

Where Will You Spend Eternity?

by R.A. Torrey

The question of where we will spend eternity is the most important question we can ask, and it is settled in this life by what we do with Jesus Christ.

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 25:46, John 3:36, John 8:24, John 16:5, Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Philippians 1:23, 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Revelation 20:15

Topics: "Eternity", "Salvation"

Description

R.A. Torrey emphasizes the critical question of where one will spend eternity, urging listeners to confront the reality of eternal life and the importance of making preparations for it. He explains that eternity is certain and that everyone must spend it somewhere, either in heaven or hell, based on their choices in this life. Torrey stresses that the question of eternal destiny is far more significant than earthly concerns and that it is possible to know one's eternal fate through faith in Jesus Christ. He warns against the folly of dismissing this question lightly and encourages individuals to consider their relationship with Christ as the determining factor for their eternal destination.

Transcript

"Whither goest thou?" John. 16: 5.

OUR subject to-night is, Where Will You Spend Eternity? You will find the text in John 16: 5, "Whither goest thou?" Jesus Christ was about to leave this world. He told the disciples that he was going, but none of them asked Him whither He was going. He reproved them for not asking. Well He might, for the most important question that can face any man when he comes to leave this present world is "Whither goest thou?" or "Where will you spend eternity?" A friend of mine was in a store one evening and an elderly man came in and said to the proprietor as he bought a cigar, "Dr. Torrey is going to preach tomorrow night on Where will you spend eternity." It had been an exceedingly cold winter, and the proprietor replied, "Some of the poor people around here recently have felt as though they would like to spend it in some place where it was hot." I suppose the man was simply thoughtless when he said it, but it marks a shallow man, a very shallow man, to be thoughtless on a question like this. It will not do to dismiss a question like this in that way. Some of you would like to dismiss it in some such light, thoughtless way. You will play the fool if you do. When Harry Hay ward, the brutal Minneapolis murderer, who murdered a woman who had been kind to him in order to get a few dollars from her, stood upon the gallows and the drop was about to fall, he made a funny speech and at the last jestingly twitched the rope about his neck and said to the sheriff, "Let

her go, I stand pat." I fancy he thought he was smart. No intelligent man thought so. They set him down as a fool and a brute. And so, my friends, you who are disposed to joke about this solemn question we have before us to-night, I beg of you do not do it. Your friend out of courtesy, may laugh at your joke, but in his inmost heart he will think you a fool, and in your inmost heart you will know he is right. That then is our subject to-night, "Whither goest thou?" or "Where will you spend eternity?"

1. First of all, REMEMBER THAT THERE IS AN ETERNITY. That is certain. We may try to shut our eyes to the fact, but the fact stands. Look ahead to-night. You may live five years, ten years, twenty years, thirty, forty, fifty years. But then what? The fifty years will soon be gone. Then what? ETERNITY! On it stretches before us, on and on and on. Never ending centuries will roll on, ages roll on, but still eternity stretches on and on. It will ever stretch on, never any nearer an end. Oh, thank God for eternity. If I knew I were to live a thousand years it would not satisfy me. If I were to live a million years it would not satisfy me. I would always be thinking of the end that would come some time. I am glad that as I look out into the future I see an eternity that has absolutely no end. There is an eternity.

II. In the second place, REMEMBER YOU MUST SPEND THAT ETERNITY SOMEWHERE. The time will never come when you cease to be, the time will never come when you pass into the nowhere. You will be somewhere throughout all eternity. Men sometimes try to believe that when they die they will cease to be. A friend of mine once told me that that was what he believed; that when he died that would be the end of him. He was very sure of it. Not long after his mother died and he wrote me a letter about her having passed into a better life. His atheistic philosophy would not stand. Men who live like beasts naturally wish to believe that they will die like beasts, but there is something in all our souls that tells us that it is not so. It is your beastly self that says that death ends all. Your better self denies it. But, however that may be, there is One who came to us out of eternity, came to us from the unseen, eternal world, came to us from God, with whom He had been through all eternity. He presented His perfectly satisfactory credentials of His divine origin, of His having come from eternity, Jesus Christ, and He has told us that there is an eternity for each of us and that we must spend it somewhere.

III. Remember in the third place that THE QUESTION WHERE YOU WILL SPEND ETERNITY IS VASTLY MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE QUESTION WHERE YOU WILL SPEND YOUR PRESENT LIFE. How anxious we are about where we shall spend our present life. Shall I spend my life in a cottage or in a palace? Shall I spend my life in the midst of the luxuries of wealth or amid the privations of poverty? Shall I spend my life in the midst of congenial companions or amid bitter foes? Shall I spend my present life in health and happiness or in pain and weariness and sorrow ?

How anxious we are about these questions. But they are of comparatively no importance. Suppose I spend my life in a palace. Suppose that I have all that money can buy. I dress elegantly and fare sumptuously every day. I go to gay parties and often off to Florida, the Sandwich Islands or Europe. Oh, what a happy life! Not very. But suppose it is. How long will it last? Ten years, twenty years, forty years, fifty years, and it is all over. What then? What then? The coffin, the grave, eternity.

On the other hand, suppose I spend my life in poverty. I have little cooped-up rooms, not very clean. I have very poor food, and perhaps oftentimes not enough of that. I wear shabby clothes. I have to work hard for very small pay. The rich brush by me and my children in the street, and think us of little more account than the dogs and cats. Oh, what a wretched life! Not necessarily. It may be a very happy life. But suppose it is wretched. How long will it last? Ten years, twenty years, forty years, and it is all over.

And what then? Eternity! An eternity of joy, or it may be an eternity of woe, to which any wretchedness I knew here is as nothing, nothing at all. Ah, the question of where we shall spend eternity is the important question. Suppose I am taking a day's journey to a place where I shall spend forty years. Which is the more important, the accommodations I shall have on the cars or the accommodations I shall have when I get there? This life is a day's journey to an endless eternity.

Some travel the journey in a common day coach, a poor one at that, but they travel to a mansion to which the stateliest palace on earth is as nothing. We can easily put up with some inconveniences by the way. Some travel in a very sumptuous Pullman palace car, or on a De Luxe train, but they are travelling to a hovel, poor, loath some, pestilential, nay, they are travelling to a prison-house, to a dungeon, nay they are travelling to hell itself, where they shall spend eternity.

I don't envy them. Take the multimillionaires who are travelling at express speed to hell. Do you envy them? I don't. Poor wretches! This question of where we shall spend eternity is a far more important question than the question of the comforts we shall enjoy by the way. Are you giving this question the consideration its importance demands? Many of you will soon be there. The brother of a friend of mine lay near death, near eternity's door. He had been a professed Christian in early life, but he had become a backslider, and very bitter.

He would not allow anyone to speak to him about Christ or the future. His wife and daughters and mother were praying constantly. They could not let him die thus. His brother was praying. At last he could keep silence no longer. He said "Willie, when you used to go off on a journey did you make preparations for it?" He looked up with surprise, "Why, certainly." "Willie, do you know you are about to take a long journey? Have you made any preparations?" "No, none." "Don't you think you ought?"

"It's no use. Jesus won't take me now, I am too great a sinner." His brother quoted to him the wonderful promises to sinners found in this Book, and he found peace at last. But what if he had gone to that great eternity persistently refusing to make preparations? Men and women, young men and young women, don't be foolish. Face this great question, Where shall I spend eternity?"

IV. The next point to consider is that IT IS POSSIBLE FOR US TO KNOW WHERE WE SHALL SPEND ETERNITY. Some think it is all guesswork. It is with some. It need not be. Jesus knew where He would spend eternity. He said, "I go to Him that sent me." Paul knew where he would spend eternity. He said, "For me to die is gain." And again, "I depart to be with Christ which is very far better" (Phil. 1:23). And still again, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day : and not only to me but also to all them that have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7,8). Albert Cookman knew where he would spend eternity. As he was dying, he lifted up his voice and shouted, "I am sweeping through the gates to the New Jerusalem. " D. L. Moody knew where he would spend eternity. As he was slipping away from life he said, "This is my coronation day, I have long been looking forward to it. " I know where I shall spend eternity. "How do you know?" some one will ask. I have the sure word of God for it. You can anyone of you know if you will. Now you nien who call yourselves agnostics, sceptics, and infidels and Universalists and Unitarians and Spiritualists, and Christian Scientists and theosophists, do you know where you will spend eternity? Do you really know? Be honest with yourselves now. You cannot afford to be deceived, do you know? No, no, no, you don't know. Well I do, so I have the better of you.

V. The fifth fact to bear in mind is that WE WILL SPEND ETERNITY IN ONE OF TWO PLACES: IN HEAVEN OR IN HELL. The exact location of Heaven and the exact location of hell is not a question we need to enter into. The character of the places is the important question. Heaven is a place of holiness, happiness and love. Hell is a place of violence, misery and hate. In one or the other you and I shall spend eternity. With Christ or with the Devil. With the holy and pure or with the profane, the blasphemous, the vile. Which will it be for all eternity?

VI. Now let me pin into your memory another thought, WHERE YOU WILL SPEND ETERNITY WILL BE SETTLED IN THE LIFE THAT NOW IS. Jesus Christ says in John 8:24, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins. For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins." And we read in the twenty-first verse of the same chapter, "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins, Whither I go, ye cannot come." In other words Jesus says that unless we believe in Him we shall die in our sins, and that if we do die in our sins our eternal destiny is sealed.

Again the apostle Paul says in 2 Cor. 5: 10, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." This makes it clear that where we will spend eternity is decided by the deeds done in the body, the things done this side the grave. It makes it clear that where we will spend eternity will be settled in the life that now is. Now many people do not like to believe that.

They know that their present life is a very poor preparation for eternity, so they don't like to think that their present life settles their eternal destiny. But it does. Jesus taught that plainly enough when He said as quoted above : "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins, Whither I go ye can not come." Schemes of future probation are pure speculations with absolutely no foundation in fact and contrary to the plain teaching of the Book that never lies. It is not a question, friends, of what we would like to believe, but what is true.

But some man rises and says, "I don't think that where we shall spend eternity is settled in this life. I think men will have another chance." I reply, "It doesn't make a particle of difference what you think, or what I think. The question is what does God say." But you still persist in saying, "But some very scholarly men and some very brilliant men like Lyman Abbott, for example, think there is to be another chance." I reply, Who is Lyman Abbott? A man who some eighty years or so ago came out of the great unknown, grew to manhood, talked a good deal, said some wise things and, as everyone knows, a good many foolish things, and in five years or less he will disappear again and soon be forgotten.

But who is Jesus? One who was in the beginning, was with God and was God. Some eighteen centuries ago He took upon Himself a human form, lived thirty odd years on this planet, spake as never man spake before nor since, revealing the truths He had learned in eternal fellowship with God, was killed by those of His time for claiming to be the Son of God, was raised from the dead by God Himself in testimony that His claim was true, was exalted to God's right hand "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named in this world or in the world to come."

Which are you going to believe: Lyman Abbott or Jesus Christ? Pastor Russell or Jesus Christ? If you have any sense you will believe Jesus Christ. Through all the centuries of Christian history men have appeared who have differed with Jesus Christ, men who have been accounted just as scholarly and brilliant by their generations as these men who to-day presume to set up their opinions against the teachings of Jesus Christ, and they have disappeared from the stage again and their vaunted discoveries

have not stood the test of time; but the teachings of Jesus Christ have stood the test of nearly nineteen centuries.

It ought not to take a man of fair average common sense very long to decide whom to believe under such circumstances. Believe Jesus Christ. Well, if you do believe Jesus Christ, write it down that where we shall spend eternity is settled in this life, settled this side of the grave.

VII. Just one point more, WHERE YOU SPEND ETERNITY WILL BE DETERMINED BY WHAT YOU DO WITH JESUS CHRIST. If you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour you will spend eternity with Him. If you reject Jesus Christ you will spend eternity away from Him. Listen to the sure word of God. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on Him" (John 3 : 36). Listen again. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall suffer punishment even everlasting destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of His might " (2 Thess. 1:7-9, see Revised Version). Where we spend eternity will be determined by what we do with Jesus Christ in the life that now is.

Let us sum up what we have seen to-night. First there is an eternity ; second, we must spend that eternity somewhere; third, the question where you will spend eternity is vastly more important than the question of where you will spend your present life; fourth, it is possible for us to know where we shall spend eternity; fifth, we shall spend eternity in one of two places, in heaven or in hell; sixth, where we spend eternity will be settled in the life that now is; seventh, where you spend eternity will be determined by what you do with Jesus Christ. My friend, whither goest thou? Where will you spend eternity?

There is a story that has been often told, but I wish to repeat to-night. In 1867 a young French nobleman went to London to consult Dr. Forbes Winslow, the eminent pathologist in diseases of the mind. He took letters of introduction from eminent men in France, among others one from Napoleon III, who was then Emperor of France. Reaching London he called upon Dr. Forbes Winslow and presented his letters of introduction. Having read them Dr. Winslow asked him what was the trouble.

The young man replied, "I cannot sleep. I have not had a good night's sleep for two years, and unless I get sleep I will go insane." Dr. Forbes Winslow asked him why he could not sleep. He replied he could not tell. "Have you lost money?" "No." "Have you suffered in honour or reputation?" "Not that I know of." "Have you lost friends?" "Not recently." "Why then can you not sleep?" The young man replied that he would rather not tell. Dr. Winslow said, "Unless you tell me I cannot help you."

"Well then if you must know, I am an infidel. My father was an infidel before me, but strange as it may appear to you, though I am an infidel and though my father was an infidel before me, when I go to bed at night I am haunted with this thought: Eternity, and where shall I spend it? And it drives all sleep from me. It haunts me the whole night through. If I succeed in getting a little sleep my sleeping thoughts are worse than my waking thoughts, and I start from my sleep haunted with the question, Eternity, and where shall I spend it?"

"I cannot help you," Dr. Winslow quietly replied. "What," exclaimed the young man, "you cannot help me? Have I come all the way from Paris to London, to have my last hope taken away." "No," replied Dr. Winslow, "I cannot help you, but I can tell you of a Physician that can." He walked across his office and took from the table a Bible and pointed to Isa. 53:5 and read, "But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with

His stripes we are healed.

That is the only Physician in the universe who can help you, Jesus Christ." The lip of the young French nobleman curled with scorn. "What," he said, "do you mean to tell me, Dr. Forbes Winslow, that you, one of the leading scientists of the day, the most eminent pathologist in the diseases of the mind in the world, that you believe that effete superstition of Christianity?" "Yes," replied Dr. Winslow calmly, "I believe in Christ, and believing in Him has saved me from becoming what you are."

The young Frenchman stood a moment in deep thought, then he looked up at Dr. Winslow and said, "Well if I am honest I ought at least to be ready to consider it, ought I not?" "Yes." "Well, will you be my teacher?" "Yes," replied Dr. Forbes Winslow, and the eminent pathologist in diseases of the mind became the physician of the soul. For several days he opened the Word of God about Christ and His salvation to the young nobleman until the light dawned in upon his soul, and his heart was at rest and he went back to Paris with the great question settled of, Eternity, and where shall I spend it? Eternity, and where shall I spend it? ETERNITY, AND WHERE SHALL I SPEND IT ? I thank God I know where I shall spend eternity. I shall spend it with Christ in the glory.

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