

Name and Fame

by J.C. Philpot

The sermon warns against the fleeting nature of earthly fame and encourages listeners to seek a heavenly immortality through a heart right with God.

Scripture: 2 Samuel 18:18, Proverbs 22:1, Ecclesiastes 6:4, Ecclesiastes 12:13, Matthew 16:26

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Worldly Ambition"

Description

J.C. Philpot delves into the human desire for name and fame, highlighting the ambitious heart's yearning for earthly immortality and recognition among fellow men. He contrasts the fleeting nature of worldly recognition with the eternal significance of a life lived for God, emphasizing that true immortality is found in the heavenly bliss of eternity. Philpot warns against seeking fame at the expense of one's soul, pointing out that many renowned figures in history were not led by the Spirit of God and ultimately found their earthly accolades to be in vain.

Transcript

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During his lifetime, Absalom had built a monument to himself in the King's Valley, for he had said, "I have no son to carry on my name." He named the monument after himself, and it is known as Absalom's Monument to this day.

2 Samuel 18:18

There is a yearning in the mind of man after name and fame. Shrinking from oblivion, grasping at an earthly immortality, the ambitious heart desires not wholly in death to die. It would not pass away as unnoticed and as unknown as the leaf which falls into the babbling brook, and, after a few whirls, sinks to the bottom with scarce a bubble to mark its vanishing out of light into darkness. Few indeed care for life eternal—for an immortality of happiness and holiness in the mansions of heavenly bliss; or if there be a passing desire for heaven, it is but to escape hell. But to achieve an immortality among their fellow-men; to be or to do something which shall secure the proud and rare distinction of living after death in the memories and on the lips of successive generations, is a deep-seated feeling in the human bosom.

This, the school-boy feels, who cuts his name on the form, as much as the painter, who longs that the canvas may breathe his name when the fingers which spread it with form and color lie mouldering in the dust; or the poet, who is content to die if his verses live for him from generation to generation. But this coveted distinction is attained by few. "Surely," says the Psalmist, "they are disturbed in vain." "Their memorial is perished with them." But could they obtain their object, it would be but a shadow. No applauding breath of man reaches them in their gloomy abode; no rills of human praise let fall a drop of water from earth to hell to cool their burning tongue. Most names that are remembered and handed down to posterity are of men in whom the Spirit of God was not. They were of the world; their words and actions were inspired by a worldly spirit, and directed to worldly ends. Therefore the world loved them in life, honored them in death, and bestows on them after death the only reward it has to give--an earthly immortality.

But when we view what they were in life, and what they are in death; when we lift up the veil which hides the mansions of the dead, is their lot worth coveting? Alas! no! Their soul is no more cheered by the honors paid to their memory than their mouldering dust is gladdened by the marble monument which stands over their grave. Solomon has already written the epitaph of this admired son of fame, the compendious history of his birth and death, beginning and end. "For he comes in with vanity, and departs in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Yes, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet has he seen no good; do not all go to one place?" (Eccles. 6:4, 6.)

But there are a few, and a few only, who have won a double immortality. Their names, their works, their influence survive them on earth when their happy spirits are bathing in the bliss of heaven. To be a Shakespeare, a Byron, a Voltaire--who that fears God would accept so wide-spread a name to accept with it what we may well apprehend is their present and future portion? Better be the lowest pauper who starves on a parish pittance; better be the shoeless wretch that sweeps the public crossing; better live in a hovel and die in a hospital, with the grace of God in the heart, than have a world-wide, time-enduring name when the soul is howling in hell.

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