

A Periodic Interview with the King of Terrors

By [James Meikle](#)

1730-1799

October, 1764. This night I confess before you, who alone has immortality—that I believe myself mortal. Soon the eye which guides, and the hand that holds this pen—shall crumble into dust in the cold grave—and my soul shall go to dwell in the eternal world! Sober removal! Solemn change! Eternal state! Is there not a friend to attend and comfort me through all? Ah! no! My friends, the nearest and the dearest, are at best but compassionate spectators; they may weep at my bedside, but cannot take one blow for me in the hottest battle. Yes, the angels may minister to me on this side the river, and on that side the river—but not one of them can descend with me into the swellings of Jordan. But, O merciful High-Priest! who in my nature has tasted of death to soften mine—you shall go down with me into the flowing stream, and at your presence the raging torrent shall divide. And then, instead of being carried down the stream of destruction—I shall have a pleasant entrance into Immanuel's land! Woe to him who is alone in the hour of death! When I fight my last enemy—be my shield; when I walk in death's dark valley be my sun. And then foes and fears shall distress me no more.

One may beat a snappish dog with a stick—but to fight an enraged lion, requires other weapons. It is a small thing to lie a few days under a disease—but another thing to die. A cold shiver or two shall enter me among the inhabitants of the unseen world. I start back, and recoil—but the tender thread breaks—and in a moment I die! I see, I feel—that it is not an easy thing to die. Nature startles at death, and the unprepared soul is overwhelmed with a horrible gloom, that increases through eternity itself. Where then, O where shall I find comforts for my last moments? They must come from above, for the world will avail me nothing in that day. I will therefore have recourse to God's promises, which are exceeding great, exceeding precious, and exceeding proper to every case a child of God can be in; more precious than mountains of gold, and great above conception and thought.

November 12, 1764. Since I last was viewing the unseen world, a near neighbor of mine has been carried there without a moment's warning, or the least intervening sickness—but what he felt at the expiring groan. And though he could say nothing, yet the providence calls aloud to be always ready. Then, I will take hold of the promises, and, by a firm confidence in the Divine Promiser, I shall be like Zion's stable hill, which cannot be moved by rending winds, and roaring tempests. Have you not said, "I will never leave you. I will never forsake you." Never! what a world of comfort is in this word! I claim your pity, then, through life,

your protection in death, and your presence through eternity itself! O God of all grace! I will hold you at your word, when the shadows of the everlasting evening are stretched out on me.

December 7, 1764. It is arduous work to die, and yet it is work that must be done. And as the terrors of death will endeavor to make me loose my hold of this and that promise—I will take fast hold of many promises, that I may have strong confidence, and strong consolations, in the day of battle and war. As the love of God, manifested in my dear Redeemer, begins my heaven on earth; so the continuance of God's love will be the essence of my bliss above.

Now, the promise is, that "nothing shall separate from the love of God"—not all the heavy affliction of this life—nor the pangs of dissolution and death—nor the depth of a fallen state—nor the height of Jehovah's throne, who dwells in light inaccessible and full of glory. Then, seeing it is my heaven to be forever with you—should death terrify me, which, instead of separating from you, brings me to your very throne?

But another promise is, that "the Lord is and will be his people's keeper, and that in all their ways." Then, you will keep me in my going out of this world, and my going in to eternity, which the high and lofty One inhabits. Under the care of such a keeper, what need I fear? Under the protection of such a God, what need I dread?—Again, there is another promise of which I will possess myself, and it is, that "to the upright there arises light in the darkness," and that at "evening time there shall be light." However dark my case may be, I will endeavor to believe the promise. Clouds may hang over my head, storms and tempests may roar about me; but still I am traveling on to everlasting light, to eternal day, and my divine Guide leads the blind by a way they know not.

January 1, 1765. It is surely proper for a mortal, on the first day of the year, to think on the last day of his life. I think it affords me comfort to reflect, that with the last year all its toils are gone, and shall return no more; so the weary hireling rejoices to see the shadows fall that shall finish his fatigue. Alas! the year begins with vanity, and ends with vexation! But happy he who can improve both in view of his latter end. Latter end! Ah! how distant is this often from my mind! And yet the time is not far off, when with the prophet of old, my weakening pulse will reveal, "the end has come, the end has come, it watches for you, behold it has come!" And when life expires, and time ends—solemn eternity begins! How shall I enter on eternity, and plunge into the dread abyss? Gladly would I make the tremendous step in his hand whose name is, 'the Everlasting Father'—or Father of Eternity. How shall I fasten my hold, and strengthen my faith, that the dissolving pang shall not loosen it? If you are with me I will fear no evil, I shall feel no pain.

Now, I will assemble all the terrors of death, that I may know the strength of my foes, and see what forces will be sufficient to meet this *king of terrors*—who

comes against me with ten thousand at his feet. I see, then, that death is dreadful on these accounts.

1. It separates soul and body, which have been many years in the closest friendship; not to mention the pangs and agonies that may attend my last illness.
2. It raises an everlasting partition between the inhabitants of the world and myself. My dear, my Christian acquaintances, we must talk no more together, nor speak one word, even in commendation of the *Plant of renown*, in his house below.
3. I must leave my family and friends, however dear—to be exposed to the temptations of sin, the snares of the world, and the cruelty of malicious men.
4. I must also go by an unknown road, to an unknown land, and an unknown company. (Is there not an adventurer who will undertake this journey for me at any sum? No, there is not one!)
5. I must stand in the judgment. And the Judge is not a man as I am—but the great God, before whom the heavens are not pure, and in whose presence the holy angels cover their faces. O! how shall I appear! And yet I must appear—and know not how soon!
6. And to sum up all, when I go from this world, I shall never return. Now God reproves, rebukes, and exercises patience that I may amend; but then my sentence will be irrevocable, and fixed for eternity itself. "When I hear, my belly trembles, my lips quiver at the account, rottenness enters into my bones, and I tremble in myself, that I may rest in the day of trouble."

Now, if I can balance these tremendous views, I may gather courage for the decisive hour. And only interest in Jesus can do this. I appeal then to you, O searcher of hearts, that I have taken you for my Savior, and the covenant of your rich grace for my salvation. Sin and hell shall not shake my faith in you, for I desire to act faith anew on you every day, as if I had never believed before. Then, if, on the strongest evidences, after the severest scrutiny, and plainest dealing with my own soul, I shall find I have a saving interest in Jesus, terrors will flee away—and the dark step be converted into a delightful and inviting journey.

1. As to the *first*, then, though death separates soul and body, it is but for a few years; nor shall my sleeping dust be cast out of his care, who for my sake was laid in the silent grave. My deathless soul at once enters into the presence and into the joy of my Lord—to be later joined by my incorruptible body.
2. And as to the *second*, all my Christian friends shall shortly arrive at the better country also. We part for a little while—but meet to part no more. But O what a happy change do I make! I leave the church militant to join the church

triumphant! I leave the company of men for the society of angels! In a word, I leave the inhabitants of the world, to go into the beatific vision of Jehovah and the Lamb, where, in the highest strains, I shall commend the Plant of renown, and never cease and never tire!

3. Again, *third*, well may I commit my friends and family, however young, however helpless—to him who rules in eternity and time. A weak faith may doubt—but a faithful God, an omnipotent helper, cannot faint nor fail. His grace is not less sufficient for them, that I am no more, and the intercession of the divine Advocate before the throne is more prevalent, than the tears and prayers of ten thousand friends.

4. *Fourth*, why should I be afraid of an unknown road, when my dearest friend shall be my guide? Why should I be afraid of an unknown land, seeing it is my father's country; and all the inhabitants are friends, who will make me welcome to the seats of bliss? There is neither sin nor sinner there. O! why do not I long to be in a world of innocents, when the wicked so abound here?

5. *Fifth*, the Judge indeed is not a man—but he is God-man. And he who suffered for me on the cross, intercedes for me at his Father's throne, and carries my name on his bosom, will not condemn me in that solemn day! Though his eyes are as a flame of fire, yet, when wrapped in the Surety's righteousness, even divine Omniscience shall not see a spot in my soul, nor a blot in my life. He is not a man; indeed this is my comfort, because he cannot change, and will not deny himself. Now, if he acquits in the word of grace, in the promise and in the court of conscience—seeing Jesus my Savior is the same yesterday in the purpose of his love, today in the application of his grace, and forever in the performance of his promise—he will also acquit me in that tremendous day.

6. And *sixth*, as to returning again to time and the world, did I ever bewail the length of the summer, and long for the return of stormy winter? Did I ever lament my continued health, and cry for pining sickness? So were I once entered these regions of immortal joy, the thoughts of leaving them would be like death. One glance of the heavenly country, would make the world a howling desert. The first sight of Immanuel's face would make me forget all my dearest friends, and think them none of my concerns. I will never think so little of heaven—as to desire to return to the confines of hell.

To find myself before the throne will ravish; but to know that I shall dwell at the throne forever and ever, will fill with transport, and enlarge my joy. Now, if I can lead this lion like a lamb, I need not fear any beast of the field? (that is, if death is no more terrible, of what need I be afraid?) Hence I will study to live so habitually prepared for death, that I shall never be surprised, though my friends and the world may.

I may fall in the open field or drop down by the wayside, or die unseen in the

silent night; yet I shall not die as the fool dies. "O death! where is your sting? O grave! where is your victory!" Indeed I must die, and must rot—but death shall be my deliverance, and the grave a bed of rest!

February 5, 1765. Many things may take place at my death, that may make the world look on it as a melancholy scene. It is possible I may lie on my death-bed, deprived of reason, and entertain my last visitants with nonsense; yes, and possibly enter eternity, not knowing *when* or *where* I go. Surely it would be pleasant to employ my last moments in commending precious Christ; but a disordered body shall not make my sympathizing High-Priest forget me. A raging fever may break the frame of my body—but shall not break the covenant of grace which secures my endless happiness.

Should I be surprised that my faculties are in a tumult, when the union between my soul and body is dissolving? Disease may fiercely attack my feeble nature—but cannot touch my eternal state. Indeed, such things taking place at death, strongly and vehemently forbid delaying the *great work* until then, when man may be no more himself—until he is no more. Therefore, in the calm and tranquil day of life, while in the full use and exercise of my reason, I desire to prepare for everything that is solemn in the last onset of my last enemy.

But, again, I may lie long on a death-bed, and become a burden to myself and to my friends. Well, who will think much to *taste* the cup of affliction—who will shortly *drink* of the rivers of pleasures through an endless evermore? It well befits the heirs of glory, to wait on God all their appointed time, until their eternal change comes. It is an easy task to count my troubles and sum up my sorrows, which diminish every time I number them—until they are finished in the last pang. I may sleep little—but time sleeps less. And with time, all my temporal troubles shall end. My body may suffer long and sore, and toss and tumble, and find no rest, through the severity of my disease; but my God measures every fit of sickness—every degree of pain. And, whatever impatience and unbelief may think, he is compassionate, and will not crush under foot a prisoner of hope. Soon shall my weary dust rest sweetly in the silent grave, and my soul rise to the raptures of the higher heaven!

But I may die of some loathsome disease, and lie in such a deplorable condition, that few will think to come near me. Well, the body that has been often defiled by sin, may at last be filled with stench and corruption; yet, being redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus, it shall at last be raised up a glorious body. Why should I care how my clay body looks—which must perish? Why should I care how my countenance is disfigured with pain, when many worthies have been so before me? Job was so changed, that his friends at some distance knew him not. But why mention saints, when it is witnessed of the King of saints, though fairer than the sons of men—that his visage was more marred than any man, and his form than the sons of men! It does not matter much, how dust returns to dust, since (O glorious prospect!) Christ shall change his vile body, that it may be fashioned like

unto his glorious body!

Again, death may deprive me of all my near relations, so that in my last sickness I may not have a friend to hold up my head, or sooth my pain. Is it not recorded of the glorious Sufferer, that all his followers and friends forsook him, and fled? Though you should make desolate all my company, yet in your favor shall I find my friends, my home, my heaven.

How comfortable to think that those who perish, less deserve the name of friends; and that my best FRIEND is the immortal God, eternal in his essence, and unchangeable in his love! Well may I put up with few friends in this world, who am going to a world of friends, where there is neither sin nor self, feud nor fraud; yes, to a FRIEND nearer, and dearer, and better than them all.

April 2, 1765. O how difficult do I find it to bring my thoughts *down* to the grave—and to welcome my decease! Am I any more impressed with the thoughts of mortality than I was some months ago? And yet, whether I believe it or not, I am so many months nearer my latter end. Surely the *tenant* that will not think upon *term day*, seems ill provided for it. And yet, what a fool must he be that will not look forward, when he is *warned*, and when death is fast approaching? Even so, I have warnings of my mortality daily; not a meal of food—but tells me that the building, which daily needs *propping* and *supporting*, will tumble down at last. Not a sleep I take—but might remind me of the sleep of death. Indeed, the difference seems to be, that the sleep in death is *deeper* and *longer* than in the repose of night. In the one, my soul is *fettered*; in the other, *fled*. In the first, I sleep for hours; the last, for ages. Most people can own their mortality—and I as well as they. But if I bring my confession *home*, and ask myself, "Am I willing to bid friends and family, cares and concerns, projects and enterprises, pleasures and delights—in a word, *life and its joys, time and its contents, the world and its whole*—a long and everlasting farewell, and that at a moment's warning?" Alas! how am I perplexed, and at a loss what to say? I desire to deplore my attachment to time and the things of time, and to cry for that grace by which I will be able to say, *I profess I die daily*, even to look and wait for death every day.

The mirthful and unthinking part of mankind are of opinion, that the thoughts of death pall the joys of life. But this is a vast mistake, for he never enjoys life aright—who is *terrified* and *distracted* at the approach of death. Corrupt nature would have all care and concern about death taken out of the way, that they may go merrily to their revels. But the expectant of heaven, would only have the too great fear of death removed. Surely, a right prospect of death heightens the joys of life, and blunts the griefs of life. For if, when the storm beats against me, I can look beyond death, and see an eternal calm; or if, when the sun shines upon me, I can look forward, and see all the blessings of peace—plenty, prosperity, joy, life, light, love, friendship, rapture, and delight—heightened above thought—must not I be happy in any condition and thrice happy in comparison with that state in which I use the enjoyments of life, as a thief would do stolen goods—under

continual apprehensions of being seized by the 'constable Death', of having my joys snatched away, and myself shut up in an everlasting jail. David would not go against Goliath in Saul's royal armor, because he was not accustomed to it; so, I should be accustomed to the armor I intend to use in the decisive combat with death. And truly nothing will do like a strong, a steady faith in my exalted Redeemer. While philosophical and rational arguments avail nothing to the combatant, like Saul's cumbrous armor; faith, like David's humble sling and stone, will lay the grinning giant on the ground. And O to be using it daily at lesser marks—which I cannot lack in a land where I must *walk by faith*; that I may be expert at last, and, by the Spirit's aid, sink the stone in the monster's forehead!

How strange is it that the traveler should daily complain of the length of his journey, and yet walking in every bye-way that can sidetrack him, and lengthen his journey! How surprising that he should pretend that he never can be happy until arrived at home, and yet daily setting out for home on the longest road as he can! Alas! even so it is with me; for though I complain of the toils of life, yet where are my sincere longings for the better life? Though I believe I will never be happy until in heaven; yet how long can I be put off without my highest happiness, and completest bliss! I would gladly go to God, yet how astonishing that I would rather chose Elijah's forty days journey through a dreary wilderness to the mount of God, than his sudden ascent to the throne of God! Now, though by adoption I belong to your family, O Father of mercies! yet while my disposition is such, should death apprehend me, what better would my case be than a runaway son's, to whom, being brought back by force, his father's house, though a glorious palace, would in that event become a gloomy prison!

Though I cannot say I long for heaven as I should, yet I can say I long for that day, when I shall be able to say—*I long, I pant for heaven*. Then the enchantments of life, and terrors of death, shall neither detain me, nor deter me any more!

May 1, 1765. This day a parent is carried to his long home, who, not long ago, deplored the possible decease of his child. But little thought he, that death's suspended scythe should, passing by the child—sweep himself away! The tragedy is continued—but the people changed. The tears still trickle—but are turned from the parent's eye, that being shut in death, and pour down the children's cheeks.

Surely, then, the shortness of my life, and uncertainty of the time of my death—should make me say little of the decease of my nearest relations. When death strikes at a family, and cuts off one member, every member being alike mortal—the infant along with the man of grey hairs—the time that is given to the survivors ought to be better employed than in mourning and murmuring at Providence.

May 7, 1765. Death is the woodsman, and the world is the forest; and round

about me every day he is cutting down. Now an old tree falls, then a young tree; the fair spreading tree and the barren shrub are laid along the ground. And I cannot long escape, for all the forest must be cleared away. But the tree, in one sense, has the better of me, for it grows up again in the same place it was cut down; O that, in another sense, I may have the better of it, in growing like the palm tree in the paradise of God, and flourishing in a better soil than that in which it fell!

August 1, 1765. The value of things are best known by comparisons. Let me, then run a comparison between this present life I now enjoy, in all its best things, as well as its worst things—and that better life I expect after death.

In this life I may have at *times*—

1. A measure of health.
2. Some tainted pleasures.
3. A few friends for a few days.
4. Some acres of ground.
5. Fine clothing.
6. A wealthy house.
7. Bread to eat, and water to drink.
8. A portion of the good things of time.

But—in eternity I *shall* have *always*—

1. Eternal vigor.
2. Pure delights and holy raptures.
3. All my godly friends with me forever.
4. An unbounded inheritance in the heavenly Canaan.
5. Robes of righteousness and garments of glory.
6. A house not made with hands.
7. The hidden manna, and the river of life.

8. The glorious treasures of eternity.

Spiritual Good Things.

In this life I *may* have—

1. Communications of grace.
2. Freedom from the reign of sin.
3. A measure of faith.
4. God in his ordinances.
5. Manifestations of love.
6. Access to the throne of grace.

But in eternity I *shall* have—

1. Eternal glory.
2. Deliverance from the being of sin.
3. Immediate vision of God.
4. Uninterrupted communion.
5. All the transports of eternal assurance, and everlasting bliss.
6. Uninterrupted attendance at the throne of glory.

Now, what a wide difference is there between my best state here—and the better, the blessed state above! But how will it still widen, when my worst condition is brought into one side of the comparison! with this melancholy addition, that I am oftenest in my worst state.

In this life, then—

1. I often sin against God.
2. I go mourning without the sun.
3. I dwell in the valley of Achor, and my exercise is lamentation and mourning, and my daily attendants are sorrow and woe.

4. Death snatches away my nearest and dearest friends, and with them crops all the joys of life.

5. My knowledge of divine things is very lame.

6. My graces often are baffled by prevailing corruption and a tempting devil.

7. Disease attacks me often, and death awaits me always.

8. I am often too ready to say—what a weariness is it to serve God.

9. I daily see transgressors, and am grieved with self-destroyers.

10. Both vain and wicked thoughts often, alas! too often rise, rage and ravage in my mind.

11. Often my society is among those who seem to have no fellowship with the Father nor his son Christ Jesus.

But in eternity—

1. I shall never offend God's holy eyes.

2. My sun shall go down no more, and the days of my mourning shall be ended.

3. I shall dwell on the mount of communion, and my exercise be praise and worship; and my attendants transport and joy.

4. Jesus, my best Friend, shall forever cheer my ravished eyes, and fill my folded arms.

5. I shall know—even as I am known.

6. All my graces shall wear the crown of perfection.

7. I shall never complain of sickness, being above the reach of sin and death.

8. I shall serve him day and night with rapture and delight.

9. There shall not be one Canaanite in all the house of God. There shall not be one sinner in all the land of glory.

10. My soul shall be swept of all the trash of sin, and all my thoughts shall soar in adoration, and dissolve in love.

11. I shall associate myself with the general assembly and church of the first-

born.

Seeing the difference is so wide, what a wonder that I am not daily longing for the better! If Joseph's felicity made him forget, not only his toil—but his father, and his father's house, surely, when I arrive at the kingdom of my heavenly father, all the tender fondness of friend and brother, of parent and husband, will be swallowed up in nearer relations, and lost in a divine love.

Would not the prisoner venture out of a dark dungeon—to the broad day? So, though death be a dark step, yet the inviting glories of an eternal world lie beyond it, the dawning beams of which enlighten the dreary shadow.

Heaven has spared me a twelve-month since I began to think on death at set periods. But O, what a small progress have I made!

November 9, 1765. This day one of some rank is thought near death, and the relations hasten to their dying friend. And indeed the friendly hand may wipe the cold sweats of death from the pale countenance. But when the chilling fears of death attack me in my last moments, may my sympathizing Savior dispel my fears, dry my sorrows, and strengthen my extreme weakness! When, in the hour of death, all my friends shall stand estranged from me, may I have the presence of that divine FRIEND who sticks closer than a brother; so close, that the stroke that breaks the union between soul and body, shall not divide my soul and him.

How am I astonished at the news of my acquaintance's death! The inhabitant of a populous city dies alone in the open field! though enriched with the nearest and most loving relations—yet neither wife, children, nor servant, are present to support him in his last pangs! though master of a good house, and a soft bed—yet under a stormy sky, and on the cold ground, he breathes his last! Though not used to traveling in the night, yet in a very dark night he undertakes his long, his last journey—he sets out for, and arrives at the eternal world!

I see, then, that I may, in the midst of numerous friends, die *alone* and disregarded. But let me claim you as my inseparable friend, and then, though all my relations were present, I shall have no use for them, or, though absent, shall suffer no *loss*. All the melancholy circumstances of disease, to the heir of heaven, only enhance the felicity of the better state. Through fire and water the sons of promise arrive at *the wealthy place*. And, though nature recoils, it is a pleasant flood, which conveys into those rivers of pleasure that are at your right hand. And it is a friendly flame, though nature shrinks at the sight, and friends shudder at the account—that consumes the prison, and carries the soul into the presence of God.

January 1, 1766. Though my days be an handbreadth, and my age as nothing in your eye—your eternity satisfies all my desires.

January 20, 1766. These few days I have had some severe attacks of pain, whereby I may see that I am like a besieged city, against which the enemy makes nearer and nearer approaches, now opens one battery, then another. And though there be frequent intermissions, yet the siege will not be raised until the city is stormed and taken. But these observations I could not make, until my pain was gone; why then delay the great work until the hour of death? May I never fall in with such extravagant folly.

February 1, 1766. David had his last words, and swan-like, sang sweetest at his last. But I know not what may be my last words. Then, since ignorant of my last words, may my *last song* be a song of triumph over death and the grave.

March 1, 1766. One great cause of earthly mindedness is casting 'death' out of heart and eye. Though we were permitted to dwell on this side the grave forever, what could we do more for the world than we do; or what less thought and concern for the other world could we take than we do? How great, then, is our folly, when we are only sojourners for a day!

April 3, 1766. Two days ago I found myself somewhat sick—but O how averse to think of dying! Yet, did I hate sin and love holiness as I ought—I would surely long for that period that would deliver me from the one, and perfect me in the other. And death is that happy period.

The prudent warrior, who knows his enemies are determined to attack—will always be on his guard. Even so death, I know, will sooner or later (and the longer the delay the nearer the attack) be upon me in all his strength and terrors; therefore I have much need to watch, that I be not plunged into eternity unawares.

One in high life is sick. But disease and death are the same from the throne to the ash-heap; and neither the kind friend nor the careful servant, nor the skilled physician, nor the cheering cordial, nor the fine room, nor the soft bed—can diminish the anguish, brighten the dark scene. But your love, O you best of Friends! can pour in seraphic joys in the hour of death—on the brink of the grave.

August 5, 1766. O how little progress do I make toward eternity! Time flies away—but I linger still. May I not at last be surprised? Shall everything about me make haste, but my soul—in preparing for pulling off this body? Soon it will be a burden, and yet how burdensome are the thoughts of getting free of this burden!

September 1, 1766. While this month begins with me, an acquaintance has this day begun eternity. O endless eternity! O state unknown! Of what solemn assembly is he now a member! Time, and the things of time, are now of no account with him!

September 2, 1766. Again I remind myself of my mortality. And whether I be

prepared to meet death or not—death is prepared to meet me!

I *profess* a belief of death, O to *practice* it too! Then shall my views of a future world be brighter, and present things shall sink in my esteem.

Though men should tremble before me, it would not make the *king of terrors* less terrible. But if God, who does wonders past finding out, smiles on me, I shall smile in the face of death, *and laugh at the shaking of his spear*.

October 2, 1766. If invited to a royal feast, and noble entertainment, I will not much regard the appearance of the messenger sent from my friend, whether pleasant and well dressed—or surly and morose; knowing that the giver of the feast is my real friend, and will make me very welcome. Even so, though death should come in all his terrors—he is but a messenger to call me home. And I am assured of his favor who sends him—and may go cheerfully at his command.

October 25, 1766. This day I attended the funeral of one who, returning from a visit made to his friends, expires in the open air, falls from his horse, and embraces the cold ground! Little did the family think that morning, when both the parents set out, that one of them had a very long journey before him—even to the invisible and eternal world! Had an angel whispered in this person's ear at his breakfast table, "You have but four or five hours to live!" his soul must have felt astonished! The married pair, on whom forty-four annual suns had shone, are separated forever without a fare-well. Though together on the way, the dying person speaks not a word, nor utters a groan.

Whatever I do, death attends me! Wherever I go death follows me! Then, my friends be not surprised though I leave you in some such way as this.

December, 2, 1776. My kind heavenly father continues my life. O may I prepare for my latter end! In this last month of the year, everything around me proclaims mortality. The flowers have died; the fields are stripped of their verdure, and the trees of their leaves; the day is short and the heavens are black, and the music of the skies is no more. Thus everything points me to my latter end.

January 1, 1767. As mortals count their time, I fall asleep in one year, and awake in another. So soon shall the sleep of death transfer me to another world. Alas! that I should think so little on my last concern!

January 6, 1767. One may be ready to think, why so much care and concern for a moment, for death is only for a moment. But it is a moment on which eternity depends. While viewing death at a distance, I may be ready to think, with forward Peter, that at my Lord's call I will venture calmly into the waters. But perhaps, when among the roiling waves I may begin to sink. What then? My gracious Savior will be near and stretch out his helping hand.

February 3, 1767. I die little by little—and insensibly pass away. So is the growth of the corn; one cannot perceive it increase at all, yet it arrives at harvest, is cut down, and never more shall clothe the fields. But poor mortals are cut down at all seasons—in the early bud of verdant spring—the blooming summer, or mature autumn. Hence I see, however prepared in other respects, I am always ripe enough for the scythe of death.

April 7, 1767. The earth is putting on a new face, and nature begins to smile. But from the womb I am journeying downward, until I arrive at the dark chambers of death. O! then, that, like precious grain, the glory of my resurrection may overbalance all the black prospects of corruption and the grave! One that spends his life in a round of mirth and unconcern, might be ready to conclude, that thinking so often on death must make my life sad and melancholy. But that is not true, for thinking on death is the best balance to weigh either prosperity or adversity in, and helps to keep the soul in an even temper in every state. Therefore, not only the monthly but the daily remembrance of death, is the Christian's duty, which needs neither divert him from his lawful employment, sadden his countenance, nor sink his spirits.

May 5, 1767. When will the day come when I shall look on the approach of death with transport and delight—when I shall view him, not as a tyrant—but as a trusty servant to bring me home? The wilderness may please the beast of prey to range in—but cannot enchant the traveling Israelite from pursuing his journey to the land of promise. I have a fresh admonition of sudden and unexpected death in one, who, in the bloom of life and on a visit to his friends, was hurried into the eternal and unchanging world.

May 30, 1767 (birthday). The man who would observe his birthday, should always make the day of death the instructive antithesis. To feast and revel on this day, is more like a darkened Heathen, than a professed Christian. I have seen more birthdays than many of my friends, and now the course of nature forbids that I should see many more. But, were my affections such as they ought, it would afford me joy to find myself so near my native country, and my Father's house.

June 2, 1767. This month brings long days—but my day of life is growing shorter still. O to work hard for eternity, while the day lasts; for there is neither work nor device in the silent grave, where I am going.

July 7, 1767. O the antipathy that is between this and the unseen world! Whenever I am much occupied about the one I let go the other. Yet the day is fast approaching, when the things that my soul lusts after shall be found no more. Prosperity can neither lengthen my days, nor shorten my time—which is daily wasting away.

August 1, 1767. Why should I take such fast hold of the things of time? If grace

loosens not my hold of them—to my comfort; death will—to my sorrow. This day the burial of an infant and of an adult remind me of mine own. O for the art of realizing future things! I believe, and yet cannot believe that I am mortal!—this is no less true than strange. I am persuaded that the greater part of men—the old as well as the young—are arrested by death when least expected. "But God said to him—You fool! You will die this very night." *Luke 12:20*

August 4, 1767. It should make the Christian serious, to see the greater part of the world thoughtless about death and judgment. In a little while, where will the mirthful world be, who seem to place their happiness in admiring and being admired of one another? However gloomy the hour of death may be to nature, yet may my soul always find delight from the prospect!

September 1, 1767. Where are the wealthy men who lived half a century ago? They are now a feast for worms and their names are hardly known in the very places where they made their appearance. Now death is fast approaching to sweep me off, like those who have gone before. Why, then, should I fill my mind with anxious thoughts, or fond delights, which shall dwindle into nothing in the dissolving pang?

October 6, 1767. This day has brought me the heavy tidings of a dear, a beloved acquaintance, being hurried into the eternal and unchanging world. Indeed he was ready, which makes all other circumstances smile, though solemn. The high fever was but the fiery chariot to convey him home; the fall which fractured his skull, was but hastening his soul to be crowned with glory. I see that no man knows whether love or hatred will come to him in this life.

January 1, 1768. While one year ends and another begins, nothing makes the things of life sit lighter on the soul, than a firm belief of death. Here the sorrows of the galley-slave are finished, and the glory of the crowned head is overclouded forever. Among all the projects of men, none have ever attempted to arrest time, or subdue the grave! The Christian alone has hit upon the wonderful invention, and conquers the grave by preparing for it, and arrests time by improving it for eternity—where hours and days, and years, and ages, are all arrested, and stand still in an everlasting NOW.

January 5, 1768. If I should break down my whole life into days, hours, minutes, moments; I find every moment of my life will be comparable to ten thousand ages in eternity. What then, though all my moments were black with misery, since, in lieu of every afflicted breathing, I shall possess ten thousand ages, and infinitely more, of astonishing glory and unfading bliss!

January 16, 1768. For these two or three days past, I have labored under a short illness, accompanied with sharp pain. And what are these but the *advanced heralds* of the king of terrors? a sure proof that neither the enemy nor the day of battle are far off. Let Saul's unhappy complaint in another case, never be mine in

this, "The Philistines are upon me! (Death and judgment are upon me!) and God is departed from me."

February 2, 1768. Though disease should not attack me, an accident may hurry me away into eternity. And with accidents I am daily surrounded. Of this I had a double instance, both in the silent night and broad day. My horse stumbling and I, tumbling over his head, might have tumbled into eternity. What a hair-breadth is only between me and death! I am not to distrust divine protection—yet I am never to forget that I am mortal.

March 2, 1768. This last month has carried many away in an uncommon manner to their long home. Death, in the freezing storm, and tremendous tempest, has arrested some in their way to, and within a gun-shot of their homes; while neither their endeared relations, nor affectionate friends knew of their distress, or could stir to their relief. But whether in the field or by the fireside, death and I must enter the lists of battle. And in no war is it more advantageous to be ahead of the enemy, by being first in the field; which is only done by a due preparation for the final battle. It is much better to go forth like an undaunted hero—like a believing Christian—to the combat against this disarmed bravado, crying, "O death where is your sting?" than to be dragged, (for meet we must,) like a desponding unbeliever, to his cruel paws.

May 30, 1768 (birthday). There is a time to be born, this I have had. And a time to die; this awaits me—the *when*, or *how*, or *where*, I know not. What will riches do in the hour of death for me? Only hinder me. What will a fine house do? Nothing, really. What will character and name do? Only spread the report of my decease. But what will a reconciled God do? He will turn the shadow of death into the morning, and make me triumph over the last enemy!

June 7, 1768. Few are my days. And, alas! the few are ill improved. A spendthrift of time is the most inexcusable of all spendthrifts. One may waste his money, and a friend may leave him more—but I cannot do so, with my time.

July 7, 1768. For these two days, how have I been chastened with pain, and the multitude of my bones with strong pain! Thus, whether I will or not, I am reminded of my mortality, and also admonished to improve health while continued. For what can I do when struggling with disease, and groaning through pain?

July 8, 1768. This day shall be memorable to me, not only for the load of distress it brought along with it, but for the unwelcome news it wafted to my ears—of the death of an acquaintance. Our profession was the same, and we had no great difference in our ages or our health. Only on July 6th he could walk in his garden—when I was confined to my bed. But this morning he is no more—while I remain in the land of the living.

July 17, 1768. The *illness*, after an attack of eight days, is mercifully removed.

But it will return again, and one day or other overcome me.

August 2, 1768. What alarming thunders in the natural heavens have I heard this day! O that they may remind me of that tremendous day, when nations, tongues, and tribes, shall be convened before the bar of God! O to be at peace with the Thunderer! then shall everything speak peace to me, even the stones and beasts of the field; yes, though the thunderbolt should dash me among the dead, yet on the wings of the ethereal flame shall my soul soar away to the land of peace!

September 6, 1768. Nothing is a stronger proof of corruption being prevalent, than being *delighted* with a state of imperfection. Ah! then my own mouth condemns me; for what can be more imperfect than a state of sin and death? And, alas? how am I delighted therewith! I find vanity in the gayest things of time, and am sure that the several objects of carnal desire shall perish in the hour of death. But the immortal part triumphs in the happy prospect of an happy eternity.

It is common to bewail one who dies young. But if he dies in Christ, whatever loss it may be to his friends, to others, to the church—it can be none to himself. Did I know the sweet employment of the redeemed in heaven, I would long to join the divine assembly. Had I any spiritual taste of God's love, I would long to be drenched wholly in the overflowing ocean above!

October 7, 1768. What a thin partition is between time and eternity! And what window can let me look into the eternal and unchanging world! Every providence, every disappointment, bids me fix my eye on a future world; the death of every acquaintance affords me a prospect into eternity. Yes, the headache, or any touch of pain in my own body, are as so many chinks to peek into the eternal world.

October 15, 1768. Yesterday a young girl, in the bloom of youth, was carried to the house of corruption. Neither the affection of a parent, nor the endearments of a suitor, could avert the fatal blow. The afflicted lover attends the dying bed, witnesses the expiring groan, where all his pleasing prospects dissolve into disappointment and pain. And from the enchanting scenes and airy dreams of love—she awakens in the eternal, changeless world! Let lovers, then, amidst their excessive fondness, and delightful views, remember the hour of death, and the world to come. And whenever I die, may I go to a dearer beloved, and nearer relative, than any I can leave below.

January 28, 1769. This day a traveler, who on a visit to his friends was arrested by death, is carried to the house appointed for all living. What has transpired with him in these few days! Yesterday he set out on his journey, traveled sixteen miles, and fell down by the way-side, without friend or companion. The cold wet ground was his bed, a January sky was his covering, and the weather-beaten heath his pillow! After passing a tedious night in this deplorable situation, on the second day he is found chilled with cold, yet breathing. He is carried to a

hospitable house, where, in spite of all endeavors, he expires. And on this third day he is buried. Who can tell where I am going to die? whether in the fiery flame or the flowing stream, whether on the frozen field or friendly bed? But it matters not how, or where, or when. If I die in Christ, I shall die in peace, and live in glory!

February 16, 1769. Anger, malice, and envy—are not suitable for the bosom of mortals. How mad to plan out the period of revenge! for before it approaches, the fierce pursuer is no more. Hence God is said to laugh at the wicked plotting and planning his mischief, because he sees that his day is coming, that shall hinder the execution of his well-laid plots—and fix his awful state in endless woe. Nothing, then, should dwell in my bosom—but the immortal graces; faith which shall rise into vision, hope which shall grow into fruition, and love which shall dwell before the throne.

May 30, 1769 (birthday). This morning of my birthday has proved the day of death to a near neighbor of mine. And neither a scattered family nor a disconsolate widow, could detain him another day. What nearer could death come to remind me of my mortality, unless he had laid his hand on some of my family or myself? How deep am I rooted in the earth! On every birthday, on the beginning of every month, by every providence, I would fain get myself loosed from this perishing world—but still I take root again. Nothing but heavenly grace in exercise will loosen my affections from the earth.

June 20, 1769. This day a young man is buried, whose last words were lamentable. "Hell," said he, "is begun! O! death, death, death is nothing—if damnation were not at its back!" Indeed he was in a very high fever, and at times delirious. But this was truth with a witness!

October 3, 1769. What multitudes of mankind from every station have fallen in the conflict with this dread king of terrors, since I began to view the solemn period! Now, a thousand worlds are not worth a straw to them. Why, then, should I let the world so far into my heart, which, when my heart-strings break, will deceive me forever? How are my departed and dearest acquaintances employed this night? and how shall I be employed when I enter the eternal and unchanging world? If I expect to join in the hallelujah of the higher house, it well becomes me often to chant a stanza of the sacred anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!" And the oftener I sing the sweeter—until I rise to join the song above, that is inimitable below.

December 5, 1769. Man has not so many teachers in anything as about his mortality. And the child of a span long is as good a teacher, as the man of letters or of grey hairs. But of nothing is man more stupid, (I speak from mournful experience,) than about the mortality of the body, and the immortality of the soul. Hence so much care about the transient state, and so little concern about the world to come! But in a little while, dust must return to dust, while the immortal soul flies away to the eternal and unchanging world. O state unknown! yet

certain, and fast approaching.

January 2, 1770. The more 'new years' I have seen, surely the fewer I shall see. My short life is well represented by a sand-glass, whatever adds to the one end, diminishes from the other. Why, then, should my worldly cares so greatly increase about a life that is hastening to its end? It is an awful thing to be more and more glued to the world—the nearer I am to be taken out of the world!

February 1, 1770. What a strange antipathy is there between time and eternity! They cannot mingle more than light and darkness. Time may be lost in eternity—but time and eternity cannot measure the same duration. So it is with the things of time—and concerns of eternity. When the one has much place in the soul—the other has little reception there. If I am full of cares about time—I cannot have a proper concern about eternity. And if duly taken up about eternity—I will not be distracted with carking cares about time.

February 6, 1770. Death makes a solemn change, in a fourfold respect:

1. The person's self.
2. The person's place.
3. The person's company.
4. The person's employment.

First, With respect to the person's SELF. The soul leaves the clay tabernacle, and takes an eternal farewell of time. The body, lately beautiful and beloved, is laid in the bed of corruption.

Second, With respect to the person's PLACE. Death, in a moment, translates from this world, to the invisible and eternal world. And, according to the state of the departed, they either dwell in the paradise of God—or are plunged into the pit of despair!

Third, With respect to the person's COMPANY. Here I tremble to think on the innumerable multitudes of specters with whom the lost soul must mingle! with whom my acquaintance, who was buried yesterday, is already mingled! where the epithets of honor that lately distinguished them take place no more! Here on earth, we lose and find friends and companions. But there our society is eternal. O happy saints! O happy sons of God! who, when separated from the potsherds of the earth, rise to the church of the first-born, associate with the angels of light, and dwell in the presence of Jehovah and the Lamb! But O thrice miserable sinners! who at the hour of death must part with all that is dear to them, and in a moment be classed with millions of agonized human specters, with legions of blaspheming fiends, and that forever and ever!

Fourth, With respect to the person's EMPLOYMENT. Here on earth, we trifle about dust and atoms; there we are taken up with eternal things. Here the ungodly are mirthful, jesting, and merry—but there they are sad, and tormented with inexpressible anguish. Again, here the heirs of heaven often go mourning and afflicted—but there they lose their sorrows, and forget their woes, amidst the hosannas of eternal glory!

March 1, 1770. The way to prove my own readiness and resignation to die, is by my cheerful submission to the decease of my nearest and dearest friends. Now my nearest relative on earth is dangerously ill—but how I hold the grasp, plead and implore, that her days may be prolonged, and the disease mercifully removed.

March 6, 1770. Still my dear friend struggles for life—but knows nothing of the danger, being insensible to everything around, human and divine. O that the soul may be secretly supported, refreshed, comforted, by the eternal Spirit of grace! And may I, and every spectator, learn to improve time and opportunities better than before; for often the same cup has changed hands, and the last have drank deepest.

March 7, 1770. O how am I now distressed for the death of a dear sister! You have made desolate all my family, for I alone of all my family survive. O that I may not quarrel the conduct of the unerring providence of my all-gracious God! Now it touches me, and I am troubled; yet I dare not sorrow as those who never looked for the event, as *those that have no hope*. Nothing but a firm belief of the invisible world—while affection and submission struggle together—can make us let our friends go there, where we expect in a little while to arrive. Moreover, I cannot but observe, that on that very day (that is, the first Tuesday) of the month on which for some years I have contemplated my latter end—the melancholy scene was realized in my sight upon my nearest friend.

April 3, 1770. How soon do the impressions of a friend's death wear off our minds! and how little impression does our own death make on their minds! Surely, O grave! you are the land of deep forgetfulness. But he who was once dead, and is now alive—well remembers all his dead members.

June 5, 1770. Alas! a person may grow formal in anything, yes, even talk and write of death as a matter of course, without any just concern. But proper views of death will make impressions which the world and all its vanities will never be able to shake off. To die with this world seated in my mind, and rooted in my affections—is sad and melancholy. But to live with the eternal world in my view, and the affections set on heavenly things, is beautiful, and fitting for the expectant of eternal glory. When I put far away the day of death—I am ready to welcome earthly vanities to come near. But the nearer the future realities of the invisible world come, the further will I chase away, the vanities of this transitory

life.

September 4, 1770. No disappointment, and no malice from one perishing creature to another, need give much pain, because an end will be put to all, in a little while. But O the endearing condescension of the mighty One, to call worms and potsherds—his jewels, his crown, and royal diadem! May all my desires be heavenward and Godward—and my soul shall be filled with joy.

December 4, 1770. How apt am I to forget that I must die, and how seldom do my thoughts dwell on that momentous change that must pass upon me! There is something fearsome and solemn in the thought, that my invisible, immaterial part—dismantled of its flesh—shall take possession of the invisible world! There we shall have no tongue, and yet we shall sing his praise! There we shall have no eyes, and yet we shall see his glory! There we shall have no ears, and yet we shall hear the endless hallelujah! There we shall have no features, and yet we shall know and be known to one another. To go into such an unknown, unintelligible state, to mingle in such an invisible society—would terrify and trouble me, did not I know that I go to God, in whose presence I shall find everything familiar, pleasant, and divine!

This article is provided as a ministry of [Third Millennium Ministries](#) (Thirdmill). If you have a question about this article, please [email](#) our *Theological Editor*.

Subscribe to *Biblical Perspectives Magazine*

BPM subscribers receive an email notification each time a new issue is published. Notifications include the title, author, and description of each article in the issue, as well as links directly to the articles. Like BPM itself, *subscriptions are free*. To subscribe to [BPM](#), please select this [link](#).