for you will soon pass from the place of saving knowledge and heavenly wisdom into the shades of forgetfulness.”

Repentance is not a feeling which you may have or may not have, and yet be equally saved. You must repent of your sins or there can be no forgiveness for you. Faith in Jesus Christ is not an optional thing, so that a man may peradventure fare well at last, whether he believe or no. “He that believeth not

shall be damned” is the emphatic declaration of Christ Himself—not an invention of His disciples, but our Lord’s own declaration.

You must have faith or you cannot be saved. And you must be men of prayer, for without prayer no man shall be saved. The sinner’s first evidence of salvation is—“Behold he prayeth!” If there be no prayer, there is no grace. These things are indispensably essential.

Note well, also, that it is essential that they be done with all our might. The text says, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” Nobody ever truly repented who repented in a half-hearted way. We cannot repent in our sleep and so go to heaven dreaming. Eve was taken out of Adam when he was asleep, but our sins will not be removed in a like manner.

Neither does any man believe in Jesus without thought upon the matter—faith does not grow spontaneously and without our own consent, like nettles in the sluggard’s garden. Faith is not the fruit of a swoon, it requires the exercise of the faculties. It is a simple thing, but it is an earnest thing, a hearty thing. “If thou believest with all thy heart,” said Philip to the eunuch, “thou mayest be baptised.” It is with the heart that man believes and that sort of believing which does not exercise the heart will never save the soul.

A prayer, too—a prayer accepted in heaven, is not a dull, cold thing. It is not a saying of prayers, a using of certain holy words, just as wizards of old were accustomed to mutter their enchantments. Oh, no, it is the yearning of the spirit after God, the passionate longing of the creature to get to the Creator and to be reconciled to Him.

“The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” But without a holy violence we shall not gain entrance at the gates of mercy. Prayer is no child’s play, but requires all our might. In order to eternal life there must be faith, there must be repentance, there must be prayer, and these must all be real, deep, fervent, or else they are not such as God gives and they are not true evidences of salvation.

Moreover, the text urges us to immediate action, because death is coming. Now I feel quite sure that the bulk of the unconverted part of my congregation is made up of persons who have fully resolved one day to repent.

If I were now sent as a commissioner from Satan, and were wickedly to ask you to make a contract with the powers of darkness that you never would repent, that you never would believe in Jesus, and that you never would pray, you would start back from so dreadful a compact. You would feel as if a most profane bargain were proposed to you. You would suspect the presence of Mephistopheles or some other form of the arch-deceiver. And yet your actions practically come to the same thing. For how many years have you lived without attending to your souls?

“Oh, but we mean to!” Yes, and you meant to twenty years ago. “Oh, but we *do really* mean it, now!” Yes, and you were quite as earnest when you were but children in Sunday school. Since then you have had different times of awakening, and you have resolved and re-resolved, but you remain the same. Will it always be so?

If so, why do you start back from promising to let it be so? If you think it right to continue unbelievers, what is right today will be right tomorrow, and what has been convenient today will be as convenient tomorrow. And though you say, “Go your way for this time: when I have a more convenient season, I will send for you,” it will come to pass with you as with Felix, the convenient season will never come and you will remain unsaved.

And yet you are dying men and women! As I look you in the face, I read, “Mortality!” written across your brows. And there is not a body here but what, unless the Lord shall come, will lie in the cold grave and turn to dust. And there is not a soul here, but what shall pass into the disembodied state, and by and by, after the resurrection, shall stand before the judgment seat of God.

Yet all this while you are trifling about your best interests—not trifling about your purses, nor about your property, but about your souls, yourselves, your truest selves! Sirs, is this wise? You are not short of wit in other things—how are you then so short of it in this? If you must play at hazard, let it be with

something cheaper than your souls. If there must be risks, go risk your houses and risk your health, but risk not your souls and their everlasting interests.

The voice of wisdom says *today*—you must repent. You must believe. You must seek God in prayer, therefore, since death is near you, do it—do it with all your might and do it now. For ere long you will be where these things never can be done.

In a very short time, every unconverted person here will be in the land where there are no Sabbaths. You can waste them now—they hang heavy on some men’s hands, but you will not be galled with Sabbaths there, or worried with calls to go up to the house of God, and think about your souls.

We who are preachers of the Gospel are very troublesome to you and often make your consciences uneasy—you will not be troubled with us soon. There will be none to cry to you to have mercy on yourselves. There will none whose loving importunity shall be a weariness to you. None will annoy you with their expostulations or burden you with invitations. You will be in the land where there are no Sabbaths and no preachers.

And there will be no Bibles there. You will not say there, as you did this afternoon, “It is dry reading—that Bible.” You will not be tired of hearing promises there. No promise and no Gospel will ever salute your ears in that dark realm of despair.

And there will be no mercy seat there. You do not pray now, though God will hear you, but in a future state, prayer will be altogether out of season. God hears not the ungodly when once they are cast away from His presence. They may call, but He has said, “I will not answer. They refused me, and therefore I will mock at their calamity, I will laugh when their fear cometh.”

I pray you remember that there will be no Jesus there, no fountain filled with blood in which to wash away crimson stains. There will be no Redeemer to cover a naked soul with His righteousness. No Savior to say, “Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.” There will be no Spirit of God there to plead with your conscience and to be resisted. There will be no grace of God there to show you your sins, and to show you the atoning sacrifice.

I pray you, do have a little patience with us who preach to you, for our time is short and you will soon be rid of us. Have a little patience with your Bible, it will soon enough be out of your way! Have a little patience with your poor Christian mother who tries to bring you to the Savior, she will be far from you soon! We, who now trouble you by desiring to do you good, will soon be out of your way.

Ah, poor souls! poor souls! for you will then be out of God’s way, and out of Christ’s way, and out of His mercy’s way, banished from the Savior’s presence—and that because the kingdom of God came nigh unto you, but you put it away from you, for you would have none of the Lord’s reproofs, but you turned every one to his own way and rejected the counsels of God against yourselves.

Beloved hearers, may none of you stand in that plight. While I breathe the prayer that it may not be so, may I ask you to pray for yourselves that it will not be so. Will you let me whisper in your ear, as though I stood close by each one of you now, and I will softly and lovingly say, Repent, and believe in Jesus, *now*, with all your might. God help you, “for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.”

II. But now I have another task, and that is to set forth my text as A STIMULATING VOICE TO GOD’S OWN PEOPLE.

Beloved brethren, our text reminds you that *you have a work to do*. You have not the work to do of saving yourselves. That is done. The dear Redeemer has finished it. “It is finished,” says the Savior and that is joy for you. But now you have another work to do because you are saved. Man was not created to be idle, he was not elected to be idle, he was not redeemed to be idle, he was not quickened to be idle, and he is not sanctified by God’s grace to be idle.

Every Christian, while resting in Christ’s work for justification is himself a worker, ordained to bring forth fruit unto God’s glory. Have we been bought with the blood of Jesus and can we be idlers in our Redeemer’s vineyard? The love of Jesus to us must provoke love in our heart to Jesus and that love must show itself by deeds of service for His name. I am sure we feel that.

Do you not feel, brethren and sisters, as members of the Christian church, that you have each a work to do? You love the church and you would not like to be idle members of it. As soldiers in one great army, you eagerly desire to promote the prosperity of the host. As members of the body of Christ, you wish to perform your office to your Head and your fellow members. I know you do. The vows of Christ are on you and the vows of the church of God are on you too.

Moreover, I know that my dear brethren have a love for the truth of the Gospel. Does it not grieve you when you hear false doctrines and when you see the idols set up again—the idols which your fathers abhorred, set up in the national temples of God? Your heart is provoked to jealousy—I know it is—and you feel each one of you that you have the truth committed to your charge and that you are bound to bear testimony to it. This you wish to do most completely.

In addition, you feel that you should seek the souls of others. Here is a great city of three millions and more of people, perishing for lack of knowledge, and if you are God's people you would, if it were possible, snatch them from the flames and deliver them from the wrath to come.

Do you not feel that each one of you, according to his position, has a work appointed him? I know I have mine. There are times without number in which I have wished that I could become the pastor of some little country church, with two or three hundred hearers, over whose souls I could watch with incessant care, about whose circumstances I could fully inform myself, and with whom I could plead individually.

But here are so many, so very, very many! You are counted by thousands. What can I do with you? My soul is burdened with the weight of the work to which the Lord has called me, yet I know it is my work and it must be done.

You are parents, some of you. Do you not feel that you are called to bring up your children in the fear of God? Are you doing it? Few Christians in these days feel as they ought that as parents they are bound to instruct their children in the things of God. You are masters—do you care for your servants? Have you no desire to see your households ordered aright? Oh, I trust you are not such heathen men and publicans that you care not for your own households.

You live in neighborhoods where you are brought into contact with your fellow men of all sorts. Do you not know that you are put there as lights in a dark place, as handfuls of salt in the midst of putrefaction? Have you never felt that you are debtors? Do you not feel it your duty to battle against error, your duty to coming generations to stand steadfast to the truth today, which if it fall today, may not rise again for many a century?

Have you felt that your obligations extend as far as your influence extends, and that if you are not serving God with your influence, you are doing harm with it? If you are a Christian, you are like an oil lamp, which, if it does not yield light, gives forth a foul smell as its wick smokes. You are doing mischief if you are not doing good.

You set an example of idleness and indifference to the things of God to sinners, which will make them say, "There is nothing in religion! Why should we make any stir about it, when even these who profess to enjoy it do not live as if they were in earnest, and care not whether our souls are lost or saved?"

Each woman here, as well as each man, if converted, should feel, "I have a work to do for God." If you are converted as a child, sing your hosannas to the King. And if you are born to God in your declining years, still bring forth fruit in old age. Even if you are confined to the bed of weakness, there is a something to be done by you before you enter heaven and the voice of the text says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." That is a most weighty point and none may question it. *All believers have a work to do.*

The second thing is this—Our text indicates *the wisest course to follow*. It is—*Do it*, do it at once, do not talk about it, do not regret that you have not done it, and sit down and fret yourself, because you have done so little in the past. It is little use crying over the spilt milk of your past life. If you have not done what you should, up, man, and do what you can! "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it."

Many prefer to find fault with the way in which other people do their work. Yes, and if you look round the Tabernacle, you will see a great many imperfections in the preacher, and in the deacons, and in the elders, and in the members, and possibly none of the workers among us do their work exactly as your superior wisdom would dictate. There are persons here who have done a great deal of good, but you have a notion that you could tell them how to do it in a better fashion, though you do nothing yourself.

Oh, sir, have done with it! Go, sir, and do your own work, and I will do mine in my own way. I do not suppose you will do my work better than I do it, if you try, and I do not suppose I can do yours better than you can do it, if I take your place. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, *do it.*”

Our text exhorts us to *do our work now*. Do not talk about doing it tomorrow, do it at once. The impetus of the text carries the thought as far as that, seeing that death may come tonight, do it now, even *now*.

What wonders would have been done, if tomorrows were todays! What great achievements have passed through that young man’s imagination! He has often pictured how useful he will be. His day-dream has been so very vivid that he has mistaken the will for the deed, and complacently reviewed his fine resolutions as if they had already been carried out. He has felt himself to be somebody on the strength of what he was going to do.

What draughts men make upon the future and how hopefully they reckon upon meeting them when the time comes. Like insolvent traders, they maintain their present position by discounting bills which they will never honor, and live as if they were rich, when all their wealth is represented by the wretched forgeries of their own false promises.

Oh, sirs, do not promise to do anything tomorrow—leave off promising, and come to real actions. Never mind what you will do next year, what will you do *now*? “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it,” and do it at once and on the spot. If I knew that my hearers had resolved to be very diligent next week or next month, I should conclude that my sermon was wasted upon them.

The fact is, if the sermon tells, a man feels uneasy, and begins to put his fingers into his pocket, and his thoughts into his heart, and he says, “What can I do before I sleep tonight? I do not feel comfortable in idleness. Is there not some poor person I could visit? Is not there some poor sinner who is going the wrong road whom I might perhaps lead aright?” An inward impulse makes the man feel as though he walked on hot coals till he has done something for the Lord. Do not quench these impulses, if the thing be good, do it—do it now.

But Solomon says, “*Do it with thy might.*” There are several ways of doing the same action. One man will do a thing and he *has* done it. Another has performed the same action, but has practically done nothing. What a difference there is in preaching! Words may be uttered in a lukewarm manner and produce no result, while by another preacher nothing better shall be said, but it shall be said earnestly and the effect will be marvelous.

One hates to see a workman finicking with a hammer, touching the nails as though he loved them too well to hurt them, but one likes to see a workman driving his nails home, working as though he meant it. The masters of assemblies should remember this. If a thing is worth doing, let it be done well. If it is not worth doing, let it alone.

Every man who preaches should aim at preaching his best sermon every time he mounts the pulpit. Every Sunday school teacher ought to teach his best. Every evangelist in the street ought to preach up to his highest level, if it be only to a dozen. Jesus Christ ought never to have our second best—never. Our best is all too poor for Him, let us never put Him off with our inferior fruits. Do it—“Do it with thy *might.*”

And once more, do it *all*, for the text says, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it.” That is to say, do it all. Do not pick it over and say, “All these things I could do for Christ, but I shall only do a part of them. Here is a duty which I could perform with my gloves on, like a gentleman. I could do this without trouble, labor, or expense, and earn a good deal of credit by it. This is the kind of thing I will do.”

Do you think God will accept such obedience as that? Man, do it, if it stains you from head to foot with mire, if it brings contempt upon you, and the universal hiss of all your fellows. Whatsoever—*whatsoever* God appoints you to do, do it right straight through. Servants, like beggars, must not be choosers, but what their masters appoint, they must do. And with such a Master, who never can appoint us a dishonorable task, it is a shame that we should think any service too hard. “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it,” and do it at once.

The pith of the text lies in the next thought, namely, that *there is an argument to every earnest Christian for intense zeal in the fact of the certain approach of death*—“For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.” Unless the Lord shall come, we shall all die, and that quickly. Life at the longest is very short.

When I consider how many claims there are upon a Christian and how much a loving heart desires to do, and then think how short is the space of time into which we must need crowd all, I am depressed in spirit, but sternly resolute to condense much work into small space. The heathen said, “Art is long and life is short.” But I will venture to alter the sentence and say, “The service of God is long and life is short”—far too short for us to perform all our desire.

What, then, is the argument from the shortness of life, but just this—work for God with all your might. If you have so little time, waste none of it. If there be so small a space entrusted to you, suffer no wastes and by-ends, but fill up the narrow space with precious things—gold, silver, and precious stones—holy works done in earnest for Jesus Christ.

The work girl sat in her little room and her fingers flew as she passed the needle rapidly, because she had but that tiny bit of candle and feared her task might prove longer than her light. May we not also fear that our work for Jesus may prove greater than the time in which we may perform it? At any rate, we cannot afford to throw away a moment.

Remember solemnly that life may end in a single moment. How suddenly death comes across our path! It came almost into my house this morning, for I was scarcely up from my bed before I was told that a little child belonging to my coachman had died in an instant, though she had seemed to be in perfect health the moment before.

The thought came to me with power, “It might have been the master instead of the servant’s child.” I know no reason why it should have been the little one than myself. Sudden death has perhaps come as near to you lately. It is not a very unusual thing to see death in the street in such a city as this or to hear of it in the common talk of the day.

My friend, would you like to die at this moment? “No,” say you, “I have many things I would wish to finish.” Finish them, brother, finish them at once. Set your house in order, for you must die and not live. “I should like to have prayed with my children more earnestly than I have ever done.” Go home and do it, for you may never have another opportunity.

“I should like to have my Sunday school class around me once more before I die, to tell them about the Savior more earnestly than I did this afternoon.” Dear brother, dear Sister, avail yourself of your next opportunity in the class—teach as though you might never teach again.

Say to yourself, “What is there I have left undone? I will do it immediately. What is there that is half done, that wants finishing? I must finish it at once. What is there that I have done so badly, that if I went to heaven I might almost wish to come back to set it right? Let me finish it now. What is there that I should like to amend? Let me make amends now.”

I have read of Dr. Chalmers that one evening he stayed with a company of friends at a gentleman’s house and they spent the evening, as we are too much in the habit of doing, very pleasantly, but not very profitably, talking upon general subjects, not at all to be forbidden, but at the same time not much to be commended. There was among the number a Highland chief, who had attracted Dr. Chalmers’ notice and he had talked with him, but nothing was said about the things of God.

In the middle of the night a bitter cry was heard in the hospitable habitation and there was a rush to the bedroom, where it was found that the Highland chief was in the agonies of death. Dr. Chalmers

expressed (and he was not a man whom we could blame for laxity in that direction) his bitter regret that he had allowed that last evening of the man's life to pass over without having spoken to him concerning the things of God.

The regret was most proper, but it had been better if it had never been necessary. Such regret may have occurred to ourselves—do not let it occur again. If *you* do not die, the person whom you are concerned about may die, therefore, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it," for death may come on a sudden.

Remember solemnly that while we have been speaking in this Tabernacle, we have been spending a part of our allotted time. Every time the clock ticks, our time grows less, and less, and less. I have a great love for old-fashioned hour-glasses, because they make you see the time go, as the sands run. I remember in Milan Cathedral seeing the sun travel along the ecliptic line on the floor of the cathedral and I realized time's ceaseless motion. Every minute our life-candles are shorter. Every pulse makes the number of pulses less.

Quick, then, man! Quick! Quick! Quick! Death is behind you. Can you not hear his footfall? He pursues you as the hound its prey. Quick! Quick with your work and your service, for soon may his skeleton hand be laid upon your shoulder, to palsy your hand of skill and silence your tongue of eloquence forever.

And let us recollect that when we die there is no return to the field of labor. I have known persons (and this is talking about a very commonplace thing, but it may be a very useful thing), I have known husbands who meant to make their wills in a proper way and to provide for their wives as they should do, but they have died, and the will has been unmade, and the future life of the wife has been full of a sorrow which might have been avoided by the proper use of the pen.

Do not leave anything undone which ought to be done. Leave nothing undone which may be for the good of others, for you cannot come back to do it. Anything you have to do for the glory of God, get it done at once, for you will not be able to return.

I fancy for a moment how I should preach to you if I should die tonight, and should be allowed to come back to preach to you once more. I know how you would listen. It would be a very strange sermon, but you would catch every word, I am sure. I know how I should preach. I should say, "Blessed be God for letting me come back to have one more trial with my unconverted hearers, for perhaps they may yet be led to Jesus."

I do not think I would have anything to say to you who are converted, that morning, if I had that opportunity. I would leave the ninety and nine and go after the sheep that is gone astray. I should preach to the lost one, and salt my words with tears and burn my lips with flaming love. Yet that is exactly how we ought to preach always.

Now put it to yourselves. If you had to die, and were permitted to come back to speak once more to your children, to your neighbors, to your Sunday school class, or to anyone else committed to your care, how would you address them? Do it just that way now, with the same ardor, zeal, and tenderness.

Do you say you cannot? That is very likely. Ask God to help you. His grace waits to aid you. It is what you want and what you must have in order to succeed. Seek it, seek it at His hands who gives liberally and upbraids not. In such fashion must every one of us go about the work allotted to us, because there is no work, nor device in the grave to which we are journeying.

Our text has a peculiar bearing upon some persons. May I be happy enough to catch their ears. There are persons here present, perhaps, who have a very heavy charge upon them and to them the text speaks. I am one of that company. With the heavy charge of this church, the college, and the orphanage, and I know not what besides, I hear a voice saying to me, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." It would ill become me to loiter. Above all men I must labor.

Some of you have wealth. Permit the text to speak to you also—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," for you can not take your money with you, neither can you serve God with it when

you are gone, “for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

Some of you possess much influence, for you are large employers. And I know some—I need not go into details—whom God has placed in peculiar positions, where they lead and guide the minds of others. I charge you by the living God, do not let the blood of any man’s soul be on your skirts. Quit yourselves with holy diligence before Him who will weigh you in the scales before long, lest it be said of you, “You are weighed in the balances and found wanting.” By the blood that bought you, I beseech you, if the Lord has trusted you with ten talents, put them out to interest, lest a tenfold judgment come upon you.

I know not how to speak as I would, but I feel I am speaking most of all to myself here. I charge you, O my heart, be faithful to your trust. It were better for me that I had never been born than that I preach to these people carelessly or keep back any part of my Master’s truth. Better to have been a devil than a preacher playing fast and loose with God’s Word and by such means working the ruin of the souls of men. To other preachers I say what I have said to myself, and to each one of you whom God has put in solemn charge—see to it that what He gives you to do, you do with all your might.

Next, I speak to those of you who are advanced in years. If you have hitherto done much for Christ, be thankful for it. But if you have not—if you have loitered, oh, my dear brethren, may I, who am as it were but a youth compared with you, may I take an old man by the hand and say—“Dear brother, there can be for you here, in the order of nature, but a short time to serve God in. Do immediately with all your might what you can do.

“Let your last days, if they have not the vigor of your youth, at any rate have a yet more eager desire for God’s glory. It would seem a strange thing for a man to get nearer to heaven and to be less heavenly minded, to be more ripe for glory as to his age and to be less mature in grace. O that you may live while you live and bear a good testimony during life’s eventide.”

Do I speak to those who have been lately converted and are past middle age? At what a rate, my dear brothers and sisters, ought you to live! Remember, Martin Luther was converted quite in middle life, but he did a great work before he died, and many a distinguished servant of God has begun late, but has worked well and made a good day’s work of it before his sun went down. There is no reason why *you* should not copy the example. God can do much by you, though your time be short.

Then I also address myself to those of delicate constitutions who may be here. Some of you must often be reminded of death by the trembling you feel in your own bodies. I do not exhort you to do anything that would injure your constitutions by imprudence, for God does not require us to be suicides, but whatever service it is in your power to do, do it, so that there may not be mingled with the sorrow of your future sickness any reflection upon yourself, because when you had the power to serve God you did not use it.

I would also speak to those who have been the subjects of high impulses and noble thoughts. There are choice spirits in the world, into whose ears the Holy Spirit whispers grand designs such as He does not reveal to all men. Here and there He finds a soul that He makes congenial to Himself, and then He inspires it with great wishes, deep longings, and grand designs for glorifying God.

Do not quench them, brother. Do not starve them by holding them back, but as death is coming, do what is in you and do it with your might. No man knows what God means to do through his agency, for oftentimes the very feeblest have conceived the greatest purposes.

John Pounds and his ragged-school—who was John Pounds? A poor cobbler. Robert Raikes, with his Sunday school—who was Robert Raikes? Nobody in particular, but nevertheless Sunday schools have come to something. *You* may have a sublime conception in your soul. Do not strangle it—nurse the heaven-born thought for God, and the first opportunity you can find, carry out the idea to its practical issues and throw your might into it.

Methinks there must be some young Christian here who loves his Master and who means to do something for Him before he dies. Brother, what you do, do quickly. Do I not address some young man of a noble spirit who feels, “I could be wealthy. I could gain a position in my profession. I could become

famous, and get honor for myself, but from this hour I will lay all down at the foot of the cross, and lay myself out for the good of souls, and the glory of God.”

Give me your hand, my brother, for you and I are of one mind in this. But I charge you go and do it. Do not dream, but work. Do not listen to the sirens which would enchant you by their music and draw you from the rough sea of duty. Launch forth in God’s name, yield yourself up to the winds of heaven, and they will bear you straight on in the course of devoted service. May the Lord help you to do with your might what you find to do.

And lastly, there is a peculiar voice in the text to those who will die in the next few days—*those here present, I say, who will die within the next few days*. “Well,” say you, “and who are they?” “Ah,” say I, “that I cannot tell you.” It may be the speaker, and it may be you into whose eyes the speaker’s eyes are gazing now. Here are within this house tonight not less, I suppose, than six thousand persons. And according to the averages of human life, a certain number of us will, in all probability, be in another world within a very short space of time—say, within a year. Yes, and to some one of us, the angel may be sent tonight!

Now, to that man or to that woman, the voice of the text is very strong—“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” You have only three days to live. You have only a week to live. You have only a fortnight to live. You have only three weeks to live. Finish, then, your labor for your Lord.

“Ah,” say you, “if I were that man, I should be very busy the next three weeks and very earnest in prayer.” As you do not know but what you may be that man, go act in such a manner. Set your house in order, draw near to God. Seek to glorify His name. Live in the bosom of Christ, and whether you die or not, it will make no difference to you, for you to live will be Christ, and to die will be gain, and so you will be satisfied whichever way it may be.

O brethren, we have not, most of us, begun to live yet. I feel very often like the chicken in the shell, which has chipped its shell a little, and begun to see that there is a great world outside. We have not as yet begun to serve God as He ought to be served. The divinely born manhood within us, the divine life which God infuses, is it not sadly clogged and hampered? May God set us free, and raise us up to the highest standard of a consecrated life, and His shall be the praise for evermore. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ECCLESIASTES 9

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.