

Glimpses at Life's Windows

by J.R. Miller

The realization of immortality gives life a new glory and motive for noble living, breaking down the walls between life here and hereafter.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:54

Topics: "Hope in Christ", "Immortality"

Description

J.R. Miller reflects on the theme of immortality, emphasizing that life on earth often feels confining, like being trapped in a dark tower. He encourages listeners to recognize that glimpses of a glorious afterlife can inspire a nobler existence, transforming our perspective on earthly struggles and failures. The resurrection serves as a window to the eternal, reminding us that death is not an end but a transition to a fuller, more beautiful life. Miller urges us to live with the awareness of immortality, which can motivate us to serve others and pursue our aspirations without fear of earthly limitations. Ultimately, he reassures that every act of love and sacrifice will bear fruit in eternity, enriching our lives beyond the grave.

Transcript

No one can ponder the great theme of immortality for an hour--and not feel the stir and glow of a better, nobler life in him. In our more commonplace moods, we are like men shut up in a narrow cell. We see for the time nothing but the little patch of dusty floor at our feet--and the cold, cheerless walls that encircle us. We are occupied with our little round of duties. Burdens press, sorrows pour bitter tears into our cup, our hopes are shattered; or we have our short-lived joys--we see our plans succeed, and play at living like children in their make-believe games. Now and then we have intimations of a wider and more glorious world outside our walls, stretching away beyond the small circle in which we dwell. Faint voices appear to come to us from without. Or there are glimmerings as if of memory, like the visionary gleams of a past and forgotten life, which flash before us in our higher moods.

But to most of us, pent up in this earthly life--these are only merest intimations, faintest whispers, dreamlike suggestions. We go on living in our narrow sphere, oppressed by its limitations; our faculties and powers stunted by its gloom.

Did you ever climb the winding staircase in the interior of some great monument or tower? At intervals, as you ascended, you came to a window which let in a little light, and through which, as you looked out, you had a glimpse of a great expanse of fair and lovely world outside the dark tower. You saw green fields, rich gardens, picturesque landscapes, streams flashing like flowing silver in the sunshine, the blue sea yonder;

and far away, on the other hand, the shadowy forms of great mountains. How little, how dark, how poor and cheerless, seemed the close, narrow limits of your staircase as you looked out upon the illimitable view that stretched from your window!

Life in this world is like the ascent of such a column. But while we climb heavily and wearily up its steep, dark stairway--there lies, outside the thick walls, a glorious world reaching away into eternity, beautiful and filled with the rarest things of God's love. And thoughts of immortality, when they come to us, are little windows through which we have glimpses of the infinite sweep and stretch of life beyond this hampered, broken, fragmentary existence of earth.

The doctrine of the resurrection is one of these windows. It opens to us a vista running way beyond the grave. Death is a mere episode, a mere experience, an incident on the way. Even the grave, which seems to quench all the light of life, is but a chamber in which we shall disrobe ourselves of the infirmities, blemishes and imperfections of mortality--and be re-clothed in the holy, spotless vesture of immortality.

Thus we sleep at night, and sleep seems like death; but we awake in the morning, our life unharmed, unwasted, made fairer, fuller, fresher, stronger.

Thus winter comes, and the leaves fall, the flowers fade, the plants die--and snow wraps the earth in a blanket of death. But spring comes again, and the buds burst out anew, the flowers lift their heads and the grasses shoot up once more. From beneath the great snow drifts--the gentlest and most delicate forms of life come as fresh and fragrant as if they had been nourished in a conservatory. Nature rises from the grave of winter in new beauty and luxuriance. In place of the sere leaves, and faded loveliness, and exhausted vigor of the autumn--there is now all the splendor of new creation! Every leaf is green, every pore is flowing full of vital sap, and every flower pours sweetest fragrance on the air.

The grave is but life's winter, from whose darkness and chill we shall come with unwasted beauty. Then, way beyond this strange experience, as we look out at the window again--we see life going on, expanding, deepening, enriching.

When the truth of immortal existence comes into our personal consciousness, it opens a wonderful vista before us. It gives life a new glory. It furnishes one of the most powerful motives for noble living.

The weakness of most lives, even of most Christian lives, is the absence of this motive. For, however firmly we may cling to the truth of immortality as a belief, there are but few lives in which it is so realized as to be a ruling inspiration, a strong, masterful conviction.

How it would widen out all our thoughts, conceptions, hopes and plans--if the walls that divide life here and hereafter were broken down and our eyes could see our own existence in perspective, stretching away into eternity, as real, as personal, as fraught with interest beyond the grave--as on this side of it! How it would lift up, dignify, ennoble, inspire, awaken and deepen all our life--if we could but hold the truth of personal immortality in our consciousness all the while as vividly and as really, as we hold tomorrow!

The grave would not then be the end of anything--except of mortality and of the sins, weights and infirmities which belong to this earthly state. It would break up no plans. It would cut off nothing. If we see life only as a narrow stage bounded by the curtain that falls at death, ending there forever--how poor and little and limited does existence appear! We can have no plans that require more than earth's brief day for their completion. We can start no work that cannot be finished before the end comes. We may cherish no

joys that will reach over into the life hereafter. We may sow no seeds that will not come to harvest this side of the grave. Our souls may be thrilled by no aspirations and hopes that have their goal beyond the shadows.

But how different if we see life--with the veil torn away! The future is as much in our vision and as real--as the little present. We may begin works here which shall require ten thousand years to complete. There is no hurry--for we shall have all eternity in which to work. We may scatter seeds which we know shall not come to harvest for long ages. We may cherish hopes and aspirations whose goals lie far away in the life to come. We may endure sacrifices, hardships and toils which cannot bring any recompense or reward in this world, knowing that in the long yearless future--we shall find glorious return.

Life may seem a failure here--crushed like a lily under the heel of wrong or sin--broken, trampled, torn. But it may yet become a glorious success. Many of the truest and best of God's children, know only defeat in this world. They are evermore beaten back and thrust down. The burdens are too heavy for them. They are overmastered by sorrows. The world's enmity treads them in the dust. They are not worldly-wise, and while others march by to great earthly success--they live obscurely, oppressed, cheated, wronged, and lie buried away in the darkness of failure!

If the vista did not reach beyond the bare and cold room in which these unsuccessful ones breathe their last--we might drop a tear of pity over their sad story of defeat. But when the curtain is lifted--and we see millions of years of existence for them on the other side--we dry our tears. There will be time enough for them to retrieve the failure of earth. Through the love and grace of Christ, the defeated Christian life that goes out in the darkness here--may be restored to beauty and power, and in the long ages beyond death may realize all the hopes that seemed utterly wrecked in this world.

Indeed, it may be that those who have failed here, as men phrase it, are the very ones who shall win the highest success in the after-life, if they have kept their garments clean amid the struggles and toils. Certainly, for the Christian, the realization of the truth of immortality takes away the bitterness of earthly defeat. There will be time enough for victory, and for the most glorious success--in the unending eternity!

There are lives that are cut off here on earth, before any of their powers are developed. A thousand hopes cluster about them. Dreams of greatness or of beauty fill the visions of loving friends. Then suddenly they are stricken down in the dim dawn, or the early morning of their Christian life. The bud had not time to open out its beauties in the short summer of earthly existence. It is borne away, still folding up in its close-shut calyxes, all its seeds and possibilities of power, loveliness and life. Sorrow weeps bitterly over the hopes that seem blighted, and cuts its symbols of incompleteness upon the marble; and yet, with the warmth of immortality pressing up against the gates--what does it matter, that the bud did not open here and unfold its beauties this side of the grave? There will be time enough in heaven's long summer--for every life to put out all its loveliness and glory. No hopes are blighted, which are only carried forward into the immortal years. No life is incomplete, because it is cut off too soon to ripen, in an earthly home, into majesty of form and glory of fruitage; for DEATH does not come to the Christian as a destroyer. It dims no splendor. It blots out no beauty. It paralyzes no power. It blights no bud or seed. It only takes out of life, whatever is dull, earthly and opaque, whatever is corrupt and mortal--and leaves it pure, brilliant, glorious!

Death only sweeps away the limitations, breaks down the walls, shatters the crust of mortality, washes out the stains--and then life expands into perfect freedom, fullness, joy and power. The translation of a Christian life from earth to heaven--is but like the removal of a tender plant from a cold northern garden,

where it is stunted and dying--into a tropical field, where it puts out most luxuriant growths and covers itself with splendor!

There ought to be wondrous comforting power in the truth of immortality, for those who carry here the burdens of sickness, infirmity or deformity; and there are many such. Many lovely bodies are full of disease; they stagger under life's lightest burdens. Then there are many who carry imperfect bodies; and old age comes to the strongest and the fairest, stealing away the strength and touching the loveliness, and it fades!

But the resurrection body will be forever free from disease and pain. There will be no decrepitude, no bowed forms, no pale cheeks, no wasting or decay. How pleasant it is to the old--to know that they will get back their bodies, with all the marks of aging removed, and will begin life again with all the glow of immortal youth! I believe it is Swedenborg who says that in heaven the oldest angels are the youngest. A deep truth lies here. Not only does age leave no marks or traces of wasting--but the immortal life is a growth ever toward youth and freshness of existence, rather than toward decrepitude and decay.

There is another bearing which the truth of immortality must have upon the life that truly realizes it. It is in the intensifying of all its best activities and powers. If there were to be no life after this brief existence--why should we deny ourselves and spend our strength in serving others? Why should we sacrifice our own ease and comfort--for the sake of those who are degraded and unworthy? How cold and hard all duty seems--without this motive! But when this truth of immortality comes and touches these austere duties--how they begin to glow! The certainty of a hereafter, bright with all manner of rewards and joys--is a wondrous inspiration! It does not matter, that there is no apparent result when we toil and sacrifice; that the word we speak seems to float away into oblivion; that the impression we seek to make on a life, fades out while we gaze. Somewhere in the long years to come--we shall find that not the smallest deed done for Christ, or the feeblest word spoken, or the faintest touch given--has been in vain.

In the highest sense--do we work for eternity. In a truer and deeper way than we know, and in remoter ages than we can count--shall we find our songs from beginning to end--in the hearts of our friends. In frescoing, when the artist lays on his colors they sink away and leave no trace--but they reappear by and by in beauty. Just so--we touch lives today and there is no impression that we can see. The very memory seems to fade out. But in eternity it will be manifest. The brightest clouds in the glowing west lose their splendor while you gaze--but work done in human souls will appear in unfading hues, brightening forever.

Thus the glimpses we get through the little dim windows in the walls of our earthly life--should give a new meaning to our existence here, and to all our multiplied relationships. With immortality glowing before us, our brief years on earth should be marked by earnestness, reverence, love and faithfulness. Soon we shall break out of our narrow circle--and traverse the boundless fields that we see now only in the far-away and momentary glimpse. But it will be a blessed thing if we can get into our hearts even here, something of the personal consciousness of our immortality, with its limitless possessions and possibilities, and feel something in our souls--of the power of an endless life!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/glimpses-at-lifes-windows/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net