

Eternity

by J. Wilbur Chapman

The sermon emphasizes the importance of considering Eternity and making choices that align with God's will in order to avoid a life without purpose and a life that is ultimately unsatisfying.

Scripture: Psalm 90:2, Isaiah 57:15, Matthew 25:46, John 3:16, Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 4:18, Hebrews 9:27, 1 Peter 1:24, Revelation 22:5

Topics: "Eternal Salvation", "Gods Judgment"

Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches about the powerful words 'Lost' and 'Eternity,' emphasizing the urgency of understanding their significance. He challenges the audience to contemplate where they will spend eternity, highlighting the infinite nature of God and the importance of choosing salvation. Chapman warns against being indifferent or reckless towards eternity, sharing poignant stories to illustrate the consequences of neglecting God. He urges everyone to turn to God, emphasizing that true satisfaction can only be found in Him.

Transcript

My text this evening is one word. Ever since I have been a minister I have asked God to help me say two words and say them properly. It is said that Whitefield used to say "Oh!" in such a fashion that his hearers were convicted of sin and some of them would cry out for mercy. The first word that I would like to say properly is "Lost." I have never yet spoken it as it ought to be uttered. I have tried my best and failed. If I could say it as the Son of God appreciated it when, fainting beneath the weight of the Cross, He staggered up Calvary's hill, I would not need to preach. To me it is the most striking word in the English language. The other word I have asked God to help me say is the word of my text. It is written in Isaiah 57:15. It is the word "ETERNITY."

A thousand years from to-night we shall be somewhere. Ten thousand years from to-night. Increase the multiple and you only increase the truth. How can a man speak a word that takes in the ages of time and all beyond it. ETERNITY! The old cobbler sat day after day on his little bench, hammering away at the shoes, and before him was an old-fashioned clock. After a while he thought that the pendulum of the clock was speaking to him and he heard it say as it swung one way, - Eternity, and when it went the other way, - Where? And the old clock became a preacher and he heard it speaking like this: "Eternity, where? Eternity, where?" The question is a solemn one. Eternity, where?

The word becomes all the greater when I add to it a part of the verse in which the text is found: "The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." What a subject for thought is here. I speak of this One and they tell me that He is omnipresent, that is, everywhere. I speak again of Him and they say that He is omnipotent, that is, all-powerful. I talk of Him again and they tell me that He is omniscient, that is, all-knowing. We have come in contact with great minds. This is the greatest. We have been influenced by great personalities. This is an infinite personality. When I put these words together, the statement of my text is startling. "One that inhabiteth eternity." He is infinite. He is eternal. He is unchangeable. Eternity is the place of His abode.

Answer me this question: Where will you spend eternity? Nobody can answer it but you. If I could answer it for you, God knows I would. If the mother who wrote this request that I hold in my hand and said: "My heart will break if my boy is not saved" - if she could answer this question for her boy, I know she would. God has placed the power of choice and determination in our hands. God may love, and Jesus may die, and the Spirit may plead, but you alone can settle the question of eternity. Answer me this: Where will you spend eternity?

I was preaching in Lincoln, Nebraska, when a professor of mathematics stepped up behind me and said: "Eternity begins where computation ends." I said: "Professor, what does that mean?" "It means this," he said, "that when the man with the greatest mind the world has known thinks his way out and out and out into the future, and his mind fails because it can go no farther, that is the beginning of eternity." There is no end. Sometimes men try to measure the depth of dark caverns, but the plummet is not long enough. So they measure the depth like this: They take a stopwatch in one hand and a piece of rock in the other, and note the time when the rock drops from their fingers, and listen as it strikes the bottom, noting the time it has taken to fall. If you know the weight of the rock and the time of falling, you can measure with some degree of accuracy the depth of the darkness. They tell me that sometimes they let a stone fall and there comes back no answer from below. To-night I stand on the edge of the precipice of time, and I cry up into the light and into the darkness: "How long art thou, Eternity?" I get the answer from this Book. "The peace of the righteous is everlasting. The doom of the wicked is without end."

Where will you spend it? I have no apology to make this evening for asking you to think about Eternity when there are so many problems in time. I have no apology for asking you to think about the future when on all sides of us there is the cry of the needy, burdens that must be lifted, and tears that must be wiped away. I cry out for this reason. A man is never fitted for time until he is prepared for eternity.

One of the members of my household was dying. She came to the time of crisis. The doctor took her pulse. It was six o'clock. "She will pass the crisis at midnight," he said. I remember how we stood and watched her white face, and then the clock. The hands seemed never to move. Every second was a minute. Every minute longer than an hour. Six hours seemed an age. If every day were like that, we should still have no conception of eternity. When my father slipped away into eternity, one of his friends gave me his pocketbook. I opened it and found inside a piece of poetry, stained on one side as if with tears, and pasted together on the other as if worn with much reading. Some of the verses I remember after all these years:

"How long sometimes a day appears,

And weeks, how long are they.

Months move as if the years

Would never pass away.

But days and weeks are passing by,

And soon must all be gone.

For day by day as moments fly,

Eternity comes on.

Days, months, and years must have an end,

Eternity has none.

'Twill always have as long to spend,

As when at first begun."

Tell me, this evening, where will you spend it? Here in this world you have crowded God out of your life. You have lost consideration of Him. You have built your home without Him. You are training your children without Him. Yet you were made for God. Nothing less than God can satisfy you. If I had a place on which to stand and could hurl into space a million worlds like ours, I could never fill space. When I open my Bible, I read in the Psalms: "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there." Whether I climb up into the light or go down into the darkness, in the daytime, in the night-time, I find God. Only God can fill space and only God can fill my life.

You are going out into Eternity. God pity you. Oh, to have no hope, no Saviour. How long and dark the way is. Answer me this question: Do you not think that in these days, especially these prosperous days, we are thinking too much of time and all too little of Eternity? There is a great war filling the world at this moment, and we are a neutral nation. Multitudes of homes in the nations of Europe have marks of mourning upon them. I received a letter this morning from a friend in Glasgow. He wrote me about one of our dear friends. He said: "Lady Maclay is aging rapidly." Grief for her lost boy is turning her life into winter. When that great day came, June 29th, and the British soldiers charged on the Dardanelles, her boy went down in a moment. And here are we, in this great protected nation, with no roar of cannon and no breaking of hearts. We are pursuing wealth and pleasure. We are forgetting God. I want to ask you this question: Do you think that we ought to be called to serious thought? I am neither a prophet nor a son of a prophet, but I know that will come to America if in her pursuit after pleasure and her love of power she continues to forget God. Judgment will fall. Judgment! I tremble for the country that will not hear when God speaks, and for the man who builds for time and has no thought of the future.

Answer me this question: Do you really think that men at heart are indifferent? Let your mind run over the list of men you know. Do you think that they are indifferent? I do not. I know men fairly well. I know what they sometimes say with their lips. If I were to go through your shops and some of the workmen would tell me they were not interested in God, I should know they were not speaking the truth. If I were to go through your college halls and some student would say that he was not interested in spiritual things, I should know that he was speaking falsely. They are not indifferent. You walk the streets some day and your best friend passes you and you never see him. You take your seat by the fireside with the newspaper that you never read a line of. You were saying as you walked the streets, or as you sat by the fireside, or as you tossed restlessly upon your pillow: "God! Eternity! My soul! What must I do to be saved?"

A Christian gentleman went to one of the judges in the state of Georgia and said: "Judge, I hear that you and your wife are to separate." He was highly indignant, and said: "Sir, that is an insult. No two people in this world have loved each other more devotedly. Separate! Nothing could separate us." His friend said: "But, Judge, your wife is a Christian. She is far from well, and the doctor tells me that she cannot live long, and you are not a Christian. Your wife will go straight to God. You are turning your back on Him." The old judge stood with tears running down his cheeks and lips trembling as he said: "My God! I never thought of that."

Men are not indifferent. Answer me this: Are you reckless? A friend of mine crossed the Alps, and in crossing he came to a dangerous pathway, not much wider than my two hands. Deep abysses yawned on either side. He was a courageous mountain climber, but he said: "I shall not cross it." The guide, throwing away his alpenstock and putting his hand over his eyes, started on the narrow pathway, making his way carefully across, until at last he turned and beckoned to my friend. This old Book that I hold in my hand says: The path of life is a hand's breadth, and life itself is a vapor. With no desire to appeal to your emotions, I say what every doctor would warrant me in saying: There is one heart beat between you and Eternity. Yet you hold back as I plead with you, as your old mother prays for you, as your wife is in agony about you, as the ministers are heartbroken over you - and to-morrow, to-morrow may be Eternity. God pity you. I do not understand you. Why do you not come to Jesus?

Answer me this: Are you satisfied? I mean the man without God. I had a dear friend in my first pastorate in New York. He was the president of the village. A great warm-hearted man. I loved him devotedly and he returned my affection. The devil tripped him and he began to drink. I hate the devil for that. It has often seemed to me that men like my friend are just the men the devil trips up. Not narrow, stingy men, - he has them anyway - but big hearts, big men. So my friend went down. When he had no home I took him into mine, but he would not stay. He was a great friend to me in the days of his prosperity. I was pastor of two little churches, and every Sunday I went up the Hudson and preached at my second church. I had to hire a horse and buggy, and I had about as much money as country ministers usually have. It cut in on my savings. One day I heard a ring at the door, and there stood my friend with a big fur coat on. He said: "Hurry, hurry." I thought there was some danger near, and so ran and put on my coat. He took me by the arm and around to the rear of the house, and there, hitched to the telegraph pole, was a gray horse and cutter. I have seen a good many horses in my time, but that one was perfection.

We got into the cutter and drove to the river where the ice was three feet thick. We drove four miles up the river, and then he put the reins in my hands and said: "Now, you drive." No little boy sitting beside his father was ever prouder than I was when I took the reins in my hands. When we got to the end of the drive, we came to my house and stepped out of the cutter. It was at that moment that he threw his arm around my shoulder and said: "This is yours." Imagine my delight. And the devil got that splendid friend of mine. One night I saw him all in rags, and I went to him and said: "Thank God, you are coming back." "Not so fast," he said. "But you are Mr. D-----, think about your old mother." She was dead then. "Remember your wife and boy." The boy was dead. I had buried him. Nothing moved my friend. Finally, I said: "You are not satisfied, are you?" He sprang to his feet and held on to the back of the chair, swaying for the moment as if he would fall, and said a thing that I can hear him saying now. "Satisfied! What has it cost me? I, the president of the village, and homeless. My mother dead of shame, my wife in the insane asylum, my boy in his grave. Satisfied!"

No man in all this world is satisfied without God. You are not. To-night as I close my appeal I say to every man in this building: In God's name, why don't you turn? Why don't you turn? Drifting, drifting, drifting, out

into the sea of Eternity! And I stand lifting the warning cry: Why don't you turn? Tell me why. The very atmosphere of this place seems filled with God. It may be that God is giving some of you your last call. The door is open and it may shut again. Turn now. Why will you die?

You know this old story. I happen to know the real truth about it, for a friend of mine was in a way associated with it. On the Harlem railroad a man kept the bridge. It was an old-fashioned drawbridge that turned with man power. You remember how he got a message to keep the bridge shut because a special was coming. However, just as the order came he heard the whistle of a little tug boat, and saw that he only needed to throw the bridge a little to let the tug boat through with her flagstaff. After he had let the tug through he turned to throw the bridge back and something was out of order. He bent to his task, pulling and pushing. The sweat came in great drops from his brow. An agonizing cry rose from his heart. The special came down the track and through the open bridge, and scores of people were killed. The keeper of the drawbridge was a man under fifty, and in the night his hair turned as white as snow. My friend went to where they kept him until he died, and the man walked up and down in his little padded cell like a caged tiger, by day and by night, rarely sleeping. One thing he kept saying over and over again: "Oh, if I only had. If I only had. If I only had." When he became exhausted he would fall on his cot, only to rise again and say: "Oh, if I only had."

To-night the door is wide open and people are praying and God is waiting. It would be an awful thing to go out into Eternity saying: "If I only had." To-night I plead with you. I think God has sent me to some of you to give you another call. These meetings are going on because God in his mercy is flinging wide the door once more. Come in. Come in. You fathers here, you can never expect your boys to go in unless you go yourself. If my mother had not been a sweet, consistent Christian, dying at thirty-four, I wonder where I should have been. You young men, you boys and girls, everybody, come in!

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