

WORK
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A SERMON
DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 21, 1867
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AT THE SURREY CHAPEL, BLACKFRIARS ROAD

*“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day:
the night cometh, when no man can work.”*
John 9:4

You observe that a very speculative question had been put to our Lord, and His answer to that very speculative question is, “*I must work.*” His disciples wished to know something about the mysterious fact that some persons are born in an unhappy condition—blind, or deaf, or dumb—on what account they were sent into the world under such disadvantageous circumstances.

Would you not yourselves like to know? Do you not wish that the Savior had expounded all that mystery? There are so many points of controversy connected with that question, that He could scarcely have had a more suggestive topic. Surely He might have enlightened us far more than Socrates or Plato. Why did He not, at once, with such a noble opportunity, plunge into the labyrinth of metaphysics, or begin to expound predestination, and open up the points in it which agree or disagree with free agency?

Here was a noble opportunity for interpreting all the marvels of divine sovereignty and natural suffering. Why did He not at once open all this up to the people? No, but with a very short answer He turns to them and says, “*I must work; you may think; you may talk; you may argue, but I must work. You may give yourselves up, if you know no better, to the inferior occupation of jangling about words, but I must work. Nobler calls I have to obey than those which come to your carnal ears.*”

We gather, then, that the Savior has a greater respect for work than He has for speculation. That when He comes into the world, He will go to all the mighty thinkers, and the gentlemen who are constantly producing new ideas, and wonderful points of subtlety, and put them into the scale as so much rubbish.

But that when He finds a single worker, a poor widow who has given her two mites, a poor saint who has spoken for Christ, and been the means of the conversion of a soul, He will take up these works which were done for Him as precious grains of costly gold. We may say of the field of enterprise and work for Christ, as of the land of Havilah, “The gold of that land is good,” and Christ thinks it to be so. He estimates the work of faith and labor of love done for Him as of great price.

I. I shall ask your attention to the text, taking and keeping close to the very words of it. And the thing we observe first, is, A NECESSITY TO LABOR—“*I must work.*”

With Christ it was not, “I may if I will,” not, “I can if I like,” not the mere possibility and the mere potentiality of work, but an imperious necessity—“*I must.*” He could not help Himself. If I may use such words concerning one who is no less divine than He was human, He was under restraint. He was bound. He was compelled.

The cords which bound Him, however, were the cords of His deity. *They* were the cords of love which bound Him who is love. “*I must work.*” *It was because He loved the sons of men so well* that He could not sit still and see them perish. He could not come down from heaven and stand here robed in our mortal flesh, and be an impassive, careless, loitering spectator of so much evil, so much misery.

His heart beat high with desire. He thirsted to be doing good, and His greatest and grandest act, His sacrifice of Himself, was a baptism with which He had to be baptized, and He was straitened until it was accomplished. His great soul within Him felt as if it could not be easy. It was like the troubled sea that cannot rest. Each of His thoughts was like a mighty wave that could not be still.

His whole soul was like a volcano when it begins to swell with lava, and wants to vent. He must let His soul run out in hot consecration and devotion to the cause of those whom He came to save. “I *must*,” He says. “I *must* work.”

Not only was it the love within which made the compulsion, but it was also *the sorrow without* which compelled Him. That blind man had touched the secret chord that set the Savior’s soul at work. If that blind man had not been there, or rather, if it had been possible for the Savior to forget the cases of misery which existed around Him, then He might, perhaps, have been quiet.

But because always before His soul He saw the multitudes perishing as sheep without a shepherd—because, far more vividly than you and I have ever done, He had realized the value of a soul and the horror of a soul being lost, He felt as though He could not be still. “I *must* work,” said He.

Fancy yourselves, my brethren, standing on the beach when a ship is being broken on the rocks. If there were anything that you could do towards the rescue of the mariners, would you not feel within yourselves, “I *must* work”?

Why, it is said that sometimes when the crowd sees a vessel going to pieces, and hear the cries of the drowning men, they seem as if they were all seized with madness, because, not being able to give vent to their kindness and brotherly feeling towards the perishing ones by any practical activity, they know not what to do, and are ready to sacrifice their own lives if they might but do something to save others. Men feel that they must work in the presence of so dreadful a need.

And Christ saw this world of ours quivering over the pit. He saw it floating, as it were, in an atmosphere of fire, and He wished to quench those flames, and make the world rejoice, and therefore He must work to that end. He could not, He could not possibly rest and be quiet. He knew not how to take His ease even at night.

*“Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervour of His prayer.”*

And when He was faint and weary, and needed to eat, He would not eat because the zeal of God’s house had eaten Him up, and it was His meat and His drink to do the will of Him that sent Him. The love within and the need without acted towards one common end, and formed an intense necessity, so that the Savior must work.

Moreover, you must remember that *He had come into this world with an aim which was not to be achieved without work, but which was a passion with Him, and therefore He must work because He desired to achieve His end.* The salvation of the many whom the Father had given to Him, the gathering together in one those who were scattered abroad, the finding of the lost sheep, the restoration of the fallen—He *must* accomplish these objects.

Eternal purposes must be fulfilled. His own surety engagements must be honored. He had loved His own which were in the world, and He loved them so that He could not leave the world until all His work should be completely done, and He should be able to say, “It is finished.” So, hopefully looking forward to the recompense of the reward, anticipating the glory of bringing men from the thralldom of their sins, and conducting them into the tower of salvation, He longed and panted to work.

The soldier who is desirous of promotion, scorns peace and longs for war, that he may have an opportunity of ascending in the ranks. The young man who wants to carve out a position is not satisfied to vegetate in a country village. He wants work, wants it because he knows that work is the way of rising in the world.

It is right enough, if a man has a just ambition, that he should seek the means by which that ambition may be attained. Our Savior’s ambition was to be crowned with the gems of the souls which He had saved, to be the great friend of man, the great Redeemer of mankind, and consequently He must work. He must be men’s Savior. He cannot be their Savior without working, and therefore, the passion within,

the need without, and the great and all-absorbing aim which drew Him onward, furnished three cords which bound Him, like a sacrifice, to the horns of the altar. "I must work."

Now, brethren, without enlarging upon a theme so tempting, let us ask whether you and I feel the same compulsion. For if we are as Christ was in the world, if we are worthy to be called His followers at all, we must be compelled with His compulsion, we must be weighted with His load. *Do we feel as if we MUST work?*

Oh, there are so many professors who feel that they must feed! Nay, they must be fed. They do not even get so far into activity as to desire to feed, but they must be fed as with a spoon—and they desire to have certain precious Gospel truths broken down and dissolved into pap for them, and put into their mouths, while they lie in bed, almost too idle to digest the food after they have received it.

There are some other Christians who feel as if they must always find fault with other people's work, as if it were a passion with them to criticize and judge. Many besides are there who must be excused from working. They will dodge anyhow to get out of any task. They count it no small thing if they can escape giving to any charitable or Christian object, or if they can avoid exposing their own precious selves to any kind of sorrow or toil in the service of the Lord Jesus.

I trust *we* are not of such a cowardly spirit as this. If we are, then let us leave off bearing the name of the Gospel. As one said, "Either be a Stoic, or give up being called a Stoic." So I would either be a Christian, or else give up being called a Christian. This is not to be a Christian—to shun work for Christ. I do trust, however, that we have felt this compulsion—"I must work."

Why *must* I work? That I may be saved? Oh, no! God forbid! I am saved, if I am a Christian—saved, not through my own works, but through Christ's works. I have heard the Gospel which tells me that there is life for a look at the crucified One. I have looked to Christ and I am saved.

Then why must I work? Why, *because* I am saved. If He bought me with His blood, I must spend myself for Him who bought me. If He sought me by His Spirit, I must give myself to Him who sought me. If He has taught me by His grace, I must tell others what I have learned from Him. The motive which constrains to Christian activity is not so base and selfish a one as that of obtaining heaven thereby.

Why, even a Romanist (a masterly Romanist however—strange anomaly that so sweet a song should come from so foul a cage of unclean birds!) could sing—

*"My God, I love Thee; not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love Thee not
Must burn eternally.*

*"Thou, O my Saviour, Thou didst me
Upon the cross embrace;
For me didst bear the nails and spear,
And manifold disgrace."*

Our love is caused by Christ. His love to us makes us feel that we must work for Him. When we were little children, a kind friend made us very happy one day, and yet a second and a third time did that same friend make our little hearts leap for joy. And when we went to bed we said, before we fell asleep, "I wish we could do something for Mrs. So and so. I wish I could give Mrs. So and so something."

Perhaps we had no money. but the next morning we got a few flowers out of the garden, and we set off so pleased to take our little bouquet to our kind friend, and we said, "Please accept this little present, for you have been so kind to me."

We felt as if we could not help it, and we were only afraid lest our little present should not be received. And we felt that if we could have done ten, twenty, or fifty times as much, we should have thought it all too little. But it was our happiness to do what we did, and to wish to do more.

The same spirit prompts us to wish to do something for the Lord Jesus. Oh! will He accept anything from me? Will He let me try to increase His glory? Will He allow me to feed His lambs, or to be a shepherd to His sheep, or to look after three or four girls in a Sunday school, or to watch over one child as for Him, or to give a tract away, or to subscribe of my substance to any of His interests?

Oh, then, how good it is of Him to let me! How I wish I could do more! O that I had a thousand hands to work for Him, a thousand hearts and a thousand tongues, that I might spend all for Him! I hope you feel, brethren, that the love of Christ which is in you makes you say, "I must work."

Then, if you live in this neighborhood, and most of us, I suppose, do live this side of the water, can you go through the courts and streets, can you go into the darker parts of the neighborhood, those close to here which you know, without feeling, "I must work"?

I wish, sometimes, that some of you people, some of you who have got on tolerably well in the world, and who live a little farther out in the country, where the air gets a little purer—I wish you could be made to sniff sometimes the air in which poverty always lives in this city of ours, and I think you would feel then as if you must work.

Our city missionaries must sometimes feel marvelously enthusiastic, I should think, from the sights which they see and the sounds which they hear. They must feel as if they must work, for men are dying, hell is filling, the Gospel is not taken to the people, and the people do not come to the Gospel, and the multitude go their way as though there were no Christ, and no heaven, and would to God I could have said, no hell after they died. But there is their portion, and they live here as if they were preparing themselves for inheriting it.

May we get, then, to understand, by God's grace, the first part of the text, "I must work."

II. Now, secondly, let us notice that here is A SPECIALITY OF WORK—"I must work the works of him that sent me."

There are plenty of people who say, "I must work," but there are very few who say, "I must work the works of him who sent me." Oh! the work, the brain-work and head-work that is done in London to get rich! It is very proper, of course. If a man wants to get on in the world, he must work. It is very well. I would not say to any young man, "Be idle." If you want to prosper in anything, throw your whole soul into it, and work as hard as you can.

Many, many people feel the compulsion of working to get on or working to support a family. Very proper indeed, but I need not exhort you to do it, for I dare say, as honest and moral men, you will feel that compulsion without any exhortation from me. Some work in order to get fame. Well, that is not so bad a thing in its way. But I need not speak about it, for those who choose that path will fall into it without my advice.

But here is the point, "I must work the works of him that sent me." Christ came into this world neither to be a King among kings, nor to be famous among the famed, but to be a Servant of servants, and to fulfill the will of God. "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God." He came to do it, and having come, He did it.

Observe the character of the work which Christ performed. It was not a work of His own devising. It was not a work which He had set to Himself of His own will, but it was a work which had been ordained of old and settled by His Father. "I came not to do my will, but the will of him that sent me."

Observe too, that Christ made no picking nor choosing about this work. He says, "I must work the *works*," not some of them, but all of them, whether they should be works of drudgery or works of honor, bearing reproach for the truth, or bearing testimony to the truth; works of suffering Himself or works of relief to those who suffered; works of silent secret groaning, or works of ministry in which He rejoiced in spirit; works of prayer on the mountainside, or works of preaching on the mountain's brow.

Christ had given Himself up unreservedly to do for God whatever the Father should bid Him do. All these works were works of mercy, works of soul-saving, unselfish work, works not selfish or egotistical. He saved others, Himself He could not save. They were not works by which He increased His own treasure, He distributed to the needy. Not works by which He lifted Himself up, He condescended to

men of low estate. Not works by which He earned honor among men, He gave His back to the smiters, the reproaches of them that reproach fell upon Him. His works were works of pure philanthropy to men, and of entire consecration to God.

I wonder whether you and I, as Christians, have ever fully and thoroughly realized a compulsion to do such works as these? “I must work the works of him that sent me.” O my brethren, it is so easy to work our own works, even in spiritual things, but it is so difficult to be brought to this—“I must work the works of him that sent me.”

Understand me, there are ten thousand actions good in themselves, which it might not be right for me to choose as my avocation in life. I know a great many persons who think it is their business to preach, but who had much better make it their business to hear for a little while longer. We know some who think it is their business to take the headship of a class, but who might be amazingly useful by giving away some tracts, or by taking a seat in a class themselves for a little while.

The fact is, that we are not to pick and choose the path of Christian service which we are to walk in, but we are to do the work of Him that sent us. And our object should be, as there is so much work to be done, to find out what part of the work the Master would have us do. Our prayer should be, “Show me what You would have me do”—have *me* to do in particular—not what is generally right, but what is particularly right for me to do.

My servant might, perhaps, think it a very proper thing for her to arrange my papers for me in my study, but I should feel but a very slender amount of gratitude to her. If, however, she will have a cup of coffee ready for me early in the morning, when I have to go out to a distant country town to preach, I shall be much more likely to appreciate her services.

So, some friends think, “How I could get on if *I* were in such and such a position, if I were made a deacon, if I were elevated to such a post.” Go your way, and work as your Master would have you. You will do better where He puts you than you will where you put yourself. You are no servant, indeed, at all, when you pick and choose your service, for the very spirit, the very essence of service consists in saying, “Not my will, but thine be done. I wait for orders from the throne—teach me what You would have me to do.”

On this point, however, there is, perhaps, less need of insisting than there is of insisting upon the other. We must feel ourselves impelled to some form or other of spiritual effort, which shall be unselfish, for the good of others, and I ask you Christian men and women, *Do you all feel this?*

Oh! what wonders were done by two or three hundred persons after our Lord went up to heaven. Why, they were enough for the evangelization of a world! Here is this great city of London of ours, with its three million and more of inhabitants—I know not how many Christian souls there may be in it, but there must be many thousands, and yet up to this day, we have been insufficient for the evangelization of this city.

For, instead of our meeting its demands, it is a simple matter of statistics, that ten years ago London was better provided for than, with all our efforts, it is now! And is this to be endured? If there were a necessity for this, we might with weeping bow down to the grim necessity. But as there is none, as it is with ourselves that the fault must be, as it still remains with us, let us ask, What is the cause of the mischief?

It is this—that *all Christians have not learned yet the truth that each Christian is personally to do the work of Him that sent him.* We are not to depute our ministers to do it, nor to think that we can discharge the service of God by proxy, but each man and woman personally must give himself and herself to the service of Christ, feeling, each one, that he or she can read this text for himself—“*I, I, I, must work the works of Him that sent me. I must do it if nobody else does. I must—I feel a compulsion. I must in some form or other give myself to those works which are peculiarly the works of God, who sends His people into this wicked world on purpose that they may do them.*”

May I say here, by way of illustration, to prove to you that progress is not impossible if we were but willing to make the effort, that probably there is no religious movement in England which is so

formidable, which has advanced so rapidly, as that movement of Ritualism, which we sometimes call Puseyism! It is advancing wonderfully, and it is advancing in two quarters—two quarters which ought to shame us forever, because they are the two most inaccessible quarters.

That is to say, you shall find rampant Puseyism laying hold upon the upper classes, getting into the drawing rooms, which we thought could not be entered, storming what we thought to be impregnable citadels of rank and lofty respectability, and finding its victims and its votaries there, and finding them in such a style, and getting them into its grip so wholly and completely, that the substance of the rich is given far more thoroughly to their false faith than our substance amongst us is given to our true faith.

Then, next, the greatest advance of this system has been made among the poorest of the poor, those people who, it is said, will not come to hear the Gospel. Oh, but that is a lie, for they will come to hear the Gospel if the Gospel is but preached so that they can understand it. But it is to the scandal of many Christian churches that these poor people will not go to them, and yet these very same people are affected by this Puseyism, ay, and get converted to it, too, and go down upon their knees as earnest worshippers, and are thorough believers in the whole thing!

Now, how is this done? Well, I will tell you. It is in this way—the priests who believe in this thing, do honestly believe in it. They believe it to be the truth, and they hold it with a grip that is not relaxed, and they are not ashamed to suffer reproach for it, but come out boldly in their own colors, not hiding, and playing, and shuffling, as some others have done, ashamed to confess what they have done, but they have come out boldly.

And let me say, all honor to them for the honorable courage they have displayed in their dishonorable work! I like to give the devil his due, and if you see courage even in a foe, you can but let it be called courage. I like, I must say I reverence, the courage of those who will stand up for Rome in the teeth of a prevalent Protestantism, as well as the courage of the Protestant who stands up against Rome in the midst of a prevalent Romanism.

Now, if they have done all this, and they have done it very much through the real earnestness of the priests, have we not some such courage and earnestness as that among our ministers? I hope, that if the ministers have failed here, each one will begin to correct himself, and that we shall become as earnest and as bold in our cause as ever they can be in theirs.

But the next thing is this—*they make all their members and all their admirers earnest missionaries*. You shall find them spreading their little tracts, dropping their books, saying a word to those young men in the shop, talking a little to that young lady in the drawing room. You shall find them everywhere sending round their sisters of mercy.

A minister I know went into the house of one of his members, and said, “There is a Sister of Mercy going round near here, does she call at this house?” “Oh, yes,” was the answer, “certainly. She goes into every room in the house.” “Well,” said he, “but I did not know that I dared to go into every room. Does the Sister of Mercy really go into every room here in the house?” “Oh! yes, sir, and into every room in the street.” “Well, how is that?” “Oh! I don’t know, sir, but she gets in somehow or other.”

And why should not we get in somehow or other? What they can do, why cannot we do. Shall they do after their fashion what we dare not do and cannot do? Oh! it is a fine thing that the soldiers of the Pope should be braver than the soldiers of the cross. Shall it be so? Oh! God forbid.

May the old spirit, and the old valor, and the old enthusiasm come back to the Christian church, and there is enough to save London yet, there is enough for us to send back the tide of Popery yet. There is enough yet to vindicate the Gospel, and to show that it is yet a thing of power, mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Only we must come to this, that our work, our activity, must drive itself into the special channel of doing the work of Him that has sent us, and doing it at once.

III. Thirdly, as there is a necessity for work, and a specialty of effort, so there is A LIMITATION OF TIME, “I must work the work of him that sent me *while it is day*.”

This limitation of time sounds very weightily to my ears, coming as it does from the lips of Christ. Jesus Christ, the immortal, the ever-living, yet says, “*I, I must work while it is day!*” My brethren, if anyone could have postponed work, it was our eternal Lord. See Him. He is in heaven, but He is still working. There are a thousand ways in which He can serve His church.

We believe not in the intercession of the saints. They cannot work for us in that land of rest after they quit this world of labor. But we do believe in the intercession of the saints’ Master. He can pray for us still. The Head of the church is always active, and yet He said, “*I must work while it is day!*” Then, see with what force it comes to you and to me, for we can do nothing more with our hands when once the turf has covered our head! All as to work is over then, so heed it as an omen.

That word is full of significance which you hear—“while it is day.” How long will it be “day” with us? Some days are very short. These wintry days are soon over. My young sister, my young brother, your day may be very brief. *Work while you have it.* Is there a sign of consumption? Work, then. Do not make that an excuse for idleness, but an argument for labor. Work while it *is* day.

Or if there be no such sign, remember that still your sun may go down before it reaches its noon. O young man, wait not till your powers are ripe and your opportunities are large, but say, “*I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day.*” You may never live to be one and twenty. Oh! be a soul-winner before you are a man! Dear sister, seek to be a mother in Israel, a matron for Jesus Christ while yet you are but a girl. Seek to win souls for Jesus while you yourselves are but lambs in Jesus’ fold. “While it is day.”

Some of you are getting grey and your day cannot be very much longer. Eventide has come and the shadows are drawn out. Now, you must not make the infirmities of old age an excuse for being altogether out of harness. The Master asks not from you what you cannot render, but such strength as you still have, give to Him “while it is day,” feeling that you must work the works of Him that sent you.

“While it is day—while it is day.” If I had a prophet’s eye, and could pick out the persons here for whom the bell will toll during the next month, how this text might suit them! “While it is day!” Dear mother, if you had only another thirty days—another month—to live and you knew it—how you would pray for your children during that month! How you would talk to those dear boys about their souls, though you have never taken them aside and spoken to them yet!

Dear Sunday school teachers, if you knew that you should only go to school one, or two, or three, or four more Sundays, how solemnly would you now begin to talk with those children in your class! And yet, remember, this is the way in which we ought to live and work always. You know Baxter’s words—

*“I preach as tho’ I ne’er might preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men.”*

Let us do the same. Then, supposing you should live ten, twenty, or thirty years longer, yet how brief those years are. And when they are gone, they seem but as yesterday! So let me even ring the bell myself. Let me sound the text like a knell in your ear, “While it is day! While it is day! While it is day!”

And having thus reminded you of your own mortality, let me give the text another sound, as I bid you remember that the “day” may soon be passed, not to you, but *to the objects of your care*. Let me, if you would loiter, remind you that there are two lives here to be insured—another life as well as your own.

“While it is day.” You cannot speak, you will not have an opportunity of speaking, to some people in London tomorrow, *for they will die tonight*. It is impossible that you should have an opportunity of speaking to two thousand of them next week, for they will die this week. the bills of mortality will demand the insatiable hunger of Death will call for them. They must go. Oh, work, then, “While it is day” with them.

And with some it is “day” only for a very short time, even though they may live long. For with some men, their “day” is only the one occasion when they go to a place of worship. The one occasion when

there is sickness in the house and the missionary enters. The one occasion when a Christian comes across their path and has a fair opportunity of speaking to them of Christ.

Many of our friends here in London have not a day of mercy, in a certain sense. They do not hear the Gospel. It does not come across their track. A bishop once said, that it would have been well for some people in London if they had been born in Calcutta, for if they had been born in Calcutta, Christian earnestness might have found them out. But living as they do, in some of the back slums of London, none care for their souls at all. Ah! then, since their day may be so brief, and yours is so brief too, let each gird up his loins tonight, and say, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day."

You came over Blackfriars Bridge tonight—you may drop down dead on it as you go back! You have come from your house tonight, and you have left at home a dear friend to whom you wish to speak about his soul. Do it tonight, for he may die in the night.

I think I read it in the life of Dr. Chalmers, that on one occasion he spent an evening with a number of friends, and there was present a Highland chieftain, a very interesting character. They spent the evening in telling anecdotes of their lives, and repeating extracts from divers entertaining works of voyages and travels—spent the evening, as we should think, very properly indeed, and after having very much enjoyed themselves, they went to bed.

At midnight, the whole family was startled from their sleep, for the Highland chieftain was in the pangs and agonies of death. He went up to his chamber in sound health, but died in the night. The impression upon Chalmers' mind was this, "Had I known that he would have so died, would not the evening have been differently spent? Then ought it not to have been spent in a very different manner by men all of whom might have died?"

He felt as if the blood of that man's soul in some measure fell upon him—the occurrence itself was a lasting blessing to him. May it be so to us in the hearing of the story, and from this time forth may we work with all our might "while it is day."

IV. We close tonight with the last words of the text, "The night cometh when no man can work." Here is the REMEMBRANCER OF OUR MORTALITY.

"The night cometh." You cannot put it off. As sure as night comes in its due season to the earth, so death comes to you. There are no arts nor maneuvers by which night can be deferred or prevented, nor by which death can be postponed or altogether adjourned. "The night cometh," however much we may dread it, or however much we may long for it.

It comes with stealthy tread, surely, and in its appointed time. "The night cometh." The night comes for the pastor, who has labored for his flock. For the evangelist, who has preached with earnestness. For the Sabbath school teacher, who has loved her charge. For the missionary, who has worked for souls. "The night cometh."

The night comes for the sitters in the pews. For the father, the mother, the daughter, the husband, the wife. "The night cometh." Dear hearer, shall you need to be reminded that the night comes for you? Will you take it home to yourself, or will you, nursing man's hapless delusion, "Think all men mortal but yourself?" The night cometh when the eye shall be closed, when the limbs shall grow cold and stiff, when the pulse shall be feeble, and at last shall stop its beating. "The night cometh."

Solomon thought this out for all mankind, "No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war." To the Christian worker it is sometimes a dreary thought. I have plans in action for the cause of God, upon some of which I have just newly entered, and I sometimes think I should like to live to see them in greater maturity.

Perhaps I may, but I daily feel as if I should not. Constantly it haunts me—I may commence these things, but if I do not do all I can do today, I may never have a tomorrow. And therefore, I say again what I have said a thousand times in my own soul, that I will do all I can now. As for the years that are to come, they must shift for themselves.

It is no use when starting plans to look forward to what they may grow to in years to come, and then to write down as our work what may spring out of our work. No, we must do immediately and at once all that has to be done. God can afford to wait with His work, but we cannot afford to delay with ours.

We must work now, “while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.” The coming of the night, though always comfortable to the Christian, when he recollects that he shall see his Master, is yet sometimes a very very heavy thought to us who are engaged in many works for Christ, and who would like to live to see some of those works prospering.

How dreary the conclusion! “*When no man can work.*” Mother, you cannot bend over your children and teach them the way of life when you have departed. If you would have them taught in the things of God, your voice at least will never teach them then of the love of Jesus.

Missionary, if that district of yours is unattended, and souls be lost, you at least can never make up for the damage you have done, for the mischief which you have caused. Your memory and your love are past. You are gone. The place that knew you once knows you no more. Among the deeds of the living you can take no share. If you lifted, by your example, the floodgates of sin, you cannot return to let them down again or to stem the current.

If you missed opportunities of serving Jesus here, you cannot come back again to retrieve them. If one were a warrior, and had lost a battle, one might pant for another day to dawn for another conflict yet to retrieve the campaign. But if you lose the battle of life, you shall never have it to fight again. The tradesman may have gone bankrupt once, but he trusts that, with more careful dealing, he may yet achieve success.

But bankruptcy in our spiritual service is bankruptcy forever, and we have no chance of retrieving our loss. It is a night in which no man can work. The myriads before the throne can do no service here. The poverty of London they cannot alleviate. Its shame and sin they cannot remove. They can praise God, but they cannot help man. They can sing unto Him that loved them and washed them, but they cannot preach of Him, nor proclaim to those who need to be washed at the fountain that is filled with His blood. It were almost to be desired that they could, for surely they would do the work so much better than we can do it!

But the Master has decreed otherwise. They must fight no more—they must stand and look on at the battle. They must delve the field no longer—they shall eat the fruit, but they cannot till the soil. The work is left to those who are still here. Let us have no regrets because they cannot join in it, but rather let us thank God that He reserves to us all the honor as well as all the labor.

Let us plunge into the work now. As the British soldiers in battle, when few, were told by their king that he hoped there was not one man there who desired that they should be more, for, said he, “The fewer the men, the greater each man’s share of the honor,” so let us scarce desire that we should have helpers from the skies.

With the might of God upon us, with the open Word still full of precious promises, with the mercy seat still rich in blessing, with the Holy Ghost, the irresistible Deity, still dwelling in us, with the precious name of Jesus, which makes hell tremble, still to cheer us, let us go forth feeling that we “must work while it is day: for the night cometh when no man can work.” That we will work while the day lasts—and hearing the chariot wheels of eternity behind us, we will speed on with all our might and main.

But all that I have been saying applies but very little to some of you, for you have never given yourselves to God. You are still servants of Satan and you cannot serve God. O poor souls, do you know what it is that we want Christian people to be earnest about? Why, it is in order that you may be saved. We should not have much need of all this stirring up of Christians, if it were not for you.

You are without God. You are without Christ. You are on your way to everlasting ruin, some of you. And some of you, too, who have heard the Gospel for many years, and know as much about it as I do, though you know nothing about its power within your own souls. Is it not strange that while we are so much in earnest about you, you are not in earnest about yourselves?

If there were a woman's child out there in the street, and a dozen women tried to catch it up before it was run over by a cab, you would think it was a very singular thing if the mother stood by calm and cool, unexcited, or as it were, uninterested about it.

And yet here is your soul, and there are full as many people in this venerable chapel tonight who feel anxious about you, and wish they could save you, yet you do not care about your own soul! Well, now, if you should be lost forever, it will be no wonder, will it? You do not value yourself at anything. You throw yourself away.

Who shall be blamed for this? O dear hearers, shall this be one of the thorns in your pillow forever, "I took no thought about my soul. I set no value upon it, but I carelessly cast it away"? Shall this keen remorse keep up the flame unquenchable that shall forever torture your conscience. "I would not think of everlasting things. I played the fool, and danced my way into hell. I trifled where God was earnest. I was careless where ministers wept. I was frivolous where Christ bled"?

Oh, I beseech you, consider your ways, and remember that whosoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved! Believe in Him. Trust Him. That is the way of salvation. Rest upon Him, and the Lord grant that when you have so done, being saved, you may feel the impulse of my text and say, "I, too, must join with the band of workers. Saved by Christ, I too must say as Christ said, 'I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: for the night cometh, when no man can work.' "

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.