

The Value and Responsibility of One Life

by J.R. Miller

Each of us has a unique life and responsibility, and our failure can have calamitous consequences, emphasizing the importance of faithfulness and diligence in living our lives for God.

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:18, Matthew 5:14, Romans 14:12, Galatians 6:5

Topics: "Individual Responsibility", "Faithfulness in Duty"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the profound value and responsibility of each individual life in his sermon, drawing parallels to Elijah's stand for God amidst widespread apostasy. He illustrates that, like Elijah, each person is uniquely positioned to fulfill their divine purpose, and their faithfulness can prevent moral ruin in their surroundings. Miller warns against the complacency of thinking our actions are insignificant, reminding us that even the smallest efforts can have monumental consequences. He encourages listeners to focus on their own responsibilities rather than judging others, as each life is accountable for its own choices and duties. Ultimately, the sermon calls for diligence and commitment to God's work, as our lives may be the only barrier against disaster for others.

Transcript

Once Elijah thought he was the only godly man left. It certainly seemed so. The king and all the people had gone over to Baal, and Elijah was the only one who stood up for God. In fact there were seven thousand others throughout the land who had not bowed down to Baal -- but they were all in hiding and might as well not have been on the right side. Elijah was really the only one to stand for the Lord before the world.

There come times in the experience of nearly all of us, when our life is the only one to represent God in the place where we are. There is a sense in which this indeed is true of every one of us, all the time. We are always the only one God has at the particular place in which we are. There may be thousands of other lives around us. We may be only one of a great company, of a large school, of a populous community -- yet each one of us has a life that is alone in its responsibility, in its duty. There may be a hundred other men besides you -- but not one of them can take your place, do your work, meet your obligations, or bear your burden. Though every other one of the hundred is doing his own part faithfully -- your work waits for you, and if you do not do it, it will never be done.

We can easily understand how that if Elijah had failed God that day on Carmel, when he was the only one God had to stand for him -- the consequences would have been calamitous. Or we can understand how

that if Luther had failed in the days of the great Reformation, when he was the only one God had to represent him and his truth -- the consequences would have been tremendous, perhaps setting back the cause of Christ's Church for centuries. But do we know that the calamity would be any less if one of us should fail God in our mission any common day?

A story is told of a boy who found a leak in the dike that holds off the sea from Holland, and stopped it till help would come, with his hand holding back the floods through all the night. It was but a tiny, trickling stream that he held back -- but if he had not done it, it would have been a torrent before morning, and the floods would have swept over all the land, submerging fields and homes and cities. Between the sea and all this ruin, there was only a child's hand all that night. Had the boy failed, the floods would have rushed in with their merciless destruction. But do we know that our own life may not stand any day and may not be all that stands between some great flood of moral ruin -- and broad, fair fields of beauty? Do we know that our failure in our lowly place and duty any hour may not let in a sea of disaster, which shall sweep away human lives and human hopes and joys? The least of us dare not fail in the smallest matter, for our life is all God has at the place where we stand.

This truth puts a tremendous importance into all our living. We know not what depends upon our faithfulness any moment. We may think that there can be nothing serious enough in what we are doing today to demand our best, that no harm can come from our slightly relaxing our diligence. But in doing this, we certainly are robbing God who expects and needs our best every moment, if the work of the universe is to go on according to his will and purpose. Then we do not know what hurt may result to God's cause, or what harm may come to human lives -- from our lack of diligence in even the smallest matter.

There are other suggestions. We have only one life -- but it is our own. No other one can live it for us. Our truest and best friend cannot choose for us, cannot bear our burden, cannot meet our responsibility, cannot do our duty.

"Of all who live, I am the one by whom this work can best be done, in the right way."

On the other hand, it will simplify our problem of living, to remember that we have only our one life to live and to answer for. Some people fail to realize this and seem to feel a responsibility for the lives and work of others. There is a sense in which we are to bear one another's burdens and look also on the things of others -- but this does not mean that it is our business to sit in judgment on others, to assume to know more about the management of their affairs, than they know themselves. We have quite enough responsibility in looking after our own life and attending to the tasks and duties which belong to us -- without charging ourselves also with the tasks and duties of others. If we live our little life so as to please God -- that is all we really have strength to do.

If only we lived after this plan, it would save many of us a vast expenditure of strength and energy, which we now give to finding fault with the way other people attend to their duties. It would save us, too, from a large measure of uncharitableness and from much envy and jealousy.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/the-value-and-responsibility-of-one-life/>

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