

A New Year's Gift!

by Samuel Davies, January 1, 1760

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” Romans 13:11.

TIME, like an ever-running stream, is perpetually gliding on, and hurrying each of us into the boundless ocean of eternity! We are now entering upon one of those imaginary lines of division, which men have drawn to measure out TIME for their own convenience; and, while we stand upon the threshold of a new year, it befits us to make a solemn contemplative pause; though time can make no pause but rushes on with its usual velocity. Let us take some suitable reviews and prospects of time past and future, and indulge such reflections as our transition from year to year naturally tends to suggest.

The grand and leading reflection is that in the text with which I present you as a New-Year's Gift: “Knowing the time, that it is now high time to awake out of sleep!”

The connection of our text is this—The apostle, having enjoined sundry duties of religion and morality, subjoins this consideration, namely, that the time remarkably required them, as if he should say, “Be subject to magistrates, and love one another, and that because, knowing the time, that it is now high time, or the proper hour, to awake out of sleep. A sleepy negligence as to these things is peculiarly unreasonable at such a time as this!”

The Romans to whom this epistle was written were Christians indeed; they were such whose salvation the apostle could point at as near approaching: “Now,” says he, “is your salvation nearer than when you believed.” And yet he calls even upon such to awake out of sleep. The fact is that even sincere Christians are too often apt to fall into a spiritual lethargy. They contract an indolent, dull, lazy disposition, as to the duties of religion and divine things. Sometimes their love languishes, their zeal cools, and they become remiss or formal in their devotions.

Now such a state of dullness and inactivity is often represented by the metaphor SLEEP, because sleep disables us from natural actions and blunts our physical senses. Just so, this spiritual sleep indisposes the soul for the service of God and spiritual sensations.

Hence it follows that to awake out of sleep signifies to rouse out of carnal security, to shake off spiritual sloth, and to engage in the concerns of true religion with vigor and full exertion, like men awake.

And as even Christians are too often liable to fall into some degrees of spiritual sleep, as they often nod and slumber over the great concerns of piety, which demand the utmost exertion of all their powers, notwithstanding the principle of divine life implanted in them, there is great need to call even upon them to awake. Thus the apostle rouses the Roman Christians, including himself among them, as standing in need of the same excitation. It is high time for us, says he, that is, for you and I, to awake out of sleep!

This is a duty proper at all times. There is not one moment of time in which a Christian may lawfully and safely be slothful and negligent. Yet the apostle intimates that some particular times call for particular vigilance and activity; and that to sleep at such times is a sin peculiarly aggravated. NOW, says he, it is high time for us, to awake out of sleep: “This is not a time for us to sleep! This time calls upon us to rouse and exert ourselves! This is the hour for action! We have slept too long already! Now let us rouse and rise!”

The apostle also intimates, that the serious consideration and right knowledge of TIME, is a strong excitement to awake out of sleep. “Knowing the time,” says he, “that now it is high time to awake out of sleep;” that is, your knowing and seriously considering the importance, the uncertainty, and the shortness of time in general, and the peculiar circumstances of the present time in particular, may be sufficient to rouse you. Natural sleep should be in its season: “Those who sleep—sleep in the night.” But, says he, “we are all the children of the light, and the children of the day. We are brought out of darkness into the glorious light of the gospel;” therefore let not us sleep, as others do. Consider the time, that is it day-light with you; and you cannot but be sensible, that it is now high time for us to awake out of sleep! This is the hour to rise. Therefore let us awake to righteousness.

The reason the apostle urges upon the Roman Christians to awake at that time is very strong and moving; it is this: “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Salvation is hastening quickly towards us upon the wings of time. As many years as are past since we first believed in Christ—by so many years nearer is our salvation! Or, as he expresses it in the next verse, “The night is far spent—the day is at hand.” The gloomy, turbulent night of the present state is near over; the dawn of eternal day is just ready to open upon us; and can we sleep at such a time? What! sleep on the very threshold of heaven! What! sleep, when salvation is just ready to embrace us! What! sleep, when the dawn of celestial day is just about shining around us! Is it possible we should sleep at such a time? Must not the prospect of everlasting salvation so near us, the thought that in a very little time we shall be in heaven—rouse us, and fix us in a posture of eager expectation and constant watchfulness?

The text implies, that Christians should always be growing in grace; and that the nearer their salvation is—the more lively and zealous should they be; and since it is nearer this year than the last year—they ought to be more holy this year than the last. The nearer they are to heaven—the more heavenly they should be. The near approach of salvation is a strong motive to holiness; and the stronger by how much the nearer it is.

My chief design, at present, is, to lead you to know the time, and to make such reflections upon it, as its nature and circumstances require, and as are suited to our respective conditions.

The first thing I would set you upon as a necessary introduction to all the rest, is the important but neglected duty of self-examination. Methinks it should shock a man to enter upon a new year, without knowing whether he shall be in heaven or hell before the end of it! And that man who can give but a very poor account of the last year, and perhaps twenty or thirty years before it—cannot yet give any satisfactory answer to this grand question. Time is given us to determine this important point, and to use proper means to determine it in our favor. Let us therefore resolve, this day, that we will not live another year utterly uncertain what will become of us through an endless duration!

This day let us put this question to our hearts: “What really am I? Am I an humble, dutiful servant of God? Or am I a disobedient, impenitent sinner? Am I a disciple of Christ in reality? Or do I only wear His name, and make an empty profession of His religion? Where am I bound for? For heaven—or for hell? Which am I most fit for in my disposition? For the region of perfect holiness—or for that region of sin and impurity? Shall I stupidly delay the determination, until it is passed by the irrevocable sentence of the Supreme Judge, before whom I may stand before this year is at a close? Alas, if it should then be against me—then my doom will be remediless! But if I should now discover my case to be bad, blessed be God, it is not too late to alter it. I may yet obtain a good hope, through grace, though my present hope should be found to be that of the hypocrite!”

If I should push home this inquiry, it will probably discover two sorts of people among us, to whom my text leads me particularly to address myself:

the one, entirely destitute of true religion, and consequently altogether unprepared for a happy eternity, and yet careless and carnally secure in that dangerous situation;

the other, Christians indeed, and consequently habitually prepared for their latter end; but criminally remiss or formal in the concerns of piety, and in the duties they owe to God and man.

The one, sunk in a deep sleep in sin; the other, nodding and slumbering, though upon the slippery brink of eternity! Now, as to both these sorts of people—it is high time for them to awake out of sleep. And this exhortation I would press upon them, first, by some general considerations common to both; and then, by some particular considerations proper to each respectively. The general considerations are such as these:

I. Consider the **UNCERTAINTY** of your time! You may die the next year, the next month, the next week, the next hour, or the next moment!

I once knew a minister who, while he was speaking on this same point—was made a striking illustration of it—and instantly dropped down dead in the pulpit! When you look forward through the year now begun, you see what may never be your own. No, you cannot call one day of it your own! Before that day comes, you may be done with time—and have entered upon eternity! Many presume upon time, as if it were guaranteed to them for so many years; and this is the delusion which ruins multitudes! How many are now in eternity, who began the last year with as little expectation of death, and hopes of long life—as you have at the beginning of the present year! And this may be your doom!

Should a prophet be sent to open the book of the divine decrees to you—as Jeremiah did to Hananiah; some of you would no doubt see it written there by your name, “This very year you are going to die!” Jeremiah 28:16. Some unexpected moment in this year, will put an end to all the labors and enjoyments of the present state, and all the duties and opportunities peculiar to it!

Therefore, if sinners would repent and believe; if they would obtain the favor of God and preparation for the heavenly state; and if saints would make high improvements in piety; if they would make their calling and election sure, that they may not stumble over doubts and fears into the presence of their Judge; if they would do anything for the honor of God, and the interests of the Redeemer’s kingdom in the world; if they would be of service to their families, their friends, their country, and mankind in general; **NOW** is the time for them to awake out of sleep, and set about their respective work!

NOW is the time, because this is the **ONLY** time they are certain of! Sinners, you may be in hell before this year finishes its round—if you delay the great business of salvation any longer! And saints, if you neglect to improve the present time, you may be compelled to shoot the gulf of eternity, and launch away to unknown coasts—full of fears and perplexities; you may be cut off from all opportunities of doing service to God and mankind, of endeavoring to instill the principles of Christian knowledge and practice into the minds of your dear children, and those under your care—unless you catch the present hour. For remember, time is uncertain! Youth, health, strength, business, riches, power, wisdom, and whatever this world contains—cannot insure it. No, the thread of life is held by the divine hand alone; and God can snap it asunder, without warning, in whatever moment He pleases! “It is appointed unto men once to die—and after that to face judgment!” Hebrews 9:27.

II. Consider the **SHORTNESS** of your time! Time in its utmost extent, including what is past from the creation, and what is future to the final conflagration, is nothing when compared to eternity. But the time of your life is vastly shorter! That part of time which is parceled out to you—is not only **UNCERTAIN**—but extremely **SHORT**! It is uncertain when it will end—but it is absolutely certain that it will end very soon! You cannot hope to surpass the common standard of long lives—and that is but seventy or eighty years. Nay, you have but very little reason to hope you shall arrive to this. There are at least ten who die before they reach seventy years—for every one who lives to the age of seventy. It is therefore far more likely that you will never spend seventy or eighty years upon earth. A shorter space than that—will probably convey you from this world—to heaven or hell. And is it not high time then for you to awake out of sleep! Your work is great—and your time is short! You have no time to spare—none to trifle away! It is all little enough for the great work you have yet to do.

III. Consider how much of your time has been LOST and MISSPENT already! Some of you that are now the sincere servants of God, may recollect how late in life you engaged in his service; how long you stood idle in his vineyard, when his work was before you. How many guilty days and years have you spent in the drudgery of sin, and in a base neglect of God and your immortal souls!

Others of you, who have the noble pleasure of reflecting that you devoted yourselves to God early, in comparison with others—are yet sensible how many days and years were lost before you were saved—lost in the sins and follies of childhood and youth. And the best of you have reason to lament how much of precious time you have misspent, even since you heartily engaged in the service of God; how many opportunities, both of doing good to others—and receiving good yourselves, you have lost by your own carelessness. How many seasons for devotion have you neglected or misimproved! Oh! how little of your time has been devoted to God—and the service of your souls! How much of it has been wasted upon trifles, or in an over-eager pursuit of this vain world! Does not the loss, upon the whole, amount to many days—and even years? And a day is no small loss to a creature, who has so few days at most to prepare for eternity!

And to many of you, is it not sadly evident, that you have lost ALL the days and years that have rolled over your heads? You have perhaps managed time well, as to the purposes of the present life; but that is but the lowest and most insignificant use of it. Time is given as a space for repentance and preparation for eternity; but you have entirely lost it—as to this grand use of it! Nay, are not your hearts more hard, and you less prepared for eternity now, than you were some years ago? Have you not been heaping up the mountain of sin higher and higher every day, and estranging yourselves from God more and more?

To heighten your loss of precious time—you should consider it as IRRECOVERABLE. Nothing is more impossible, than to recall past time. It is gone! it is gone forever! Yesterday can no more return—than the years before the flood! Power, wisdom, tears, entreaties, all the united efforts of the whole universe of creatures, can never cause it to return!

And is there so much of your time lost? Lost beyond all possibility of recovery? And is it not high time to awake out of sleep! Have you any more precious time to throw away? Shall the time to come—be abused and lost, like the past? Or will you not endeavor to redeem the time you have lost—in the only way in which it can be redeemed; that is, by doubling your industry in time to come? You have MUCH to be done—in a little time, since you have now but little left. You have indeed had ten, twenty, thirty, or forty precious years; but, alas! they are irrecoverably lost. And may not this thought startle you—and cause you to awake out of sleep! the loss of the same number of kingdoms would not be half so great. To a candidate for eternity, whose everlasting state depends upon the improvement of time—a year is of infinitely greater importance, than a kingdom can be to any mortal man!

IV. Consider, that the great PURPOSES of the present life, can be accomplished only in time; for there are certain important duties peculiar to this world, which, if unperformed here, must remain so forever, because eternity is not the season for them.

Both worlds have their proper business allotted them; and the proper business of the one—cannot be done in the other. ETERNITY and TIME are intended for quite different purposes. The one is seed-time; the other, harvest! The one is the season for working; the other, for receiving the wages! And if we would invert the unchangeable order of things, and defer the business of life until after death—we shall find ourselves miserably mistaken!

Therefore if saints would make progress in true religion; I mean that religion which befits our present sinful state; that religion which is a course of discipline to prepare and educate us for heaven; which is a painful process for our refinement, to qualify us for that pure region; if they would cherish a noble ambition, and not only ensure happiness—but high degrees of it; if they would be of service to mankind, as members of civil or religious society; and particularly, if they would be instrumental to form others for a blessed immortality, and save souls from death, by converting sinners from the errors of their way: if they would do these things, the present life is the only time. In heaven they will have more noble employment. These things must NOW be done—or never!

And oh! what pious heart can bear the thought of leaving the world while these important things are undone? Would you not desire to enter into heaven—ripe for it? To be completely formed by your education, before you enter upon a state of maturity? Oh! does not your heart burn to do something for your gracious God and Savior, who has done and suffered so much for you? Oh! Do you not long to be an instrument of some service to the world, while you are passing through it? If this is your desire—NOW is the time. When once death has laid his cold hand upon you—you are forever disabled from such services as these. Then farewell to all opportunities of usefulness in the present life. Then, even your children and dearest friends may run on in sin, and perish, while it is not in your power so much as to speak one word to dissuade them! Therefore, enter upon this new year with hearty resolutions to be more zealous and laborious in these respects, than you have ever yet been.

Again, if unrepentant sinners, who are now in a state of condemnation, would escape out of it; if those who are at present slaves to sin, would become sincere converts to righteousness; if they would use the means of grace for that purpose—then NOW is the time. There is none of this salvation work in hell! They no sooner enter into the eternal world—than their state will be unchangeably and eternally fixed! The present life is the only state of trial; and if we do not turn out well in this trial—we shall never have another! All are ripe for eternity, before they are removed into it! The godly are ripe for heaven—and the wicked are ripe for hell! The godly are vessels of mercy, prepared for glory; the wicked are vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and for nothing else! And therefore they must remain forever in their respective lodgings!

Sinners do indeed repent when in hell—but their repentance is their punishment, and has no tendency to amend or save them. They mourn and weep—but their tears are but oil to increase the flame! They cry, and perhaps pray in hell—but the hour of acceptance with God is past—past forever! The means of grace are all gone! The sanctifying influences of the Spirit are all withdrawn forever! And hence they will corrupt and putrefy into mere masses of pure unmingled wickedness and misery!

Sinners, realize this thought—and surely, it must rouse you out of your lethargy and sleep! Trifle on a little longer—and it is all over with you! Spend a few days more as you have spent your time past—and you will be engulfed in as hopeless misery—as any devil in hell!

Another year now meets you, and invites you to improve it to prepare for eternity; and if you waste it like the past—you may be undone forever. Therefore take Solomon's warning, "Whatever your hand finds to do—do it with all your might; for in the grave, where you are going—there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom!" Ecclesiastes 9:10

These considerations, methinks, must have some weight, both upon slumbering Christians and impenitent sinners—to persuade them to awake out of sleep. I now proceed to a few considerations peculiar to each class.

Upon slumbering saints I would again try the force of the apostolic consideration in my text: "Awake, for now is your salvation nearer than when you believed!" Heaven may be only at the distance of a year or an hour from you! It is, however, certainly nearer today—than ever it was before. As many days as are past—so much the less time have you to groan away in the present life.

And shall you indeed, in so short a time, be imparadised in the bosom of your God? Shall you so soon be done with all the sins and sorrows which now oppress you? Are your days of warfare with temptation so near a close? Shall you so soon be advanced to all the glory and blessedness of the heavenly state, and be as happy as your glorified nature can bear? Is this indeed the case? And must not the prospect rouse you, and fire your hearts! Is not salvation the thing you have been longing and laboring for? And now, can you slumber—when it is so near? Can you sleep—when the night of life is so far spent, and the dawn of eternal day is ready to shine around you! Can you sleep on the brink of eternity—on the threshold of heaven!

The apostle here intimates—that the near approach of salvation is great cause of great joy to believers! It is a cause of joy—though death lies between, and salvation cannot reach us until we pass through the gloomy valley. Therefore, believers, I may wish you joy—in prospect that you shall soon die! This wretched world shall not be your residence always! Your worst enemies upon earth or in hell—will not be able to confine you here in this world for long—much less forever. You may rejoice in the prospect of your speedy dissolution, because death is not nearer to you—than your salvation! Before your cooling clay is wrapped in its shroud—your glorified souls will be in heaven! You will be striking examples of the truth of Solomon's remark, that "the day of one's death—is better than the day of his birth." Ecclesiastes 7:1. Your death day—will be your birthday, which will introduce you into the world of eternal bliss!

Mortals in their language—will pronounce you "dead"—but angels will shout, "An immortal born! Born to an everlasting life! Born to an eternal crown of glory! Born to a priceless inheritance in heaven—pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay!" And must not the prospect of this glorious day so near—rouse you out of sleep? Can you not watch one hour, or one year? Shall eternal salvation surprise you asleep?

Some of you perhaps are now thinking, "Oh! if I were certain that my salvation is so near—it would even transport me, and inspire me with flaming zeal and unwearied activity! But alas! I am afraid of being deceived. It is true, I cannot but entertain some humble hope, which the severest trial cannot overthrow. But oh! what if I should be mistaken? This makes me tremble, and shrink back from the prospect of death and eternity!"

This may be the case of many an honest soul. But can this be pleaded as a reason or excuse for carnal security? Alas! can you sleep in such a dreadful suspense? Alas! can you sleep, while you are uncertain what shall become of you through an endless duration? If you have not the sure prospect of salvation to awaken you—methinks the fear of damnation must effectually do it! For it is certain that one or the other is very near you!

Therefore endeavor by close and severe self-examination, to push the matter to some certain outcome. Resolve that you will not spend another day, much less another year—in a state of such dangerous, alarming uncertainty! If this point is not yet determined—it is certainly high time for you to awake out of sleep!

Consider farther, how far your pious improvements, have come short of your own resolutions and expectations, as well as your obligations. You happy souls, who now enjoy a good hope through grace, recollect the time when you were in a very different and more melancholy condition: the time when your hearts bled with a thousand wounds; when the terrors of the Lord set themselves in array against you—and the thunders of Sinai rung the most alarming peals in your astonished ears; when the arrows of God stuck fast in you—and their poison drank up your spirits; when guilt lay heavy upon your consciences, and sunk you down into the depth of despondency; when you were haunted with alarming apprehensions of divine vengeance night and day; when you went about crying for a Savior, "Oh for a Savior!"—but your cries seem to be in vain!

Oh! what were then your vows and resolutions—if it should please God to deliver you! Did you then expect—that you would fall asleep so soon after your deliverance! Recollect also the happy hour, when the face of a reconciled God first smiled upon you, when Jesus appeared to your minds in all the attractive glories of a Savior—an all-sufficient Savior in a desperate case! When he "delivered your soul from death, your feet from falling, and your eyes from tears;" when he inspired your desponding hearts with hope, and revived you with the heavenly cordials of his love!

Oh! what then were your thoughts and resolutions? How strongly were you bent to make him returns of gratitude! How firmly did you bind yourselves to be his servants forever! But how soon, alas! did you begin to slumber! How far short have you fallen of your vows and promises!

Recollect also what were your expectations at that memorable time. Oh! would you then have believed it, that in the space of ten or twenty years—that you would have made such small progress in your heavenly course, as you have in fact done? Had you not a better hope? But, alas! how are you disappointed! What sorry servants have you been to so good a Master—in comparison of what you expected yourselves to become! And can you bear the thought of slumbering on still? Oh! shall this year pass by like the former? Surely you cannot bear the thought! Therefore awake out of sleep! Rise and work for your God!

Let me conclude my address to you slumbering saints with this advice: Begin this new year by dedicating yourselves afresh to God, and solemnly renewing your covenant with him. Take some hour of retirement, this evening, or as soon as you can. Call yourselves to account for the year past, and all your life. Recollect your various spiritual infirmities, mourn over them, and resolve, in the strength of divine grace—that you will guard against them in the time to come. Examine yourselves both as to the reality of

your religion—and as to your proficiency in it. Conclude the whole—by casting yourselves anew upon Jesus Christ, and devoting yourselves for this new year entirely to him; resolved to live more to him than you have hitherto done, and depending upon him to conduct you safely through whatever this year may bring forth, whether prosperity or adversity, whether life or death. This is the true and only means whereby we can attain that eternal happiness, which we ought all to be in pursuit of—that pleasure which will never end!

Let me now address a few considerations to impenitent sinners, peculiarly adapted to them: Consider what a dreadful risk you run—by neglecting the present time. The longer you indulge yourselves in sin—the harder it will be to break off from it; and do you not then run the risk of cementing an eternal union with that deadly evil—sin? The longer you nourish a wicked disposition, the stronger the habits of sin will grow! And are you not in danger of becoming eternal slaves to it? The longer you continue impenitent—the harder your hearts will grow! The oftener you do violence to your consciences—the more insensible they will become! And are you not taking direct ways to confirm yourselves in impenetrable hardness of heart—and contracting a reprobate mind? The more you sin against God, and grieve his Spirit—the more you provoke him to withhold the influences of his grace, and in righteous judgment—to give you up as a hardened reprobate. And dare you run so dreadful a risk as this?

The more time you waste—the greater is your work, and the less your time to perform it. By how much the longer you waste your time, by so much the shorter you make your opportunity for salvation. Alas! the day of your visitation may be drawing fast towards evening—when the things which belong to your peace will be eternally hid from your eyes. Is it not then high time for you to awake out of sleep! Will you rather run such a dreadful risk—than rouse out of your stupid security? Oh! what will be the end of such a foolish course?

Let me deal plainly and without reserve with you, on a point too dangerous to allow of flattery. If you do not now awake, and turn your attention to the concerns of your souls—then it is but too probable that you will still go on in carnal security—and at last perish forever! Blessed be God, this is not certain—and therefore you have no reason to despair. But it is really most probable—and therefore you have great reason to fear. This alarming probability, methinks, must force its evidence upon your own minds, upon principles you cannot reasonably dispute.

You have lived twenty, thirty, forty years, or more—in God's world. You have done much to provoke the almighty God to cast you off! Your sinful habits have grown so strong! Your hearts have become so much hardened through the deceitfulness of sin! You have continually rejected the gospel, and your consciences have become greatly hardened by repeated violence! And the longer you live in this wretched condition—the more and more discouraging it will grow.

I will by no means limit a sovereign God in the exercise of his free grace. But this is evident, that from the human perspective, and according to appearances, it was much more likely you would have been converted in time past, than that you will be converted in time to come. The most hopeful part of life is over with you; and yet even in that, you were not brought to repentance. How much less likely is it, then, that you will be converted in time to come?

Allow me to tell you plainly (for it is my loving concern which makes the declaration) that I cannot but tremble for some of you! I am really afraid some of you will perish forever; and the ground of my fear is this: The most generous charity cannot but conclude, that some of you are impenitent sinners; your disposition and conduct proclaim it aloud! And it is very likely, all things considered, that you will be always be so. Since you have not repented in the most promising season of life—it is much to be feared you will not repent in the less promising part of it. And since no impenitent, unholy sinner can enter into the kingdom of heaven—it is much to be feared you will perish forever in hell; not because the mercy of God, or the merit of Christ, is insufficient to save you, if you apply to him for it, according to the terms of the gospel; not because your case is in itself hopeless, if you would awake out of sleep, and seek the Lord in earnest; nor because you have not sufficient encouragement for laborious endeavors. But because it is all too likely, that you will continue on careless and secure, as you have always done, and persist in it—until all your time is gone—and then your case will be indeed desperate and hopeless!

I honestly warn you of your danger, which is too great to be concealed. And yet I give you sufficient encouragement to fly from it, while I assure you, that if you now lay your dreadful condition to heart, and earnestly use all proper means for your conversion—then you have the utmost reason to hope for success; as much reason as the saints now in heaven once had, when in your condition; and in your condition they once were.

Therefore, now, sinners, awake out of your sleep! Instead of entering upon this new year with carousals and extravagances; consecrate it to the great purpose for which it is given you—by engaging in earnest in the great work of your salvation. “How can you sleep at a time like this? Get up and pray to God! Maybe he will have mercy on you and spare your life!” Jonah 1:6. “Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light!” Ephesians 5:14.

Consider, that this year may lay you low in the dust of death. How many are now in the grave—who saw the last new-year's day! And though I cannot point out the specific people who will die this coming year—yet, without a spirit of prophecy, I may venture to foretell, that some of US will be in heaven or hell—before this year ends its rapid round! Some gray head or some sprightly youth; perhaps you—or perhaps myself! And since none of us know WHO it shall be—then none of us are exempted from the necessity of immediate preparation. Oh! that we may all be so wise, as to consider our latter end!

I beg permission of my kind hearers—to employ a few minutes in addressing myself to my pupils, whom my affection would always single out from the rest, even when I am speaking in general terms to a mixed crowd. Therefore, my dear charge, my students, my children, and every tender and endearing name! You young immortals, you embryo-angels or infant-fiends! You blooming, lovely, fading flowers of human nature, the hope of your parents and friends, of church and state, the hope, joy and glory of your teachers! Hear one who loves you! Hear one whose greatest interest in the world—is to promote your best interest! Hear one who would account this the greatest blessing he could enjoy in his pilgrimage, and whose nights and days are sometimes made almost equally restless, by his affectionate concerns for you! Hear him upon a subject in which you are most intimately

interested; a subject more important than even an angel could address you upon; and that is—the right improvement of your time—the present time—and preparation for eternity.

It is necessary that you in particular, you above all others, should know the time—that it is now high time for YOU to awake out of sleep! I make no doubt but you all look upon true religion—as an object worthy of your notice. You all as certainly believe that there is a God—as that yourselves exist! You all believe that heaven and hell are not majestic fantasies, or fairy-lands—but the most important realities; and that YOU must in a little time—be the eternal residents of the one or the other! It cannot, therefore, be a question with any of you, whether you shall mind religion at all! On that you are all determined. But the question is—what is the most proper time for it? whether the present—or some uncertain hereafter? And in what order you should attend to it, whether in the first place, and above all, even in your youthful days—or whether you should not rather indulge yourselves in the pleasures of youth for some time—and then make religion the business of the dregs of old age.

If any of you hesitate upon this point, it may be easily solved. NOW is the most convenient, promising season for this purpose that you are likely to see! Never will you live more free from care, or more remote from temptation. When you launch out into the noise, and bustle, and hurry, and company, and business, and vice of the world—then you will soon find the scene changed for the worse! He must be a tempter to himself, who can find a temptation, while immured at this school, and immersed in books. Never will you see the time, when your sins will be so conquerable, and your hearts so tender, and susceptible of holy impressions; though even now, if you really know yourselves, you find that your sins are invincibly strong to you, and that your hearts impenetrably hard! Therefore now, my dear youth, now is the inviting season: Awake out of your sleep; awake to righteousness and sin not.

I beg you would not now commit sin—with a design to repent of it afterwards. For can you be so foolish as knowingly and deliberately to do that which you explicitly intend to repent of? That is, to do that which you intend to wish undone; and to lament with broken hearts that ever you did it! Can Bedlam itself, parallel the folly of this? Oh take warning from the fate of your wretched predecessors in this course.

Could you ask the crowds of lost souls who are now suffering the eternal punishment of their sin, whether they intended to persist impenitent in it, and perish—they would all answer, that they either vainly flattered themselves they had repented already—or intended to repent before they died! But death seized them unawares, and put an end to all their expectant hopes! Young sinners among them—imagined they would not die until old age! And old age itself thought it might hold out a few days longer—and that they would yet have time enough to repent. But oh! they have now discovered their error, when it is too late to correct it.

Therefore do not harbor one thought of putting off repentance to a sick-bed, or to old age; that is the most inconvenient and desperate season in your whole life. And if you fix all your hopes upon this, we would think that you had viewed your whole life on purpose to find the most unfit and discouraging period of it—for the most necessary, difficult, and important work in the world!

Come, then—NOW devote yourselves to God, and away with all excuses and delays. Remember, that upon the principles I have laid down, principles that must gain your assent by the force of their own evidence; I say, remember, that upon these principles, that it is extremely likely that you will always persist impenitent in sin, and perish forever—if you waste away the present season of youth, destitute of vital religion. Every day, you have less and less hope for yourselves!

And can you bear the thought of perishing forever? Are your hearts so soon arrived to such a pitch of hardness, as to be armored against the terrors of the dreadful prospect? It cannot be! For “who among us can dwell with the devouring fire! Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings!” Isaiah 33:14.

As for such of you as have already begun great work of salvation—I have only this to say, “Therefore, my dear brothers—be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the Lord’s work, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain!” 1 Corinthians 15:58.