

What Is Your Life?

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller's sermon emphasizes the profound significance of life, urging listeners to recognize their eternal responsibilities and the centrality of Christ in fulfilling their purpose.

Scripture: Psalm 90:12, Matthew 5:16, John 15:5, Romans 14:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 3:14, Colossians 3:23-24, James 4:14, 1 Peter 4:10

Topics: "Eternal Perspective", "Responsibility in Life"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the sacred burden of life, urging individuals to view their existence through an eternal perspective rather than a limited earthly lens. He argues that life is filled with noble responsibilities and connections to God and humanity, and that our actions have lasting impacts that extend into eternity. Miller highlights the importance of recognizing our dependence on Christ for true life and purpose, as well as the weight of accountability we carry for our deeds. He concludes that understanding the significance of our lives leads to a deeper commitment to fulfilling our divine purpose. Ultimately, life is a beautiful journey of service and responsibility, culminating in eternal glory.

Transcript

"A sacred burden is the life you bear.

Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly;

Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly;

Fail not for sorrow, falter not for sin,

But onward, upward, till the goal you win."

What one thinks about life, what conception he has of that strange thing called existence -- particularly what he thinks of his own individual life--is a most vital matter! Life is noble or ignoble, glorious or groveling--just as a right or wrong, a high or a low, conception is nourished in the heart. No man builds higher or better--than his plans. No artist surpasses in marble or on canvas the beauty imaged in his soul, and no one's life can rise in grandeur above the thoughts of life which live in his heart.

No conception is true or worthy--which does not consider life in its eternal perspective; not as cut off and limited by the bounds of earthly existence--but as stretching away into immortality and vital at every point

with important relations and solemn responsibilities. We are more than mere animals. Our lives are not little separate atoms of existence, each one complete in itself and independent of all other atoms. He plans very shortsightedly, who has no outlook from his hut in his narrow island-home in the great wide sea, and who sees no existence for himself beyond the stoppage of his heart's pulses--that strange experience which men call death.

We can only learn to live worthily--when we take into our view, and plan all the unending years that lie beyond the grave. We need a vivid and masterful consciousness of our personal immortality. A man who sees but a few bits of rock chipped from El Capitan, and a few dried leaves and faded flowers plucked from the trees that grow in that wondrous valley, has no true conception of the grandeur of the Yosemite. And no more just conception of human existence in its fullness and vastness--has he who sees only the little fragment of broken, marred and shattered years--which are fulfilled on this earth. We must try to see life as sweeping away into eternity--if we would grasp its meaning and have a true sense of its grandeur or realize its solemn responsibility.

There are streams among the mountains which, after flowing a little way on the surface in a broken current, vexed and tossing, amid rocks, over cascades, through dark chasms--sink away out of sight and seem to be lost. You see their flashing crystal no more. But far down the mountain, amid the sweet valley scenes--they emerge again, these same streams, and flow away, no longer tossed and restless--but quiet and peaceful as they move on toward the sea.

Just so, our restless, perplexed lives roll in rocky channels a little way on the earth and then pass out of sight--and it seems the end. But it is not the end. Leaping through the dark cavern of the grave, they will re-appear, fuller, deeper, grander, on the other side, vexed and broken no longer--but realizing all the peace, joy and beauty of Christ; and thus they will flow on forever! This is no poet's fancy, no Utopian dream of a golden age, no mere picture of imagination. Life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel. Since Christ has risen again--death is abolished, and to everyone who believes in him, there is the certainty of an endless life of blessedness in his presence and service. We only begin to live--when the consciousness of immortality breaks upon our hearts.

Then there is another element in every true conception of life, which is equally essential. No life hangs in mid-air, without relations, connections or attachments, without dependences and responsibilities. A man may not tear himself out of the web of humanity and pass all his years on some solitary island in the sea, cutting every tie, casting off all responsibility, living without reference to God or man, law or duty--and fulfill in any sense the true meaning of life.

In every direction there are cords of attachment which reach out and bind every fragment of humanity fast in one great web; and these attachments are inextricable. We may ignore them--but we cannot break one of them. We may be disloyal to every one of them--but we cannot cut one thread of obligation.

A little reflection will show us what these connections are. Where did we come from? What is the origin of this life we bear about with us? What are our relations to God the Creator? Our life sprang from his hand. Not only so--but it is continually dependent upon him. No more does the trembling leaf hang upon the bough and depend upon it for support and very life--than does every human life hang upon God, depending upon him for life and support and for its momentary existence.

Then, as we think of ourselves as Christians, this thought is infinitely deepened. What is a Christian life? We are accustomed to say that it is a life redeemed by Christ's death. More closely defined, it is a life that

is taken up out of the ruin of sin--and attached to the life of Christ. Apart from him--men are but dead and withering branches, having no life; but when attached to him--they become living branches covered with leaves and fruit.

As we think of it, we see Christ as the one great central Life of the world--and ourselves living only in him, our little fragment of being, utterly dependent upon him for every beauty, blessing and hope. We live only in him. He takes our sins--and gives us his righteousness. He takes our weakness--and unites it, like a branch grafted upon a tree, to his own glorious fullness of strength. Our emptiness--he attaches to his divine completeness, Our lives feed upon him, and are in every sense dependent upon him. We have nothing and we are nothing which we do not receive from him. Out of this relationship, come the most binding and far-reaching obligations to God--obligations of gratitude, praise, trust, obedience, service.

Our life is not in any sense our own. Its purpose is not fulfilled unless it is lived to accomplish the end for which it was created and redeemed. We begin to study the Scriptures and to ask what is the chief end of life, and we have not to read between the lines to find the answer. Everything has been made by god--with some design. Even a grain of sand has its uses. It helps build up the mountain, or it forms part of the great wall that holds the sea in its place, or it helps by its infinitesimal weight to balance the system of worlds. A drop of water has its purposes and uses. Creeping into the bosom of the drooping flower, or sinking down to its roots, it revives it. It may help to quench the thirst of a dying soldier. It may paint a rainbow on the clouds. It may help to float great ships or add its little splash to the chorus of ocean's majestic music.

And if such minute things have their purpose--how grand must be the end for which each human life was made!

We think further, and we find a wondrous network of attachments binding our little fragments of being--to the great web of life around us. There are a thousand relationships which link us to our fellow-men: to home, to church, to country, to society, to truth, to humanity, to duty; and every one of these connections implies responsibility. Obligations touch our lives on all sides. Duties come to us from every point. Every human relationship is solemn with its weight of responsibility.

We think again, and we find that we are in a world in which our minutest acts--start results that go on forever! The little ripple caused by the plash of the boy's oar in the quiet bay--goes rolling on and on until it breaks on every distant shore of the ocean! The word spoken in the air causes reverberations which go quivering on forever in space; and these scientific facts are but feeble illustrations of the influences of human actions and words in this world.

This fact charges every moment with most intense interest! The very air about us is vital, and carries the secret pulsations and the most unconscious influences of our lives far abroad; and not only so--but these influences sweep away into eternity. There is not a moment of our life, which does not exert a power that shall be felt millions of ages hence. There is something about the vitality and the immortality of human influence, that is fearful to contemplate, and that makes it a grandly solemn thing to live, especially when we remember that these qualities belong to the evil--as well as the good of our lives.

"The deeds we do, the words we say,

Into thin air they seem to fleet;

We count them ever past--

but they shall last;

In the dread judgment they

And we shall meet!"

We think once more, and we find that life has another attachment--forward to the judgment bar of God! "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ!" Romans 14:10. We must render account for all the deeds done in the body. We read more deeply into the divine revelation, and learn that this accountability extends to all the minutest acts and words and thoughts--which drop from hand and lip and heart, as we move along through life. It even reaches to the unconscious influences that breathe out from us, like the fragrance of a flower. We must meet our whole life again before God's throne, and give account not only for what we have done, evil and good--but also for all that we ought to have done--for the undeveloped possibilities of our lives and their unimproved opportunities.

It is in the light of such facts as these--that we must regard the life that is given to each of us. It is indeed a sacred burden! It is no light and easy thing so to live--as to fulfill the end for which we were made and redeemed. Life is no mere child's play! Every moment of it is intensely important, and charged with eternal responsibility. It is when we look at life in this way--that we see our need of Christ. Apart from him--there can be only failure and ruin. But if we give ourselves to him, he takes up our poor perishing fragment of being, cleanses it, puts his own life into it--and nurtures it for a glorious immortality!

Under a plain marble monument sleeps the dust of one of God's dearest children, Mary Lyon, who gave her life to his cause in unwearying service, until its last power was exhausted. Cut in the stone that marks her last resting-place is this memorable sentence from her own lips, which tells the secret of her consecration, "There is nothing in the universe that I fear--except that I may not know all my duty, or may fail to do it." With such a sense of personal responsibility pressing upon the heart at every moment, life cannot fail to be beautiful and well rounded here, and to pass to a coronation of glory hereafter!

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