

Eternity

by Leonard Ravenhill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living with eternity's values in view and striving to do the ultimate for God in this brief span of life.

Duration: 28:52

Scripture: Psalm 90:12, Acts 9:4, Romans 1:14, Romans 3:23, Philippians 3:7, Hebrews 11:33

Topics: "Eternity"

Description

The sermon transcript discusses the urgency of preaching the gospel of the kingdom in every land before the glorious day of the son of Manuel's appearance. It emphasizes the need to save the souls of the lost, as a thousand million souls are being lost every day. The sermon also highlights the concept of eternity and its impact on motivating believers to work for God. The theme of judgment is explored through a poem that depicts the consequences faced by different individuals, including the rich, the great, the gambler, and the model man, in the afterlife. The sermon concludes with a plea for repentance and salvation before it is too late.

Transcript

It's not by a point, it's not by a mile, but by the Spirit, sayeth the Lord. It's not by a might, it's not by a power, but by the Spirit, sayeth the Lord. Praise God and hallelujah.

We welcome you to End of the Life Ministries Audio Outreach Program. It is our prayer that through these messages you would be strengthened in your walk with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that you would be encouraged as the day draws nearer, but most importantly, above and beyond anything else, that you might hear what the Spirit sayeth unto the Church. The voice you are hearing is that of Leonard Ray from Hell.

I'm happy to be invited to speak and send a message to you through the Light Ministries from the Antioch Christian Center in Mineola in Texas, United States of America. My first exhortation to you would be that maturity in the Christian life does not come necessarily with age. I believe it comes through a number of reasons, a number of ways.

Number one, obedience. Number two, discipline. Number three, integrity.

And number four, a vision of eternity. My number one hero in the New Testament, after our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is that astounding man, the Apostle Paul. I call him an astounding man because he had a faith that was unshakable, a will that was unbreakable, a love that was unreasonable, and an intimacy with God which was unexplainable.

This awesome man was given a vacation in heaven. He says, I was caught up into the third heaven, and he never uttered a word about that revelation. He possibly saw everything on his short trip to heaven that John saw on the Isle of Patmos in the book of the Revelation.

Not only did he go to heaven, but even hell marked him. Remember when the demons cried, Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who you? I esteem that the greatest honor that a man can have on this earth, not to be known as the greatest preacher, or the greatest prayer warrior, or the greatest writer, or the greatest mystery, but to be known in hell, to be feared by the powers of darkness. Because he knew and had such a majestic walk with God, he could say to others like Timothy, what things you've seen and heard in me, do in the God of peace be with you? He poured his affection out to this young man Timothy.

And one of the great exhortations he gives to him is, a great exhortation to me, is stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the laying on of my hands. You may ask, how do we stir up the gift of God? Well, one thing we have to get rooted deeply in our lives, particularly if we're young Christians, we've got to read and reread that 11th chapter of Hebrews. What an amazing group of people, we don't have all their names, we have their achievements.

It says they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions. And you have all those fantastic things. And then the bottom line is, that staggers me, brings me to tears, is that not one person in Hebrews 11 ever had a Bible? How did they know God? You see, today we substitute knowing the Word of God for knowing the God of the Word.

There are people backslidden, there are people living hellish lives, and they can quote scriptures and tell you they've had miracles in their ministries and what have you got. They do not know God. And the great desire of the Apostle Paul, he was weather-beaten, he'd been in prisons, in weariness, in fastings, in painfulness, beaten, and in every conceivable way the devil had battered his body, his soul, and his spirit, and yet he's still saying not long before he died that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.

You see, the scriptures don't say if we suffer for him we shall reign with him, it says if we suffer with him. And Paul wanted to know that travel that Jesus knew. I believe Paul knew a Gethsemane.

He knew a cross because he said, I am crucified with Christ. You see, the difficulty is first of all to get a man to the cross, to be saved, then to get him on the cross to be sanctified, then to get him to carry a cross, to be an example to younger believers, to know death with Jesus Christ and resurrection. Another way to store up the gift of God is to read, of course, church history.

I'm meant to read biographies. I love to read the biographies. I've been in a gold mine, I've been in a coal mine, I've been in factories, I've watched linen things being made, and garments being made, and automobiles made, and so forth.

But the greatest thing is to see how God makes a man. And remember, it takes God 20 years to make a man. You see, the youth is impetuous.

You want to get there in a hurry. If you read the 7th chapter of Acts, you read about the apostle, about that amazing man Moses. He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians.

I'm sure he studied astrology. He possibly knew half a dozen different languages. It says that he was mighty in word and deed.

He wasn't an orator because he stammered, but he was mighty in word. He was a lawmaker. Before ever he saw the laws of God, and yet God had to take him out of a superstar living, living like a king, as a king, being revered and honored, and put him on the backside of the desert.

Not for 40 days, or 40 weeks, or 40 months, but for 40 years, a third of his life. The Son of God was 30 years on the backside of the desert. Now he went to go to Bible school for 10 days and tell the world he'd got all the answers.

The Lord Jesus, I say, was 30 years in coming to maturity. John Baptist was there 30 years in the wilderness. The apostle Paul, the most awesome intellect the world ever had, I'm sure, had to go back into Arabia, and there get discoveries of God.

Timing is very important with God. We're always in a hurry, and God is never in a hurry. He's never in a hurry, but he's never late.

The Psalmist said, my times are in thy hands. Another thing that has provoked me for 50 years or more is the challenge of an atheist. Let me read it to you.

Were I a religionist, did I truly, firmly, consistently believe, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another life? Religion should be to me everything. I would cast aside earthly thoughts and feelings as less than vanity. Religion would be my first waking thought and my last image when sleep sunk me into unconsciousness.

I would labor for her cause alone. I would not labor for the meat that perisheth, nor for treasures on earth, but only for a crown of glory in the heavenly regions where treasures and happiness are alike beyond the reach of time and chance. I would take thought for the matter of eternity alone.

I would esteem one soul gained to heaven worth a life of suffering. There should be neither worldly prudence nor calculating circumspection in my engrossing zeal. Earthly consequences should never stay my hand or seal my lips.

I would speak to the imagination, awaken the feelings, stir up the passions, arouse the fancy. Earth, its joys and its griefs, should never occupy a moment of my thoughts, for these are but the affairs of a portion of eternity, so small that no language can express its comparatively infinite littleness. I should strive to look but on eternity and on the immortal souls around me, soon to be everlastingly miserable or everlastingly happy.

I would deem all who thought only of this world, merely seeking to increase temporal happiness and laboring to obtain temporal goods, I would deem all such as purely madmen. I would go forth to the world and preach to it, in season and out of season, and my text should be what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul. My complaints about the preaching of today, or most of it, is that it lacks intensity, it lacks immensity, and it lacks eternity.

I've talked with men recently about those amazing people called the Puritan preachers. They were around in the 1600s. They were men of majestic intellect, and they had such an awesome concept of the holiness of God.

This isn't common anymore. I haven't been on the road preaching for about three years, but when I was on the road I would ask every night in the meeting, if you come every night this week I'll ask you one question, did you come to this meeting to meet God, or did you come to hear a sermon about Him? And only once has anybody come to me and said, I come to meet God. And that's what the whole of life is about.

What's the good of knowing anything else if we don't know God? My explanation for the vastness of the thinking, the depth of the thinking, the length of the thinking, and the majesty of the thinking of those Puritans is this, that they lived six days a week in eternity, and they came down to earth on the seventh day to declare what things God had whispered in their ears and worked in their hearts. Just last week I had a birthday. Somebody gave me a lovely copy.

It's a new definitive study in the life of Jonathan Edwards, that awesome man. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones of London once told me that he thought that Jonathan Edwards had the greatest intellect of any man that ever lived in America, and I'm sure that that's right. Others support that view.

Whenever I pick up a biography or an autobiography, I try to find just what the prayer life or devotional life of that man was. I suddenly found a chapter, and it said 13 hours a day, every day, were spent in meditation and prayer and Bible study by this awesome man, Jonathan Edwards. He was the man, you may recall, who said, Lord, stamp eternity on my eyeballs.

He thought only in that dimension. If we thought in the light of eternity every day, every moment, it would curb our language, it would change our priorities, it would give us a new respect, a new revelation of the holiness of God and the brevity of time, and it wouldn't be difficult to sing truthfully in the light of that. My richest gain I count but loss, and poor contempt and all my pride.

I'm so glad I was raised in a day before ever they sang lots of these stupid choruses, before they ever had puppets in Sunday school. I thank God for Sunday school teachers 70 years ago. I thank God for the hymn books.

We used to sing a hymn in those days, away there in England. He was not willing that any should perish. Jesus enthroned in the glories above, saw this poor fallen world, pitied our sorrows, poured out his life for us, wonderful love.

The last stanza of that hymn says, perishing, perishing, thou was not willing, master forgive and inspire us anew, banish our willingness, help us to ever live with eternity's values in view. Eternity. The first time I read about eternity as a child, I was curled up in a chair in our home in England.

I was reading a book that thrilled me, written by an American lady, Harriet Beecher Stowe. She was the sister of Henry Ward Beecher, the great preacher. I read the story that of Uncle Tom's cabin, and you remember that that wicked old white man, Legree, had been thrashing Uncle Tom.

He lay bleeding and writhing in anguish in the old slave shed, but his soul was not in the shed, because as the dawn of light began to come through the crack in the boards, he looked through that and then through the broken window. He began to think of the bright and morning star. He began to ponder on the great

white throne of God with its ever radiant rainbow.

As he was doing this, his soul was lifted up to heaven. His body was on earth, but his spirit was soaring, worshipping God. Old Legree comes and looks through the window and he says, hey Uncle Tom, how would you like to be tied to a tree and have a slow fire lit round you? Wouldn't it be pleasant, Tom? Massa says, Tom, I know you can do dreadful things.

And then he reached upward and clasped his hands, but he said, after you've killed the body, there ain't no more you can do. I know there's all eternity to come after that, all eternity. That word has revolutionized more lives than any word I know, I think, as regards an incentive to work for God, to spend and be spent.

It was born of the Scottish preacher, if I remember right, who wrote the verse, go labour on, spend and be spent, thy joy to do the master's will. It is the way the master went, should not the servant tread it still. Toil on and in thy toil rejoice, for toil comes rest, for exile home.

Soon shalt thou hear the bridegroom's voice, the midnight cry, behold I come. Maybe it was after that that his diary records, I strive to keep the feeling of eternity always before me. One of the greatest preachers Scotland ever had was a man by the name of Thomas Chalmers.

He was a very brilliant youngster. At the age of 12 he matriculated. He became a divinity student at the age of 15.

He began to preach at the age of 19. He loved to play around with his mathematical genius. He became a preacher.

But he wrote a pamphlet in which he said this, the author of this pamphlet can assert from what to him is the highest of all authority, the authority of his own experience, that after the satisfactory discharge of his parish duties, a minister may enjoy five days of the week in uninterrupted leisure for the prosecution of any signs which his taste may dispose him to engage. Well years after in the General Assembly, that awesome affair they have in Scotland, Chalmers heard a minister take this low view of the ministry and use it as a plug to hit people as it were. This stung Chalmers to the quick.

He jumped up and made one of the greatest speeches he ever made. In closing he said to the chairman, yes sir I penned it. I was strangely blinded.

I aspired those days to be a professor of mathematics but what sir is the object of mathematical science? Magnitude and the proportion of magnitude. But in those days sir I had forgotten two magnitudes. I thought not of the littleness of time and I recklessly thought not of the greatness of eternity.

So here we have the word eternity. It's the inspiration to this man whose back is ploughed with the lash of a cruel master. He's hanging on to life almost by the skin of his teeth but he's rejoicing in the fact that he knows in whom he has believed and therefore eternity stretches before him as endless bliss in the presence of the Eternal King.

He's an illiterate man. He can't read. He can't write.

At the other end you have the young scholar, brilliant at fifteen, carrying off prizes, becoming the outstanding preacher in Scotland but he forgot about eternity. Then he had an illness. In the illness he drew near to eternity and during that time he had a radical experience of the new birth and suddenly

eternity began to propel him, urge him, drive him on to do the ultimate for God in this brief span of life that we have.

Boram, the great essayist of Australia, calls the word eternity the stateliest cathedral of human speech. It is the transcendent triumph of articulation. It stands among the few realist sublimities of our vocabulary.

It is one of those magnificences of the language that defy all definitions. I was very blessed to be made an assistant to Dr. Arthur Fawcett in Bolton, that's in 1932, quite a while ago. He introduced me to some marvellous studies of characters in history.

Not the least of them was a Quaker by the name of Stephen Grellet. He was a Frenchman. His father was a companion of the king of France.

His father was actually the comptroller of the mint in France. His father owned some of those beautiful China factories at Limoges. But he became a man of the world.

He came to, to cut a long story short, he came to Philadelphia. There a miracle took place in his life. He too was a great scholar.

Somebody asked him to go to a Quaker meeting and he went and he heard about the things of God. He began to get interested. He couldn't read the Bible in English.

He took a dictionary and an English Bible and he worked his way through the scriptures. One day he said, I was walking, I was walking in the evenings alone. He was walking in a field on the edge of a great, great American forest.

And suddenly all the leaves began to speak in the wind, he said. They were like a great choir thundering out one word. Every leaf on every tree seemed to become a tongue.

And they sang and they sang like an awesome choir. They sang eternity, eternity, eternity. What happened? He threw himself down on the ground like Saul of Tarsus.

No, he wasn't slain in the spirit for five minutes. He was dumbfounded when he saw the depravity of his own heart. When he realized that the bits of scripture he knew that Jesus Christ died for his sins, for his corruption.

For days and days and days he was in deep distress of spirit until finally he found relief. And then he was like the Apostle Paul, Saul of Tarsus as we call him. He realized I'm a debtor to all men.

As children in Sunday school in England, we used to sing a hymn. A part of it said, give every flying minute something to keep in store. Work for the night is coming when man's work is o'er.

I'm sure this great man, Stephen Grellet, he'd like to have lived to be as old as Methuselah. The marvelous fact is that he lived to be 82. He got a crowd infuriated and he preached the gospel of Christ in Paris.

They hung him up on a lamppost. Somebody marvelously came up and dared to cut him down. Another day when he got the crowd mad, he was only preaching Christ.

He was preaching against sin and the crowd took him and threw him in the river Seine that flows through the town. But again he was delivered. Once he was in the hands of pirates who stood before him swinging their cutlasses and he thought he was going to be decapitated.

Eventually he moved through the whole of Europe. He climbed over the Alps. He didn't take some kind of parachute or, pardon me, he didn't take an escalator.

He didn't take a horse and ride it. He walked over the Alps. He went in and out of leper colonies.

He went to workhouses. He went to the homes of children. He sat in the streets of Malabar trying to pick up the languages from the children.

I think he learned about as many languages as I have fingers and toes. He stood before the Tsar of Russia, the kings of France. He even got in to speak to the Pope.

And it was all because he said that one day I had a panoramic vision of eternity. I heard a voice saying eternity. And I wanted it to live with eternity's values and views.

His surely is one of the most remarkable evangelistic careers that ever been penned outside of the scriptures. I had intended to add some other material but at the moment I can't find it. So let me stay with this great theme of judgment.

Here's a poem. I dreamed that the great judgment morning had dawned and the trumpet had blown. I dreamed that the nations had gathered to the judgment before the white throne.

From the throne came a bright shining angel and he stood on the land and the sea and he swore with his hand raised to heaven that time was no longer to be. The rich man was there but his money had melted and vanished away. A pauper he stood in the judgment.

His debts were too heavy to pay. The great man was there but his greatness when death came was left far behind. The angel that opened the records no trace of his greatness could find.

The gambler was there and the drunkard and the man that had sold them the drink and the people who sold them the license and together in hell they did sink. The moral man came to the judgment but his self righteous rags would not do. The men who had crucified Jesus had passed off as moral men too.

The soul that had put off salvation not tonight I'll get saved by and by. No time now to think of religion. At last he had found time to die.

And oh what a weeping and wailing when the lost were heard of their fate. They cried for rocks and the mountains. They prayed but their prayer was too late.

Here is a poem which I believe was written by that great American Dr. A.B. Simpson. A thousand thousand souls a day are passing one by one away in Christless guilt and gloom. Without one ray of hope or light.

With future darkness. Actually that reads with future dark as endless night. They're passing to their doom.

They're passing fast. They're passing passing fast away. In thousands day by day.

They're passing to their doom. Oh Holy Ghost. Thy people move.

Baptize their hearts with faith and love. And consecrate their gold. At Jesus feet their millions poor.

And all their ranks unites one more as in the days of old. Armies of prayer your promise claim. Through the full power of Jesus name.

And take the victory. Your conquering captain leads you on. The glorious fight may still be won.

This very century. The master's coming draweth near. The son of man will soon appear.

His kingdom is at hand. But ere that glorious day can be. The gospel of the kingdom we must preach in every land.

Oh let us then his coming haste. Oh let us end this awful waste. Of souls that never die.

A thousand million souls are lost. A savior's blood has paid the cost. Oh hear their dying cry.

They're passing passing fast away. A hundred thousand souls a day in Christless gills and gloom. Oh Church of Christ what will you say.

When in that awful judgment day. They charge thee with their doom. They charge thee with their doom.

Here is a very stirring poem for a friend of mine wrote it. Brother Warren Parker. Listen carefully.

Memorize the thing. A hundred years from now. It will not make much difference friend a hundred years from now.

If you live in a stately mansion or on a floating river scow. If the clothes you wear are tailor made or just pieced together somehow. If you eat big steaks or beans and cake a hundred years from now.

Won't matter what your bank account. What make of car you drive. For the grave will claim all your riches and fame.

And the things for which you strive. There's a deadline that we all must meet. No one will show up late.

It won't matter then all places you've been. Each one will keep that date. We will only have in eternity what we give away on earth.

When we go to the grave we can only save the things of eternal worth. What matters friend the earthly gain for which some men will bow. For your destiny will be sealed you see a hundred years from now.

Well my tape has almost run out. I want to wish you as an old Hebrew teacher in the University of Edinburgh. When they when the students left him at the end of the end of the year.

And they say to each other Happy New Year. He would say Happy Eternity. My desk has a sign on it.

It says Lord keep me eternity conscious. I want to live there. It changes our lifestyle.

It curves our conversation. It changes our values. It changes our priorities.

We're made for eternity. We're here for a little time. This life is merely a dressing room for eternity.

So God bless you. Maybe I'll see you someday. If not I'll see you in eternity.

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