

The Voice of the Clock

by James Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living purposefully in light of the inevitability of death, focusing on work, prayer, and preparation for eternal life.

Scripture: Ecclesiastes 9:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, James 4:14, 1 Peter 1:24, Revelation 14:13

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Faith Preparation"

Description

James Smith delivers a powerful sermon reflecting on the brevity of life and the certainty of death, emphasizing the importance of being prepared for eternity. He highlights the significance of using our present life to prepare for the future, focusing on faith in Christ, laboring for God, and spending our lives for the good of others. Smith reminds believers that while life is for work, death is for rest, and encourages them to look forward to the eternal rest and praise in heaven. He concludes with a call to self-reflection on how we employ our time on earth and whether we are ready for the transition to eternity.

Transcript

Sitting in my school-room one Sunday morning, waiting for the clock to strike seven, in order to commence the early prayer meeting, I was struck with what appeared to be the loud ticking of the clock. "Tick, tick, tick" it went. I listened, it seemed to be different to its usual tick. I suppose that my imagination began to work, for I thought it seemed to say, "Life, death; Life, death; Life, death!" It awed me; I felt solemnized. I took out my pencil, and dotted down a few thoughts, which I think may be useful.

Life is introductory to death. Life is now, death will come soon. The pendulum, reaching one side says, "life,"--a child is born; it reaches the other side and says, "death"--a soul is departed. How small a space there is between life and death, in every case; but how very small the space between the life of one, and the death of another--only the swing of the pendulum. Let us listen to the teaching of the clock: "LIFE, DEATH."

Life now--death soon.

What is your life? It is but a vapor, that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away.

What is life? It is like the beautiful eastern flower, that grows in the morning, reaches perfection by noon, and fades when the sun sets!

What is life? It is like the shadow that continually shortens until the sun reaches the meridian, and then it is gone.

Life is now, this moment. I am not sure of the next. Now I am strong, before long I may be paralyzed. Now I have my reason, momentarily I may be unconscious. Now I may do great things, and secure great blessings; in a moment I may have no power, and my last opportunity may be lost.

Now life--soon death!

Yes, even now death's commission may be signed; even now, his arm may be uplifted, about to strike the fatal blow! Many every day are taken away with a stroke. No warning is given--but as swift as the movement of the pendulum, the arrow flies, the heart is pierced, life rushes forth, the work is done!

Do we realize the brevity of life as we should? Are we affected by it as we ought? Are we prepared for sudden death? These are solemn questions. Life with us will soon end; death will soon make its appearance; and then, prepared or unprepared, we must obey its mandate, we must depart!

Let us use the present--to prepare for the future. During life, let us learn to conquer death. This can only be done by faith in Christ, union to Christ, and fellowship with Christ. Faith in his blood, union to his person, and fellowship with him as the fullness of God.

Life is for work--death is for rest.

LIFE is for LABOR. Labor for the body; labor for the soul; labor for the family; labor for the church; labor for God. Solomon said, "Everything is full of labor." Life was intended for employment. Each of us should have something to do; plenty to do. That to do, which is worth doing. Unless we are employed, we cannot be happy. There is no law that anyone should be happily unemployed. God has created no place in which an idle person can be happy.

We must work--if we would eat with an appetite.

We must work--if we would sweetly sleep.

We must work--if we would be respected by man.

We must work--if we would be honored by God.

One of the rules of God's church is "If any man will not work--neither shall he eat!" Let us think it an honor to work for our daily bread; but let us not labor only for the bread which perishes--but for that also which endures unto everlasting life, which the Lord Jesus has promised to give us. Let nothing satisfy us but an interest in Christ, a part with Christ, and the enjoyment of Christ.

Having realized our own salvation by faith in Jesus, then life is to be spent for the good of others. "Let no man seek his own--but every man another's welfare." "Look not every man on his own things--but every man also on the things of others."

Look at their ignorance--and endeavor to instruct them; look at their degradation--and try to raise them; look at their danger--and try to snatch them as brands from the flames. "Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire." The grand work of believers, is instrumentally to save souls from death. On this--every Christian's heart should be set; toward this--all our energies should be bent. Labor for souls, to

win them to Christ, is labor for God, and labor for God cannot be in vain.

We never knew a case, we have never heard of one, in which a believer's heart was set upon the conversion of souls, praying for them, and using means in dependence on the Holy Spirit to win them--which was not crowned with success. Life is given us to spend for Jesus, in conquering his foes, aiding his friends, relieving his poor, teaching his young ones, comforting his old ones, and directing his bewildered ones. "We live unto the Lord;" so said Paul of himself, and of the primitive saints. Oh, that it could be said of all professors now!

DEATH is for REST. Yes, the poor body will have rest enough in the grave. As the body of Jesus, worn out with labors, watchings, fastings, sufferings, and mental agonies, rested sweetly in Joseph's tomb; so shall our poor bodies, when worn out with disease, sufferings, and labors for God. In this, we shall be conformed to Jesus, and there is something sweet in being where Jesus was, and in being made conformable to him. The shroud, the coffin, and the grave--will be sweet to the exhausted laborer in God's vineyard. He will have no dying regrets; he will have no fears of the future; but his work being done, he will lay down on his dying pillow in faith, and say with sainted Simeon, "Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word!"

Nor will the body lie always in the grave, for the resurrection morning comes, and in the morning it will awake, and made like unto the glorious body of Jesus, will be a fit companion and residence for the glorified spirit forever. Yes, the poor body must rise again, after it has rested--but not as when it went to sleep--but freed from all deformity, disease, weakness, and every cause of pain--like the beautiful body of unfallen Adam, or the more beautiful body of the risen Savior, it will rise powerful, spiritual, and incorruptible, to unite with the soul in glorifying God forever!

Death is for rest; not merely for the rest of the body--but for the soul. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth; yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works follow them." They rest from labor, not from service; for they serve God day and night in his temple.

Sweet, sweet, inexpressibly sweet--will be the rest of the soul in the presence of Jesus, when absent from the body--we are present with the Lord. Then we shall rest from the painful inward conflict. No more will there be flesh to lust against the Spirit; no more shall we cry out, "I am carnal!" no more shall we utter with deep groaning of soul, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death!" We shall rest from all the opposition, persecution, and reproaches of the world. We shall rest from cares and fears, from sighs and sorrows, from despondency and gloom! Yes, death is for rest!

The battle is then won,

the race is then ended,

the conflict is forever terminated,

the pilgrimage is honorably finished.

Rest, rest, rest forever--is the privilege and portion of the Lord's poor, tried, troubled and restless ones, by and bye. Let us then labor on earth--and expect to rest in heaven; and if tempted to complain of the cross we have to carry, or the hard road we have to travel, let us remember that we have not yet come to the rest and the inheritance which the Lord our God gives us.

Once more let me listen to the clock, and catch its monitory lessons. It seems to say: Life is for prayer, death will introduce praise.

Yes, LIFE is for PRAYER. Humanity is tried by many needs; and for all those needs, God has provided. The provision He has made is in the person of His Son, and to the fullness of Jesus we are lovingly invited. Prayer is the means appointed by which we may receive a supply for all our needs. No place is unsuitable for prayer; no time is unseasonable for prayer. Men are exhorted to pray everywhere, and to pray without ceasing.

If pains pierce us, or needs pinch us,

or dangers threaten us,

or desires work powerfully within us

--we should pray.

Prayer is a remedy for most of the ills of life; prayer is a principal part of our preparation for death; prayer... brings us into God's presence, gives us courage in the prospect of appearing before God's throne, and admits us to the sweetest enjoyments of the spiritual life. Prayer... proves our spiritual birth, is necessary to our spiritual health, and crowns all our spiritual efforts with success.

Life is for prayer, and while life lasts we should pray for ourselves and for others--for temporals and for spirituals; when life ends--prayer ceases, and ceases forever!

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DEATH will introduce PRAISE. We practice and learn to sing on earth, we shall eternally praise in heaven! We begin to praise in life, it will be perpetuated after death. Praise is one of the grand and glorious employments of heaven. Death alone opens the door of the grand orchestra, and admits us to the choristers of the skies. Everything we see, or hear, or feel in Paradise--will be calculated to excite gratitude, and call forth praise--they never cease praising God day nor night. As one who has a taste, a passion for music, never wearies of it--but ever enjoys it--so glorified spirits never cease praising God, and while they praise, their joys kindle more and more! They who pray on earth--will praise in heaven. Prayer is the seed of praise; it may now be sown in tears--but it will assuredly be reaped in joy by-and-bye. But I must let the clock tick on, and enlarge no further. One word at parting.

Reader, you have life now--how do you employ it? Death will come to you soon--in what state will it find you? Are you in Christ? Do you believe in His blessed name, and rely on His precious blood? Rest not without full satisfaction on this point; it is of the greatest importance. Life or death, eternal life or eternal death hangs upon it!

LIFE is for work--how do you employ it? Have you obtained the living bread for yourself? If so, do you now labor to bring others to seek it?

Death is for rest--is that your prospect? Do you expect that death will introduce you to the rest prepared for the holy people of God? If you are one of God's people it will, not else. Death makes no mistake--it never sends a saint to hell, nor an impenitent sinner to heaven. O that you were wise; that you understood this; that you would consider your latter end!

Life is for prayer--do you pray? Do you pray daily? Do you pray with the heart? Is prayer a part of the every day business of your life? IS IT?

DEATH introduces the Lord's people to praise; have you any well founded hope of this? It will either introduce you to the hallelujahs of heaven--OR the groans of hell. Which will it be? WHICH?

May the Lord bless these lines to you, and make them a means of blessing to your soul.

Oft as the bell, with solemn toll,

Speaks the departure of a soul,

Let each one ask himself 'Am I

Prepared, should I be called to die?'

Only this frail and fleeting breath

Preserves me from the jaws of death;

Soon as it fails, at once I'm gone,

And plunged into a world unknown!

Then, leaving all I loved below,

To God's tribunal I must go;

Must hear the judge pronounce my fate,

And fix my everlasting state!

Lord Jesus, help me now to flee,

And seek my hope alone in Thee;

Apply your blood, thy Spirit give,

Subdue my sin, and let me live!

Then, when the solemn bell I hear,

If saved from guilt, I need not fear;

Nor would the thought distressing be,

'Perhaps it next may toll for me!'

Rather, my spirit would rejoice,

And long, and wish, to hear your voice;

Glad when it bids me earth resign,

Secure of heaven, if you are mine!

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