

Eternity

by George Kulp

The sermon emphasizes the importance of considering the consequences of sin in eternity and the power of conscience to drive us to confession and repentance.

Scripture: Matthew 11:28

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Afterlife Consequences"

Description

George Kulp preaches about the concept of Eternity, emphasizing that what man achieves in this world is just a preparation for the eternal beyond. He delves into the incomprehensible nature of Eternity, highlighting the eternal consequences of our actions and the importance of making the right choices in this life to determine our fate in the next. Kulp stresses the significance of light, knowledge, and conscience in guiding our paths towards either an Eternity of happiness or woe, drawing attention to the eternal implications of our decisions and the weight of our memories and conscience in the afterlife.

Transcript

Eternity. The subject for our consideration, which is suggested by our text, is one in which all are interested. Tomorrow is Eternity. What man gets in this world is only a start in life, a preparation for the eternal beyond.

Isaiah 57:15

If I were asked to define time, I would reply, It is limited duration; yet who can comprehend the thousands of years that have elapsed since God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul? How much ... less then are we unable to comprehend Eternity, unlimited duration! An eloquent son of the South says: "Eternity cannot be defined. Beginningless and endless, it cannot be measured, its past increased, its future diminished. It has no past, it has no future, it has no middle, it has no ends, it has no parts -- an unanalyzable; tremendous unit. It is something which always was, always is and always will be. It is coeval with God. It began when He began, and He had no beginning. It is an unoriginated, beginningless, endless, measureless, imperishable, indescribable, indefinable thing. If asked, What is Eternity? we can only answer: 'Eternity.' It is older than the world, older than the sun, older than the stars, older than the angels -- as old as God -- yet no older now than when worlds, suns, stars and angels were made, and never will be any older, yet never was any younger."

On the walls of a monastery in Canada, where the inmates can see them plainly, are these words: "Nothing is long but Eternity," and towards that Eternity we are all rapidly tending. Whether it shall be an Eternity of happiness or woe, depends upon our improvement or our abuse of time. God always gives light. Before the Deluge He sent Noah, a preacher of righteousness, who faithfully warned the antediluvian world, until God, grieved by their wickedness, repented Him that He had made man and declared His Spirit should no longer strive.

Lot preached to ungodly Sodom until his righteous soul was vexed by their unrighteous deeds in continually sinning, until their grievous sins provoked the wrath of God.

In the days of Christ, they had greater light, as He preached unto them, saying, "Repent and believe ye the Gospel."

When the Spirit came in His fullness on the day of Pentecost, they had yet greater light, but in the twentieth century we have light surpassing all the light of all the ages past, for we have the Word of God, the fullness of the Spirit, the witness of nineteen centuries, and the example of the saints living around us today, and, if we go into Eternity unsaved, the deepest, darkest Hell will be ours, for, in accordance with our light, so has been our responsibility.

Some have said: "Oh, if I had only lived in the time of Christ, I would have believed on Him, I would have been His disciple." But Jesus said: "Greater works than these that I do shall ye do, because I go unto My Father." He declared: "John was greater than all the prophets preceding him, yet the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he."

Our light, our obligations, are greater than that of any age in the past, and our damnation will be greater, if we neglect our opportunities. You do not believe it? Listen to the words of Him in whom was hid all the fulness of the Godhead: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, shalt be thrust down to Hell."

Light means knowledge of duty, and in the Word we are taught God's requirements upon us, and He tells us, "If ye KNOW these things, happy are ye if ye do them. If ye do these things, ye shall never be moved." Again, He, by His Spirit, gives us in the Epistle to the Galatians, a long catalogue of sins, and declares: "They that do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." To every sinner the time is coming when He Will say to him: "Ye knew your duty and ye did it not; depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

This brings us to the subject we would now present -- The Sinner in Eternity. You do not want to think of it. You would put it away from you. Mirabeau, when dying, said: "Give me laudanum, that I may not think of Eternity."

"To think when Heaven and earth are fled,

And times and seasons o'er;

When all that can die, shall be dead;

That I shall die no more:

Oh, what shall then my portion be,

Where Shall I Spend Eternity?"

After light, after knowledge, after probation, after the Word, after sermons, after the Spirit's pleadings, after death, after you have crossed the boundary of time, "Where will you spend Eternity?"

A man went to New York to buy goods. The merchant took him out to see the city. They went from one house to another, from one scene of carousal to another, until, half intoxicated, they stood in a palatial saloon before a marble bar and gilded mirror, and were about to take another glass. The merchant said to his visiting friend: "Let us be merry while we may, for when a man is dead, he is dead a long while." "Yes, a long while," thought the visitor, "even through all Eternity." The thought aroused, troubled him -- "through all Eternity" -- and yet sinning against light, against knowledge, against blood-bought privileges, and to be a lost sinner throughout all Eternity!

The devils in Hell will be astonished that any soul living in your light, in your knowledge, should come to that place of eternal torment. That you, for whom Christ died, with whom the Spirit plead, should persistently push your way over the crucified Son of God to reach an eternal Hell! The sinners, the lost of past ages, who never had your light, your privileges, never heard such presentations of the Gospel as you have heard, will stand aghast to see you entering the abode of the damned; you with your feet red with the blood you trampled upon, as over prayers, mourners benches, sermons, tears and entreaties of friends, aye, of the very Lamb of God Himself, you hastened to your eternal doom.

Every man has in himself all the elements of retributive penalty, and he takes them into Eternity with him.

An old colored woman was in the habit of talking to her profligate nephew in regard to his soul, and often told him of God's wrath upon the sinner and of the fearful doom toward which he was hastening. One day he sneeringly said to her: "Say, auntie, where do they get their brimstone from?" and quickly she replied: "O child, they carry it with them." True enough, every sinner carries with him into Eternity the very elements that make Hell awful.

One of Dickens' characters -- "Monks" by name -- an awful profligate, a violator of the laws of God and man, stood at the entrance to a house, knocking for admission, the rain falling in torrents as he awaited a response. Being detained in the rain, he looked up and said, as he smote his breast: "All the rain that ever has fallen, or ever will fall, cannot put out the fires that I feel burning in here." In his own heart, Hell was then raging, and even the waters of death never could put it out.

The sinner takes with him into Eternity his memory -- and this alone will make Hell awful. Abraham said to the rich man: "Son, remember." You may take men out of the body, but still they will remember. My power to remember, to think, to reason, does not depend upon my body; apart from it I can do all these things. Memory is the worm that dieth not. Oh, if man only could forget! If time only would blot out! But there is no such thing as absolute forgetfulness.

Here is a father, proud of his only boy. Looking at his own callused hands, he says: "My boy shall never work as I do. I will give him advantages such as I never possessed, no matter what it costs." The boy goes to school, advances from grade to grade, from school at home to college away from home, then from college to the university, and spends years in the law department. In the meantime, the father's means are depleted, all the cash is gone. He sells off forty acres to keep that boy in college, then forty more to keep

him in the university. The son graduates with honor, hangs out his shingle in the adjoining city, but clients come slowly to a young lawyer, and while they are coming he must live. The last forty acres are sold and, as he sends the money to his boy, the wife says: "Why, father, what will you do when we get old?" "Oh, John will take care of us," he replies.

The years roll on, the clients come to the young lawyer and with them wealth and fame. A wife comes to his side, a palatial home is furnished, children enter the home and everything is in style and luxury. The father, now an old man, goes to town to see "his boy," but he is uncouth, out of place amid such surroundings, and soon learns he is not wanted, especially, by the fashionable wife and fashionable daughters. He would like them to play and sing some of the old hymns -- "Jerusalem, My Happy Home," and "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" -- but their tastes run to rag-time music and the waltz and march. His visits to John's grow few and far between, until, as a result of chilly receptions, he stays at home. Home? Is it home to him? The wife is gone, the acres are gone, nothing left but the house, and it takes more than square walls to make a home.

Disease comes and lays the father low. Listen to him: "I want to see John." The family physician knows the whole history; he has been with them many years, and he sits down and writes: "Judge, your father is very ill and wants to see you. His constant cry is, 'I want to see John.' Come at once." The judge gets the letter, but there is an entertainment that night, some fashionable function of society, and he cannot, must not, miss that. Again a letter goes: "Come! Your father wants to see you. He cries in his delirium, 'I want John.'" A telegram follows this: "Your father is dying. Come at once." This arouses him; he gets to the train, and while going back to the old home, conscience speaks. He has had very little time for even his conscience in these latter years. "What if you are too late.?"

The station is reached, and the judge gets out, walks up the road, so familiar still, looks at the old farm, the acres sold to make a man of him, thinks of the father's love, and then, "What if I am too late? What if he is dead?" There is the house and everything so quiet. "Why, father is gone. There is crepe on the door." He enters and is greeted by the doctor. "Judge, your father is gone, and to the very last he cried, 'I want to see John.' Will you go in and look at him?" No; wait until he is in the casket.

The funeral day comes. The judge all alone leans over the casket, and looks at the face, the form, now so cold in death, and thinks, thinks of the sacrifices that father made, of the home and lands he gave up, of his own cruel, thoughtless neglect, of the cry through those weary hours, "I want to see John," and in his agony he groans, "Father, father, speak to me just once. I have come, father," but the lips are forever silent, and the judge turns away heart-broken, and with a picture in his memory he would gladly forget. The services are over; he returns to his home; but all the city's gaiety, all the luxuries of home, all the business of his busy life, can never blot out that picture. His life is miserable, his heart is heavy. Forget? He cannot forget.

Listen! If memory of the past can make this life a burden, what of memory throughout eternity? Here one can repent, but there is no repentance in Hell. The lost can remember the Spirit's pleading, the Gospel sermons, the revival services, a mother's prayers, the mourner's bench, and slighted opportunities, and the remembrance will make even Hell itself tenfold more a Hell.

Yonder in an insane asylum, lying on a cot, is a dying sailor, an old sea captain. Hear him moaning: "Port your helm, there is a man drowning; port your helm, there is a man drowning." Twenty years before his sailing vessel left Liverpool for New York in a contest with other vessels, the one arriving first in port to

receive \$5,000.00 in gold. When a few days out, a storm came up, vessels were wrecked, and as the lookout was scanning the waves, he cried: "A sailor drowning!" Instantly the captain cried to the man at the wheel: "Port your helm, there is a man drowning!" As he obeyed and the vessel swung around off her course, there appeared before the captain that bag of gold, and, in response to his greed, he cried: "Steady on your course. But then turning his eyes toward the sea, he saw the drowning man, and again he cried: "Port your helm, there is a man drowning! The helmsman brought her around again; but that cursed lust for gold made its power felt, and he commanded: Steady on your course!" and left the sailor to drown. But ever in his memory was that scene, a man -- a fellow sailor -- left to drown, until reason tottered from its throne, and he ended his days in an insane asylum, crying with his latest breath: "Port your helm, there is a man drowning !" Forget it? Never! Stop repeating it? Never, until death comes to his release. But there is no death in hell. Men seek death there and it flees from them. Memory makes Hell awful.

Man carries with him into Eternity, not only his memory, but also his conscience. Conscience is not that faculty which tells you what is right and what is wrong, but it tells you, "Do not do the thing you believe to be wrong," and Conscience has the power to make a life miserable, to rob of all peace. It will not be bribed, nor cajoled, nor persuaded, nor frightened, nor flattered. It is as uncompromising as God. Conscience was once the vicegerent of God, and even now in its ruin has enough of the godlike about it never to be altogether and always silent. It cannot forget its holy lineage and its functions derived from Deity. "A guilty conscience needs no accuser."

Some time ago a woman came to my door and rang the bell. I went to the entrance and saw her in tears, and in such awful agony as one rarely sees in these days. She said: "God sent me over here to make a confession. I have had no rest, and no peace; I must tell you," and then she proceeded with her story. In her youth she was brought up in ignorance, as to morals untaught, and left to her own will. She had been of splendid physique, and handsome in appearance. Early in life she was married, but soon tiring of her companion, and he being untrue, she was divorced. Another man appeared upon the scene, and she was betrayed. A child was born out of wedlock. As she told this part of her life, her agony of soul was indescribable. She said: "Oh, I must tell it! God gives me no peace till I confess! I did not want that babe, and I put my fingers around its little neck and I strangled it to death. O God, have mercy on me!" I said: "My sister, do not tell that to another living soul. You have now confessed it, and that is all that God requires. Come out in the sitting-room and wife and I will pray with you." We knelt in prayer, and she also prayed, and such a prayer one seldom hears; such groans, and confessions to God, and pleading! God heard and answered, and she went from our home a saved woman. But listen! Conscience drove her to confession; and confession and prayer, and faith in Jesus' blood, brought her peace. But confession in Hell is confession too late. If Conscience makes one so miserable in this life, what will it do throughout eternity?

In preaching in a certain church some time ago, I made this statement: "If ever you were on the train with a child over six years of age, for whom you should have paid full fare, and you did not pay it, even though the conductor did not ask for it, you robbed the company and you will never get right with God until you make it right." Within ten days a lady came to me and said: "O Mr. Kulp, I want to talk with you. Ten years ago I was on the train riding from Battle Creek to Albion, and had L_____ with me. She sat on my lap. She was over six years of age, and the conductor never said anything and I did not pay. Now, what shall I do? I don't feel right about it." I said: "Go buy a ticket and pay the company." She did so, and was relieved of condemnation. But what made that woman uncomfortable, even though ten years had gone by? Just Conscience alone, and that same Conscience, when the soul is separated from the body, can and will

make Hell awful when and where there is no chance to restore, no opportunity to get right.

"My son, I am sick today. Go down to the market-place, and open the bookstand for me. Today is Saturday, the best day in all the week for sales." Samuel heard, but did not go. He disobeyed the sick father and incurred the condemnation which always comes to the disobedient. Fifty years afterward down in the old market-place one might have seen a strange sight. An old man, well dressed, hair streaked with gray, one of the best known men in all England, standing uncovered for one long hour in the merciless pelting rain, standing right where the old bookstand used to be. Who was it? Samuel Johnson, author and philosopher, trying to make atonement for the disobedience of fifty years before, trying to quiet the Conscience that lashed him through all these years. The adulation of literary friends, the commendation of critics whose favors others sought after, could not give him rest. Conscience would be heard, much to his discomfort.

Hugo gives an excellent representation of the power of Conscience. Jean Valjean stole a few loaves of bread to satisfy the hunger of his sister's starving children. He was apprehended and sent to jail. In a little while he escaped, only to be re-arrested and sent to the galleys, as a criminal, in having broke jail. From the galleys, after the lapse of a few years, he again escaped, and meeting a godly priest, he was influenced toward a better life, became a good man, prospered in business, owned a number of manufactories, was elected mayor of the city and stood among the first in society. One day he read in the paper that Jean Valjean, the escaped galley convict, had been recaptured, and would again be resented, and returned to the old life. Monsieur Madeline (for such was the assumed name of the real Valjean) read the story again and again -- read with bated breath -- as Conscience said: "You must not let an innocent man suffer." He retired for the night, but not to sleep. Would he let another wrongfully suffer for him? But it meant much to give himself up -- to cut loose from wealth and friends and position. Would he do it? Nothing less would satisfy Conscience, and it was clamorous. Toward morning he said, "I will do it," and, Conscience satisfied, he turned over and went to sleep.

The week following saw him in the court-room, facing the judges, who obsequiously arose and bowed as he entered. "Gentlemen," said he, "have you here one Jean Valjean?" "Yes, an escaped convict." "You are mistaken." "Oh, no an old pal recognizes him and appears against him." "Let me see him." The witness appears and the real Valjean says: "Did you know Jean Valjean?" "Yes, sir; worked by his side in the galleys." "Had a scar on his arm?" "Yes, sir." "Is that it?" drawing up the sleeve and showing the scar. "Yes, you are Jean Valjean." And the real Valjean took his place in the prisoner's box. Such is the power of Conscience, sovereign in its imperious demands until satisfied, but in Eternity there is no purging of an evil conscience through the blood of Jesus; no getting right with an accusing conscience.

"But I do not believe in Hell, and punishment, and an Eternity of suffering." What you believe never will alter the facts of God's Word. The time is coming when your conscience will get the best of your creed.

Herod did not believe in a future, neither in soul nor spirit. He was a Sadducee. When the daughter of Herodias danced before him and pleased him, he said: "Ask what you will and it shall be given you, even the half of my kingdom," and she asked and received the head of John the Baptist. Some time afterward the courtiers, in Herod's presence, were talking of One who opened the eyes of the blind, unstopped deaf ears, and even raised the dead. Herod heard them and, as his cheeks paled and his knees smote each other, he said: "It is John whom I beheaded." His conscience got the best of his creed. He professed disbelief in soul or spirit or future, but an aroused, alarmed conscience forces from this stricken, evil king an acknowledgment of a truth that he, in his calmer moments, denied. An enlightened conscience always

sides with God.

Man takes with him into Eternity his Reason, and Memory, Conscience and Reason make Hell awful. Reason approves of the penalty. "I was warned, I knew the truth, the Spirit was faithful, the Word was preached, but I rejected all that God did to save me, and I am justly condemned." The man without the wedding garment was speechless, because he was guilty and knew it. A garment had been provided, he might have arrayed himself; he despised the provision, and was justly punished, having invited his own doom.

Now man can get into harmony with God. Now the blood of Christ can purge an evil conscience. Now

"There is a fountain filled with blood,

Drawn from Immanuel's veins;

And sinners plunged beneath that flood,

Lose all their guilty stains"

Eternity implies not only an eternal Heaven, but also an eternal Hell. And listen! fellow-travelers to the bar of God, the darkness of Hell is one eternal night. Years roll upon years, ages upon ages, lost souls, horror-stricken by the blackness of darkness, cry out in their agony, "Will the night never end? Will this darkness last forever?" -- And from the dark caverns of the precincts of the damned comes back the answer, "Forever." No star of hope ever lights up this night, no ray of light ever penetrates the abode of the lost; it is night that day never follows; it is night without a morning; one long, black, eternal night -- "no sun or star to chase away its eternal vapors." "The best Hell the sinner is promised is a world of ruins shrouded in night's blackest pall, where no one of the damned has a friend, where all ranks and sexes are herded in one promiscuous mob, with foulest demons; where every stinking cave is inhabited with fiends and gnashing, ghosts, and on whose black crags the ravens of despair sit and croak; where God's eternal Justice plies his burning whip and Remorse lays on with his fiery thongs, the flashes of whip and thongs their only light, world without end! Where will you spend ETERNITY?

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