

What Manner of Persons Ought We to Be?

by Roy T. Williams

Dr. Roy T. Williams challenges us to reflect on our character and godliness in a world of uncertainty and impermanence.

Duration: 12:37

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, 2 Peter 3:10-16

Topics: "Holiness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on visiting a cemetery and reading the dates on the gravestones, which prompts him to pray for guidance in living a good life and ultimately meeting his parents and Jesus in the afterlife. He emphasizes the fleeting nature of material possessions and the uncertainty of life, urging the audience to consider what kind of person they should strive to be. The speaker then recounts a personal experience of losing his father and visiting his parents' graves, highlighting the importance of family and the impermanence of worldly things. He concludes by reminiscing about his childhood and the happiness he experienced with his parents, emphasizing the value of love and togetherness.

Transcript

This recording is a portion of a message by R.T. Williams based on 2 Peter 3, 10-16. The message deals especially with verse 11, Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness? Dr. R.T. Williams joined the Church of the Nazarene and was ordained by Dr. Brzee at the Pilot Point General Assembly in 1908. Only 8 years later, in 1916, he was elected General Superintendent shortly before his 33rd birthday.

He served in that position of leadership for 30 years until his death in 1946. Williams, along with Dr. J.B. Chapman, was one of the most influential second generation leaders who helped shape the future of the young denomination. No person has served our denomination longer as a General Superintendent than Dr. R.T. Williams.

This recording was made at Detroit First Church of the Nazarene in April of 1944 while Seldon Kelley was pastor. To our knowledge, this is the only existing recording of Dr. Williams preaching. May I lift up the text once more? Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be? It does not require a logician or a philosopher to see that we are living in a world of changes, a world of uncertainty, a world of insecurity, a world of disillusion.

Men have fortunes today and lose them tomorrow. Men are well tonight and in hospitals the following week. Men build buildings and by the time they put on the last shingles, the foundations are already beginning to feel the processes of disintegration.

Men buy farms and the soil is moved by wind and water and the soil by the time the farm is paid for has become impoverished, if not carefully built up in the meantime. Only a while back, a few years ago, it was my privilege to preach to a great congregation in California, our first church in Los Angeles, one of the great churches of the nation. That morning I poured out my heart to that great crowd.

It was back before the crash of 29, a time somewhat similar to the time in which we're living now. People had plenty of money, prosperity was widespread, and no one felt the pinch of poverty, at least very few. That day I poured out my heart for that great crowd in appeal for Pasadena College and the congregation gave me quickly and wholeheartedly and willingly 25,000 dollars that morning.

Some wrote checks for 1,000, others for 500, many, many for 100 each. I went back later after the crash of 29, an event that none of us shall ever forget. The same crowd faced me and there were many people on the front seats whose ages ranged from 65 to 95 years.

That morning, after I had closed the service, many of the people who before had given me large checks for the cause of Christ came up and wept on my shoulder. Some of them made statements like this, When you were here before, we had plenty of money. When you were here before, we had prosperity.

We had prepared, we thought, for a rainy day. But the rain came, the storm beat upon us and found us unprepared to resist it. And now our fortunes are gone, and many of us are in poverty and die alone.

We would give you money today for the cause of Christ if we had it, but we don't have it now as we did once. When I turned away from it with tears in my eyes, I remembered this statement, These things shall be dissolved. And I recalled again, and I recalled again tonight the fact that there is nothing material that is certain, nothing material that is secure, nothing may remember that.

Not only so, but human ties dissolved. Would you permit me tonight to go back to my boyhood days for a few moments of reminiscence? I can see my father and my mother. I can recall the old homestead, the fireplace with the burning wood.

On the cold winter night, my father and mother sat before the old fireplace with happy boys and girls, reading books, playing our musical instruments, singing songs, telling jokes, laughing, spending the evening hours together. Death had never been in our home. We had had no serious sickness.

We were all happy. My father was young and robust. The hair of my mother was as black as the wing of a crow.

Her eyes were black. Her cheeks were pink. She was well, beautiful, and happy.

Years went by, and one day death came to our home and took mother away. We picked up the torn garments and we tried to weave the cloth back together again. But when once that cloth is torn, you never can weave it back.

Home is never the same when death once comes through it. And more years went by. My sister went to India as a missionary.

I tied the rope around the trunk that held her clothes, her personal sex, and she went away to a foreign country to spend her life. I took her in my arms and kissed her goodbye as we separated. She went to India where she had been from that hour until tonight.

Then more years went by, and one day I received a telegram from one of my brothers saying that father was very low. If I hope to see him again, I must come home immediately. I went back to the old homestead.

When I walked into the room that night and looked at my father, I knew it would not be long. I took up a chair and sat it down, set it down at the head of the chair, and then I took one hand in my feet, and I felt that bony hand, and I looked into his face. He was very sick.

And I prayed this prayer, oh God, if my father goes tonight, let him go without strangulation. Let him go without convulsions. Let him go as if in a deep sleep.

And about 11 o'clock that night, I saw a quiver in the muscles of his throat. The muscles relaxed, and then contracted the second time and the third, relaxed again. And I stood up and laid the hand on his chest, and I listened for breath, but his breath was gone.

And then I smoothed the hair back on his head, and the eyelids down on his eyes, and I patted his cheek, and I said, Dad, I hate to give you up. More years went by, and one day, I became a homestead just to see the graves of my father and mother. And I rode hundreds of miles to the hometown.

And early in the morning, before banks and stores had opened for business, I walked down the street and out to the little cemetery and opened the iron gates and went through, and stood before the graves of my father and mother. And on the stone that marked the grave, I read the dates of birth and death, and went back and lived my life over again with my father and mother. And then, in a slow, drizzling rain, I removed my hat and prayed, O God, help me to be a good man, help me to live a good life, help me to die a victorious death, and may I meet my father and mother, and may I meet Jesus Christ in a better world when my journey here is over.

And then, I replaced my hat and walked down to the cemetery, according to these words, seeing that these things, material possessions and home ties, are being dissolved. What manner of man ought I to be? What manner of woman ought you to be? What manner of person ought we to be, seeing that these things are dissolving? When you go home tonight, please do me a favor, and yourself one likewise. Stand, if you will, before a mirror, and look at yourself in that mirror.

Look into your own eyes. Look deeply into your own eyes. And after you have done this, ask two questions.

Am I the sort of man I ought to be? And then the second question, what am I going to do about it if I am not the sort of man or woman I ought to be? The great question that you and I face tonight is not the question of the kind of car we ride in, but the kind of person who rides in that car. Not the kind of bed you sleep on, but the kind of man who sleeps on that bed. Not the kind of food you eat, but the kind of man who eats that food.

Not the size of the pocketbook we carry, but the sort of man who carries that pocketbook. What kind of man am I? What kind of woman am I? That is the great question. That's the big question.

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