

Missing Gods Last Train

by John R. Rice

The opportunity for salvation does not endure forever, and it's essential to be saved while the heart is tender and receptive to the call of God.

Duration: 24:28

Scripture: Matthew 11:28

Topics: "Salvation Urgency", "Repentance Now"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the urgency of seizing the opportunity for salvation before it passes away, drawing parallels from the lament of souls in hell who missed their chance. It highlights the importance of responding to God's call for repentance and salvation, especially during times of special dealing, youth, and when the Holy Spirit is at work. The message stresses the fleeting nature of life and the need to prioritize salvation before it's too late.

Transcript

Our text in Jeremiah 8 20. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. Let's say that again because that will be the lament of millions of souls in hell.

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. This is the complaint of a group of people in the city of Jerusalem. O Nebuchadnezzar's army has surrounded Jerusalem.

It's ready for destruction. The city is besieged. They would not hear the prophet Jeremiah.

Jeremiah said, God's judgment will come. If you do not repent, you'll be carried off into Babylon to destruction. But the people said, why no.

The people of Egypt, Pharaoh in Egypt, in his armies, they'll deliver us. Why, before the summer is gone, before our crops are ruined in the fields, why, they'll come rescue. We'll be delivered, you'll see.

But now the summer's gone by. The food is failing in the city. Women have took their pitiful children, and they've eaten them.

And now gone starvation stares them in the face, and the people say the harvest is past, and the summer is ended, and we are not saved. But these inspired words mean more than the destruction of Jerusalem. They mean also that here are people who would not hear God until God's opportunity for salvation passed

away.

Not only was the city of Jerusalem destroyed, but many a soul died and went to torment because he wouldn't hear the prophet of God, wouldn't hear the calling of the Spirit of God, would not repent of his sins. And I think that this lament will be the lament of men in hell who heard the gospel and let it slip, whose mothers prayed for them, whose wives entreated them, men who heard preachers preach the gospel with earnestness and power and fervor and ignored it. And down in hell they'll say the summertime of opportunity passed away, the harvest time passed, and I've missed it.

I wonder if some who hear this today may miss God's last train for heaven, may miss God's last opportunity given them to repent and be saved. Listen to the text then in Jeremiah 8:20, the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. This scripture teaches a solemn doctrine that is taught everywhere in the Bible, a doctrine that the time for salvation passes away.

Someone says, well, can't I be saved any time I want to? No, sir. There's a divine law that opportunities do not endure forever. The poet has put it in these words, there is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at its flood lead on to fortune.

Neglected, all the balance of their lives is cast in shallows and in miseries. You see, in the matter of salvation, it's today. The Bible says today if you'll hear His voice, harden not your heart.

If one speaks in your ears and says, not now, not tonight, don't be in a rush about it, wait till you settle down, wait till you have your education, wait till you make your money, wait till you have your good time. If there's a voice that whispers in your ear and says, wait, you know, that's Satan's voice, that's the voice of sin and the accuser and destroyer, that's the voice of the enemy of your soul. For God says today, the Spirit of God says today, if you want to be saved, today's the time.

Someone says, can't I be saved any time I want to? No, you can't even want to unless the Spirit of God speaks to your heart. You can't even want to be saved. Listen to this plain text in Isaiah 55, verses 6 and 7. Isaiah 55, verses 6 and 7. God has a time for sowing and a time for reaping.

God has a time for getting ready and breaking the ground and pulling the stumps and waiting on God. And God has a time for blessed revival and harvest and soul saving. What I want you to see at Law Center is that the opportunity for salvation passes away, the harvest passes away.

There are several periods left in which it's easier to be saved than it is at other times. For one thing, youth is a harvest time. Did you know that all the people who ever get saved are saved while they are young? The Bible has much to say about that.

For example, in Ecclesiastes 12, 1, we have this plain command, Remember now, thy Creator, in the days of thy youth, when the evil days come not, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. Oh, before the evil days come, seek the Lord in the days of youth. How wonderful it is to be saved when you're a boy or a girl, before you have to make a living, before the problems of college, before the problems of courtship, before the dangers and pitfalls of sex, before adolescence has stirred you up and made you unsettled.

Isn't it wonderful to be saved while you're young? The Bible says that, Remember now, thy Creator, in the days of thy youth. Later you'll have a family. Later you'll be bound down to those with whom you work.

Later your mind will be set and hardened. But while you're young, it's easier to be saved. The Savior said also, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.

Ah, little children. How little? I don't know. My six daughters were saved, every one of them before they were six years old.

I was converted when I was nine years old, approximately. And I could have been saved long before that, for God had been seeking me and calling me and talking to my boyish heart for years before I was converted. I say, little children.

Suffer little children to come. How young? I say, I do not know. But I know as soon as a child wants to come to God, he should.

As soon as a child knows he's a sinner, he should come. Remember the scripture says of the children, if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts. And if you know you're a sinner, God knows you're a sinner, and you ought to come and be saved.

Youth is the time to be saved. Suffer little children to come. Oh, when we get to heaven, most of the people in heaven will have been converted when they were children, or they will have been taken while they were unaccountable infants, and so by God's mercy taken to heaven, heaven will be filled with the people who were taken as babies, or those who were converted in childhood.

I want you to think, then, of this plain statement that Jesus said, how blessed it is for children to come to Christ and to believe in him. And he said, it's better for one of these little ones, if you were a fin, one of these, what Jesus said would be better if you were, had a millstone tied about your neck and you dropped in the depths of the sea. You that would hinder a little one to come, oh, beware of the curse of God.

You'll rue it. You'll regret it. But you see, it's best to be saved while you're young.

Childhood is the time. Again, the scripture says, they that seek me early shall find me. There's an advantage in coming to God early.

It's a very simple thing. When one famous Christian leader, well, but he was a child before he became a famous Christian. He was seven years old and entered into a contract with God.

That famous Count Zinzendorf later became the leader of the Moravian Brethren. When he was seven years old, he prayed a little prayer and said, Lord Jesus, do thou be mine and I will be thine. And he was a Christian.

I wonder, have you missed the youth tide, the harvest? Oh, that train pulls out so soon, so soon. And youth is the best time you'll ever have to be saved. In my audiences in big revival campaigns again and again, I've taken account.

I asked for those who were converted, who found Christ, who repented and trusted Jesus for salvation only after they were 60 years old, while there'll be only one or two in an audience of 500 or 800, maybe, who turned to Christ after they were 60. Then maybe only one chance out of two or 300 chances after you're 60 years old to be saved. If you're 50 years old and unsaved, you have at the very best somewhere between one chance out of 100 or one chance out of 200, it may be, depending on where you live.

You see, most people are never converted after they're 50. On the other hand, I've counted them all over the country. One third of all the Christians in America, evidently, who really have been converted, born again, claim to have turned to Christ by the time they were 10 years old.

And one half of them, one half of all the people in America who say they're Christian, that they have personally trusted Christ as Savior, say they came to Him by the time they were 14 and under 15. And I've checked and I estimate that nine out of 10 of all the people who ever get converted find Christ by the time they're 25 years old. Oh, when the years come upon you, your heart gets settled in sin and Satan increases the bonds and the bondage he's been weaving about you, and your hope for salvation is soon about gone.

Youth is the time to be saved. I remember when I was in revival campaign at Joliet, Illinois, and I made this remark. Anybody who's reached 15 years of age and has not already turned to trust in Jesus Christ as his own Savior has lost over half of all the opportunities he'll ever have to be saved.

That sermon was printed, and in Dubuque, Iowa, a 15-year-old boy read it and came to see me and said, I hope I haven't waited too long. I'm just 15 years old. I want to be saved while I can.

You see, according to the Bible, youth is the time to be saved, and all the experience of Christian workers bears it out what a blessed harvest time it is when youth time with its tender heart and the call of God is yours. I pray, friend, if you have missed the time in youth, I beg you, make no delay but hurry to Jesus Christ for some of the best harvest is gone when youth is gone. Don't miss the last train to heaven.

Then again, there's another harvest, the harvest of special dealing. The Lord Jesus told the parable of a barren fig tree. He said that the master of the vineyard came and found the barren fig tree, and he said to his husband, he said, cut this tree down.

Why does it come to the ground? I've come these three years looking for fruit on this tree. And the tenant said, Master, give me another year. Let me dig about it.

Let me fertilize it. Let me see if we can make it bear fruit another year, and if not, then you can cut it down. And Jesus was talking about repentance and the fruit which he demands is repentance.

God sometimes with a finger of his dealing moves about your heart and digs around in order to bring you to the fruit of repentance. And if you don't repent when there's a time of special dealing, it may be you'll never be saved. What do I mean? I mean that when here's a young fellow called out to the colors and takes the oath of allegiance, puts on the uniform, goes into the army or navy or air force, and his life he knows is in jeopardy, sometimes that young fellow will be one to crash then, when otherwise, if he lets the time go by, he'll never be saved.

It's a lot easier to get people converted when they're headed for the trenches and for the front and when they're sailing over to a foreign land to meet the foe than when the war's over and they come home to get drunk and spend their money while in break their marriage. I say, oh, it's time to be saved when there's a time of special dealing. Did you know it's easier for a man to be saved when he's flat on his back in the hospital than after he gets well? Did you know it's easier for a man to be saved when his mother's dead and he stands by her coffin and remembers how she loved him and how she prayed for him? It'll be easier to be saved then than it will be later when that mother's grave has settled and the years have gone by and your own heart has become cold and hard again.

You see, a time of special dealing of God is a harvest time. That's a train that's pulling out and you may miss it. You'd better be saved when there's some time of special dealing from God.

I remember I was in a revival in a country church many years ago and there was a 14-year-old boy, I remember his name well, and this boy, Rhys McFarlane, I talked to him about his soul. He was only 14, but he resisted. He said, not now.

He said, I'm not ready. No, and he would not come to Jesus Christ. The next night I came to the service and this boy was there, but his face was scratched and he limped as he walked and I said, what's the matter? What's the matter, Reed? And he said, that old gray horse, I rode that gray horse after the cows tonight and he fell down with me and nearly crippled me.

And I said, you'd better watch your step, Reed, don't you think? And he wouldn't come to Christ that night and another day or two went by and I came to the services in the country church house and Reed McFarlane had one eye was closed and swollen purple and a bandage around his head and he was bruised and cut and limping as he walked and he was really pretty badly bruised up and I said, what happened to you, Reed? He said, it was that old gray horse again, fell down and liked to kill me. And I felt inspired with a prophecy from God and I said to him, Reed, if God has to do that again, you won't get up. And he said, I knew it.

I knew it. He said, as soon as I hit the ground that time, I knew it. Well, I said, what are you going to do about it? He said, I'm going to be saved now.

When God calls, it's time to be saved. When there's a time of special healing, when God tenders your heart, when God deals with your conscience, when there's a time of stress, it's time to be saved. One night at Wichita Falls, Texas, I drove a farm or a couple out from the revival services in the big tabernacle.

And as I passed along, I saw the flutter of a white skirt by the roadside and I stopped and heard voices and I said, what's the matter? Is anybody hurt? And the woman screamed and said, my God, yes, the car turned over and we can't get anybody to stop. I stopped and found these four young people, a car turned over upside down and one girl had been thrown through the window and the others were stacked on their heads and upside down in that coupe. And we got them out and took them in my car home to town.

And just at midnight, we drove up in front of the home of one of the girls and I said, well now, young people, I'll tell you what I think. I think I'm certainly glad I'm not taking home to her mother, a dead girl, at midnight. I think we'd better thank God, don't you? You talk about a prayer meeting, you talk about revival.

I never saw people more willing to hear the gospel. If you'd go out some 55 or 60 miles an hour to turn a corner and turn your car upside down and be stood on your head for a little while jammed in a car and then be rescued and somebody suggest a prayer meeting, you might listen to reason. They did that day.

And I'll tell you, it's a call of God. If there's some healing of God, if it's sickness, if it's trouble, if it's great opportunity, if it's some sweet blessing. There was a man in Fort Worth, Texas, came to see me one day and said, I want you to perform the marriage ceremony.

And he told me the name of the girl. She was a beautiful girl, a Sunday school teacher, a devoted Christian. And I said, are you good enough man for that girl? And he said, no, I'm not.

He said, she's the best girl I ever saw. And I'm not. I said, are you a Christian? He said, no, I'm not.

I said, what do you think about a man like you trying to marry a Christian girl and you on the devil's side? And he was so in love with the girl and he saw his unworthiness and he saw his need for God. He said, I wish you would pray for me. I'd love to be fit to be a good husband to that girl.

And we had prayer and he turned to Jesus Christ. Three months later, they asked me to preach his funeral sermon. How glad I am that he took the opportunity while God dug about his heart, while God with his mercy and tenderness had made him fit to be saved and ready to be saved.

I don't mean fit in the sense of any worthiness, but in the sense that his heart was tender and that he would listen to God. The times of special dealing are harvest time. Wait a minute, there's a harvest also when there are reapers.

You know, God puts it in the hearts of Christians to talk to sinners. And it's God's plan that Christians should turn to lost people and plead with them and encourage them and teach them how to be saved. Oh, do you have anybody that cares that you lost sinner, that you are not saved? If you have somebody that cares, you better thank God for it.

Sometimes lost people, very foolishly, they pay no attention to the mother or the wife or the preacher or a neighbor or friend who urges them to seek God and be saved. That's a sin and it's folly. Or when people quit calling, it may be God that's calling and God's calling you now and he may be giving you the only chance you'll ever have to be saved if he has somebody that loves you and pleads with you.

There'll come a time when nobody says, let's go to church. There'll come a time when nobody says, I'm praying for you. There'll come a time when nobody will say, come on, I'll walk with you down this aisle if you go down now and take Christ as your Savior and depend on him.

Oh, while there are reapers, it's a harvest time and you'd better be saved while you can. That may soon be passed away. On Fort Worth, Texas, years ago, I stood and talked to a poor man on the street.

I remember that there was tobacco stain on the front of his shirt. His face was unshaven, stubble. He was not clean and he looked like a bum.

And I said to him, are you a Christian? He said, no. And I began to quote scriptures. He said, I know all that.

I've heard all that many times. I know. Well, I said, then why don't you turn to Christ? He said, preacher, I'm a ruined man.

I said, what happened to you? He said, you wouldn't think, would you, that I had \$10,000 in the bank one time, that I owned two of the finest farms in the county, that I was a member of the board of the school trustees. You wouldn't think that, would you? But I did. And I was.

And I went to church every Sunday. And I said, what happened? He said, my wife died. Said when she was alive, I wouldn't leave her.

I wouldn't curse in her presence. I wouldn't get drunk. I wouldn't break her heart.

She was too good a woman. But when she died, there was nobody cared whether I went to church, whether I cursed, whether I drank. I've drunk it all up.

I've lost my friends. I've lost my money. The farms are gone.

I'm nothing but a bum. He said, I'm a ruined man. Oh, if you have any money to cherish, you'd better turn and be saved.

That's a harvest time before the reapers are gone. Wait again. God's train may leave when the Holy Spirit quits calling.

That'll be the last chance to be saved. You know, we just so well face it. We can't have revivals without the blessed Holy Spirit of God.

Let all of us preachers be reminded again, oh, how we need to wait upon God for the anointing of the blessed Holy Spirit. For the Holy Spirit is the one who makes all the difference in revival harvest. The Holy Spirit's working with the lost sinners, God's last chance to win that one.

Not the learned arguments, not the pleasing personality of the speaker, not the tears of wife or mother. No, but the working, the wooing, the calling of the Spirit of God are God's last chance to win a soul. And if you, dear friend, are unsaved, I beg you now to turn to Christ while the Spirit of God calls.

For if he doesn't call, you'll never be saved. In Genesis 6, 3, God says, my spirit shall not always thrive with man. God's spirit won't always call.

The Lord Jesus said that no man come upon to me except my father draw him. And Jesus said in the 12th chapter of Matthew that the sin against the Holy Ghost has no forgiveness in this world or in the world to come. You see, God calls and calls, and you'd better heed.

There comes a time when the Spirit of God won't call anymore. I don't mean that anyone who can, who wants to be saved cannot be saved. People say to me, I'm afraid I've committed the unpardonable sin.

No, you haven't. Those who are afraid, they have not. But those who've lost their concern, who have no call, have no burden, had better beware.

I urge in Jesus' name to come now while God's Spirit is calling. For you won't call forever. That harvest of the call of God will pass forever away.

And if that happens, you're as certainly doomed as if you were already in hell. And that happens, you've missed God's last train. Oh, if God calls now, if there's any conscience, any burden, any moving, any conviction, seek the Lord today.

And let me say another word. Life itself is a fleeting harvest that is soon gone. Oh, how little the time is and how little we think it.

Don't neglect it for one of these days. Maybe today. It may be when you hear this, you'll never live another 24 hours.

Who knows? I don't know. I preached in the Chicago arena to a great citywide congregation of thousands. One man heard me speak and then went out and sat down on the curbing by the street and died a few minutes after I finished my message.

In Binghamton, New York, in a citywide campaign in Binghamton Theater, one man heard me preach and at 4 o'clock the next morning he died. I say, time, please, away. How many, how many will hear this message in this year? You'll have on your tombstone this date.

You turned when you heard God's last message, you turned away. Seek the Lord, be saved while you can. Let me lay on your heart then that all the revival harvest, all the call of God, all the opportunity to be saved will soon pass away.

God's last train will pull out one of these days. You'll miss God's last call, but you can be saved now. Today, if you'll hear his voice, harden not your heart.

The scripture makes it clear that whosoever will may come. If you're willing to admit, I'm a poor lost sinner. I need forgiveness.

I believe Jesus Christ died for me. Here and now, I will depend upon him. I will turn to him.

I'll risk him to save me. I will rely upon him. I'll give him my heart forever.

If you will today, you may be saved. Now is the time to be saved. Do not let that lament of a lost soul be yours.

When someone in hell shall say the harvest is passed and the summer has ended and I'm not saved, don't miss God's train for heaven. Be saved today. God help you to do it this moment and say, I will take Christ while I may.

For all most persuaded is altogether lost. I'd never want a soul

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