

Robert Murray Mccheyne - Sainly Pastor of Dundee (Famous Saints #1)

by Stephen Hamilton

The sermon highlights the life and legacy of Robert Murray McShane, emphasizing his piety, impactful ministry, and the urgency of serving God faithfully.

Duration: 57:10

Scripture: Psalm 27:8, Matthew 6:33, John 9:4, Acts 16:14, 1 Corinthians 2:2, James 1:21, 1 Peter 1:23

Topics: "Robert Murray McCheyne"

Description

The video is a sermon transcript about the preaching of the word of God by Robert Murray McShane. The main focus of the sermon is on John chapter 9 verse 4, where Jesus says, 'I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.' McShane's life and ministry were marked by this verse, as he emphasized the importance of living in a way that would be missed at one's departure. After only two years of ministry, McShane's health began to fail, and he eventually passed away. Despite his short time in ministry, McShane's intellect and dedication to studying the Bible were evident, and he left a lasting impact on both the town and the church.

Transcript

Welcome to thee in the precious and worthy name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We rejoice in that name which is above every other name. Thou shalt call his name Jesus, the angel said, for he shall save his people from their sins.

We thank thee that Christ Jesus came into the world not to attempt to or to try to save sinners, but he came into the world to save sinners. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost. And today our God and Father we pray that as thy word goes forth and as we consider the life of this man of God, that thou wilt visit us with thy presence, that thou wilt speak to our hearts.

Lord, we pray that the people of God may be challenged and convicted and blessed and encouraged. And those that know not the Saviour, that thou wilt open their hearts. Even as thou didst open the heart of Lydia that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

Father, wilt thou open hearts today to receive with meekness the engrafted word of God which is able even to save their souls. So answer prayer, glorify thy name. O may Christ Jesus be lifted up.

May no man be seen, save Jesus only. For we ask in his worthy name. Amen and Amen.

As has been announced for this series of meetings, it is our purpose to consider some of the favorite scriptures of faithful saints of God, famous men of God of a past day. As you read the lives of certain of these men of God and others, you will discover that sometimes there was a scripture that God used in their conversion. Or sometimes there was a scripture which was a particular encouragement to them in their life and ministry.

A verse or even a series of verses that appeared to be special to them and a great encouragement to them. There are those whose lives could be summed up by a text or verse of scripture. Some of those men, even those that we will consider this week, some of them would have had a number of scriptures that were favorite scriptures for them.

It would be very difficult in some instances to say this one only text was the text that marked this man's life. And such would be true, I think, of the man that we are going to consider today. The Reverend Robert Murray McShane, the famous preacher of St. Peter's Church, Dundee, Scotland.

McShane did not actually state at any time that I am aware of that one scripture was his favorite above all other scriptures. As you read his sermons, as you study his writings, you will find that there were a number of scriptures that seem to reoccur and seem to be special to him. But there is one verse that I think, above all, might be taken as a favorite text for the Reverend Robert Murray McShane.

A text that was not only a favorite for him, but which marked his life in ministry. And that is John chapter 9, verse 4. Of course, these are the words of the Savior Himself. When He said, I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.

Robert Murray McShane seemed always in his life to be thinking about his death. It seemed to be the case, when you read his sermons, you get a flavor of this and you get evidence of this, that McShane was looking toward that day when he would stand before the throne. When he would stand before God, even as his own poem rightly points out, dressed in beauty not my own.

He wrote there in that hymn concerning eternity. This was a mark of McShane's preaching. It was a mark of his poetry.

And as we shall see, this text, therefore, is most appropriate as a favorite scripture of this famous Saint of God. The 24th of March 1843 witnessed the passing of this, one of Scotland's finest preachers, the Reverend Robert Murray McShane. The godly minister of St. Peter's in the town of Dundee, often referred to as the Sainted or Saintly McShane, was called home to be with Christ before reaching his 30th birthday.

Having preached as an ordained minister for only seven and a half years in the Church of Scotland, he nevertheless left a tremendous imprint upon his own and also successive generations. I think it's a powerful tribute to the life and ministry of this man of God that even today, more than 160 years after his death, his sermons are still being read and his memory is still revered, not only in his native land, but beyond. Now it is true that no man, however greatly used of God, should be put on a pedestal.

We are not worshipers of men. We do not worship either a man or his memory. But it is good for us to consider the lives of godly men of past generations because in doing so, we may discover what it was that made them great in a spiritual sense and we can apply the lessons to our own lives.

If you look at Psalm 112, verse 6, the Scripture records that the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. We know that that is certainly in its first application true of the Lord's remembrance of His people. The righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance because the Lord will always think upon His people.

But nevertheless, I think there's an application to us that we should remember and we should think about the righteous of past generations. We should be challenged and motivated by their lives and their ministries. We also read in Proverbs 10, verse 7, the memory of the just is blessed.

The memory of the just is blessed. And there's much blessing, I believe, and profit in the consideration of a life like that of the saintly McShane. Robert McShane was born in a place that's often called Old Reekie and that's the city of Edinburgh, Scotland's capital city.

He was the youngest child of the family. He arrived on the 21st of May, 1813. Later on in that famous city of Edinburgh, he experienced his second birth and became a decided and earnest Christian.

He had a very outstanding career at high school and at university. From earliest days, Robert McShane showed a peculiar aptitude for learning. For instance, at the tender age of 4, not 14, 4, while recovering from an illness, his chosen form of recreation was the learning of the Greek alphabet.

His powers of intellect shone through also in his later studies in the Divinity School of the Church of Scotland. At the age of 22, Robert was licensed to preach the gospel, but he did not receive his own charge until his settlement in St. Peter's Church, which was a new congregation in Dundee. However, he did spend a profitable period of preparation as an assistant to another famous preacher in the Scottish Church, the Reverend John Bonner.

And this was in the parish church of Larbert and Dunnypace, near the town of Stirling in central Scotland. Bonner, of course, had two famous sons who followed him into the ministry. Andrew, who became a very great friend of Robert McShane and his brother, Horatius.

Both were contemporaries of McShane. Andrew, particularly though, became his very dear friend and after the death of Murray McShane, he authored a famous biography known as the Memoir and Remains of Robert Murray McShane. And I could urge you today, if you can get a copy of that, to purchase one and to read it.

It will be a great blessing to your soul. After a relatively short period as assistant to the Reverend John Bonner, a few months in fact, young Robert was settled in the town of Dundee in the new parish church of St. Peter's. As its first minister, he was to become also its most famous.

But his first charge was destined to be his last. And yet what an indelible mark it was to leave upon the history of both the town and the church. He did work the works of him that sent him while it was day.

But the night came, the night when no man can work. It will come for us all. And it came for McShane.

After only two years of ministry, his health began to fail. Eventually he became so ill that it was decided to send him at one point for a working holiday, for a vacation. He was to accompany two other ministers of the Church of Scotland, Andrew Bonner being one of them, on a mission of inquiry to the Jews of Palestine.

McShane, you see, always entertained a deep interest in the ancient people of God during his short ministry. In the providence of God, a young preacher by the name of William Chalmers Burns took the place of the absent pastor in the town and in the pulpit of St. Peter's Dundee. The foundation which McShane had already laid in his own ministry was instrumental in the bringing of a great revival to Dundee through the preaching of that young man, his deputy.

That revival broke out in 1839 and remarkably at its height there were 39 weekly prayer meetings held in that one congregation. Think of that, 39 prayer meetings every week. Five of those prayer meetings being conducted by and carried on exclusively by children.

When McShane returned from Palestine it was the scene of a great awakening. The revival spirit was largely present right up until March the 25th 1843 when he was called home to be with the Lord. Robert had suffered somewhat from ill health throughout his life but the immediate cause of his death in the end was typhus fever.

Having contracted that illness he died within a very short period of time. But Robert Murray McShane was a most amazing man. He never wrote a book to my knowledge nor did he preach much beyond the borders of his native Scotland but his life and short ministry left a deep imprint not only upon his own beloved country of Scotland but upon many other parts of the world.

His was but a brief ministry of some seven and a half years. But yet how powerful and how mighty through God was the life's work of this man. You know it's interesting to note that just like other worthies of the Scottish Church who had died in relative youth so McShane died as a young man.

Andrew Gray who was the minister of the High Kirk in Glasgow died at age 22. Hugh Binning and Hugh McKeel at age 26. Patrick Hamilton died as a martyr at age 24.

George Gillespie and James Durham at age 36. So McShane received his call likewise to higher service at a relatively young and tender age of 29 just on the threshold of his 30th birthday. But as Andrew Bonner has remarked in his memoir and I've enjoyed reading it we may notice how often the Lord has done much work by a few years of holy labour.

McShane lived short but in another sense he lived long because in that short time he worked the works of him that sent him. At the death of McShane the whole town of Dundee and not just the town but the whole of Scotland mourned because a veritable prince in Israel had been taken from their midst. It is said that everywhere that his passing was relayed it caused every Christian countenance to be darkened with grief.

Perhaps never was the death of any man felt so keenly by the saints of God anywhere. One whose sole occupation had been the preaching of the gospel. That young minister had often urged his hearers to live in such a way as to be missed at their departure.

That which he recommended to others was practiced by himself. McShane was most certainly missed when he was gone. His death was a great blow to the hearts of many of the Lord's people.

On the day of his burial it is said that the whole of Dundee came to a standstill. Business was suspended completely in the town such was the esteem in which he was held. Every street was lined with mourners and in the windows of those homes on the procession route people thronged to watch that sad spectacle.

It was said that many a formerly careless person felt an awe creeping over his soul as he witnessed that funeral cortege wend its way to the place of burial. If McShane had spoken by his life then most certainly his death was a sermon to the hearts of many. A lot of true Christians challenged by that event dedicated their hearts afresh to the cause of Christ.

Hitherto careless sinners, people who had no desire for the things of God or the Saviour or the Gospel which spoke of him now sought Christ in true repentance and faith. Like Samson of old, the preacher slew many in his death. Speaking many years later, his great and dear friend Andrew Bonner referred to the aura that seemed to surround the burial place of McShane.

Bonner often visited the grave there in Dundee to the side of the church and on each occasion he said he found it to be a most solemn and moving thing. And I can testify personally having visited that grave on many, many, many occasions that those who go to that place today will find it a very touching experience. And not least because of the words that are inscribed upon the memorial above McShane's grave.

This is what it says. Erected by his sorrowing flock in memory of the Reverend Robert Murray McShane, First Minister of St. Peter's Church Dundee, who died the 25th day of March 1843 in the 30th year of his age and the 7th of his ministry. Walking closely with God, an example of believers in word and conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity, he ceased not day and night to labor and watch for souls, and was honored by his Lord to draw many wanderers out of darkness into the path of life.

Underneath these words there appears the inscription, the scripture text, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. I believe of Robert Murray McShane in particular we may say with the proverb that the memory of the just is blessed. There are a number of things that I could say about Robert Murray McShane.

Things that would illustrate that even this scripture impacted his life. McShane was always aware of the approaching night. In fact, it is part of his history and part of the story that McShane chose as his own personal seal on his correspondence, on his envelopes, on his writing paper, a little drawing, a painting of a sun setting behind some mountains with the words underneath the night cometh.

And so I believe that this text is most appropriate concerning his life and his ministry. I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work. But I want us to think of a number of things concerning the life of McShane that are a challenge and indeed a blessing to our hearts.

First of all, I want us to think about the piety of McShane. He is known as the godly or the saintly McShane. And I don't think anyone who considers the life of McShane could fail to be impressed by his godliness, by his saintly character.

He was often referred to, as we've said, as the sainted McShane. And, of course, true holiness does not make its possessor any the less human. Some people have the idea that to be a holy man you have to have a long face and have a sad countenance.

You have to dress in a particular way which is fitting to someone who is in mourning. But nothing could be further from the truth. And certainly there are in every generation those who seem to think that such an appearance is synonymous with holiness.

But that idea that you have to wear a frown all the time and walk with your face toward the earth and be perpetually in mourning is both unscriptural and foolish. It has no relation to the Scripture. Robert Murray McShane, I tell you, enjoyed life to the full as a Christian.

He had a number of hobbies and interests, for example, by engaging in these he proved that a godly man may enjoy legitimate human pursuits, all in the right place. For instance, Robert was a keen and accomplished musician. He had a beautiful singing voice.

A special gift of his was poetry. He penned a number of outstanding pieces, some of which have been employed, as we have this morning, as hymns. Once the young McShane received a prize at school for the high standard of his poetry.

And despite an apparent physical weakness, he was a very keen athlete. Particularly he enjoyed gymnastics. One of his contemporaries, Dr. Guthrie of Earl, was one who witnessed his athletic efforts at first hand, although with unhappy results, because Guthrie bore testimony later to the effect that Robert's gymnastic interest had upon him that it may actually have hastened his death.

Because one day after breakfast at the manse in Earl, Robert McShane spied some gymnastic poles in the garden, in the yard outside the window, and he felt that he really must have a go on the bars. So he rushed to the horizontal bar apparently, resting on the forks of two upright poles, and went through a strenuous series of athletic exercises and manoeuvres. And tauntingly, he challenged the older preacher to do the same thing.

With reluctance, Guthrie moved toward the bars, but suddenly just at that moment, the pole in which McShane himself was hanging by his heels snapped in two, and the young man fell rather heavily to the ground. Guthrie said later of his young friend, he sickened, was born into the manse, lay there for several days, and was never the same man again. Now that event might indeed have had more than a little to do with his early death.

But from his life and character it was obvious it could be seen that Robert McShane was a godly man. He loved holiness, he desired always more and more to be like Christ. In one of his letters he said, I often pray, Lord make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be made.

And what a great prayer that is. Lord make me as holy as a pardoned sinner can be made. The testimony of others who knew him was a witness to his holiness of life.

In a certain part of Dumfriesshire in southern Scotland there lived three very ungodly young women. It's recorded that sometime in August 1842 McShane paid a visit to friends in that area at which these three ungodly girls were present. They were boisterous, they were absolutely destitute of godliness, and evidently they were hostile to true evangelical religion.

All three of them were really sceptical of the gospel and they were scornful of those who preached it. And so after meeting the young minister from Dundee, they decided to nickname him Perfection. And they sought to harden their hearts against him, but by his behaviour before them McShane completely surprised and captivated those three girls.

It was obvious that here was a young man who was happy, he wasn't sour and melancholy at all. Far from that, appearing cheery and gentlemanly, he very quickly convinced these girls that religion was not the galling and enslaving yoke that they'd always supposed it to be. That Christianity did not in reality make a

person unhappy, quite the opposite in fact.

And Robert won their affection very quickly and they soon became delighted with his company and they revelled in his conversation. The three young women went about with the preacher and they often accompanied him to the various houses where he prayed with the people. And on a particular day during prayer, the one of the three who had been regarded as the worst of the sisters, began crying and sobbing out loud.

And after their family worship one evening, the other two girls simultaneously burst into tears, crying out in great concern for their souls. Their hearts were melted because of their sin. They saw the things of God in a brand new light and it was said that all three of them became decided and earnest believers in Christ.

Won to Christ by the godly conversation of McShane. Long after Robert McShane had gone to be with his Lord, those three sisters from Dumfriesshire testified that it was his sympathetic spirit and his pitiful look which had touched their hearts. Robert was certainly one who shone as a bright star in the hand of Christ.

Just as that brilliant light that shone over the place where the Lord lay as a babe, so McShane was a star who attracted sinners to the Saviour. Often as he preached it was said that there was an almost seraphic appearance about him. He almost looked like one with the face of an angel.

But you know, not only was he a holy man in the pulpit, but just as importantly outside the pulpit as well. I think it's an indictment of some ministers that they're very different men outside the pulpit to that which they are in the pulpit. That's not a charge that could be laid at McShane's door.

It was a living epistle of Christ everywhere known and read of men and clear testimony was frequently borne by others to his piety, to his godliness. And you know truly godly saints don't speak about their own gifts and graces. It always worries me when people start telling me about their holiness.

McShane didn't sound a trumpet in front of him and say look at me, I'm a holy man of God. No, the genuinely pious man will, like the saints of Antioch, not say we are Christians, they will be called Christians. Others will see it.

They will have a testimony which will lead others to believe that they have been with Jesus. Murray McShane made many memorable statements among these were some pithy remarks on the subject of holiness. Time really is a constraint when you're dealing with a life like McShane but the preacher once said a holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.

And he certainly exemplified the truth of those words. He was indeed a saintly man. Acquaintances saw something in McShane which they did not see in others and that is evident in the records of his life that have been left us by biographers such as Andrew Bonner.

For example, not long after McShane's passing there was a letter discovered in his desk. It was a letter from somebody who had obviously received great blessing to his soul from a sermon that he had heard from the young man in St. Peter's Church. The writer of that letter had come to that church as a stranger to hear the young minister.

But he found that he got more benefit from the look of the preacher than from the sermon itself. And he talked about that in his letter. Here's what he said.

It was not what you said nor even how you said it but it was your look. It was so Christ-like. It was the face of one shining from being in the presence of his Lord.

Another incident would further establish the point that I'm making. The story's told of a woman who was visiting the city of Alexandria in Egypt. She happened to be staying at one of the hotels there.

Something had happened that day that greatly irritated her so much so that she began to lunge forth in a tirade against all Christians. You know how people sometimes do that. These Christians, she said, they're just a load of hypocrites.

Oh, I couldn't trust one Christian. These Christians so-called, they will cheat you whenever and wherever they can. They're hypocrites.

Well, as she was raging there, there was a person present who gently intervened. Well, he inquired, have you never in your whole life seen just one Christian? One follower of Jesus that you believed in? And the woman ceased her raging for a moment and she paused and all of a sudden she calmed right down. And her countenance completely changed.

And in a much quieter tone than before she replied, yes. I saw one. A man.

A minister in this hotel. A tall spare man from Scotland. He was a man of God.

I watched him and I felt that he was a genuine Christian. His very look did me good. And that minister was, of course, the Reverend Robert Murray McShane.

His life told for Jesus Christ. I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day. And that work, my friend, is the good work of living as a Christian.

As well as talking the talk, walking the walk. And believers everywhere, including myself, need to learn this lesson. It is not so much what we say nor how we say it.

And don't get me wrong, we should speak a word for Jesus. But it is how we live that opens our lips that we will be able to speak of Christ. Because people will feel that what we say and what we do match up the one to the other.

Yes, speak just a word for Jesus, ever to him be true. A word spoken in season. How good is it? But so often is it not the case that your life closes your lips? Your life closes your lips because the things that you say do not match the things that you do.

It was the firm conviction of Robert Murray McShane that holiness of life is linked inextricably with power in the service of Christ. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God. McShane used to say, it is not great talents that God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus.

And how he knew that blessing of God in his own ministry for that very reason. A Dr. McDonald Dr. Robert McDonald of Blair Gallery in the North East of Scotland afterwards of North Leith in Edinburgh affirmed, we often lose golden opportunities by not being usable. It sells according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation because it is written be ye holy for I am holy.

McShane we've said was a friend of Andrew Bonner. Andrew Bonner was married and Mrs. Bonner said she saw it first hand, the pious conduct and godly character of McShane when he stayed in their home. She said on one occasion it was not his matter nor his manner either that struck me it was just the living epistle of Christ a picture so lovely I felt I would have given all the world to be as he was.

The piety of McShane illustrates our text for he lived and worked in holiness but also the prayer life of McShane should be noted. A truly holy man will of course be a man of prayer always. Robert McShane was no exception he was both pious and prayerful.

There was a domestic servant once at the home of Andrew Bonner in Collison Perthshire who witnessed the man of God at prayer and she said of her masters guest, Oh to hear Mr. McShane at prayers in the morning it was as if he would never give over, he had some knuckle to ask, so much to ask. She said you would have thought the very walls would speak again after he prayed. Such was the abiding impression left upon hearts by the supplication of this minister.

There were others who talked about it. A number of years after his death for instance, a minister came to visit the St. Peter's church and the caretaker agreed to show him around that famous kirk and as they were walking around the church they were discussing the late beloved pastor of Dundee, McShane and the visitor was particularly anxious to discover the reason for the young man's success as a preacher. What do you think he said to the caretaker, is the secret of McShane's great ministry?

What was the secret of his power in the pulpit?

The caretaker looked at the minister he said nothing for a moment but he just conducted the minister into the vestry now he said kneel down by the chair the somewhat bemused minister knelt by the chair and then in a most solemn tone the caretaker said now then start to weep raise your eyes to heaven and cry to God Oh God bless me Oh God use me Oh God I cannot go up to yonder pulpit until I know that I have the mighty anointing of the spirit resting upon me and looking into the face of that visiting preacher with tear filled eyes the caretaker said that dear friend is the secret of the ministry of Robert Murray McShane he was a man of prayer and I think what was true of McShane should be true of all gospel ministers and it ought to apply to all genuine Christians we ought to be men and

women of prayer we have not because we ask not sometimes we look at mighty Christians and eminent saints of God and we say well they were mighty men for God they did a great work for the Lord but do we ever consider what it was that made them great of course it was God of course they got spiritual power from the Lord but where did they get it they got it at the place of prayer they got that power on their knees at the throne of grace and Robert McShane was a great man because he believed in the vital necessity of prayer occasionally he would refer to his own practice in private devotion but not in any boastful way for instance he stated to a friend once I feel that it's far better to begin the day with God and to see his face first and get my soul near to him before it is near another

speaking to a student for the ministry one day he said above all keep much in the presence of God never see the face of man till you have seen his face who is our life and our all and that was of course his own practice throughout life he felt a compulsion to serve God in prayer I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day one of those works is the work of prayer for prayer is work, prayer is labor you are never so full of effort and activity as when you are on your knees before God seeking his power Robert McShane kept notebooks for his private prayer he had a systematic method in bringing matters before the Lord on his knees for instance in one of those notebooks he drew four circles and he filled them with matters for

prayer, there was a small circle that contained the

name of his family and kinfolk and then the names of his friends and then in a wider circle there came his own congregation and in that particular circle there were no fewer than eleven separate classes into which names were divided for example he would pray for the careless and then the ones that he felt were anxious and then those that were recently converted and he would pause over each one, he would remember each one personally and pray fervently to God for them, then in the fourth circle apparently it had many places listed within it, first his own beloved parish of Dundee then moving out to the other towns and cities of Scotland and then further afield to the missionaries of the world and the lands where they were laboring he was diligent in the place of prayer and I ask myself this

just as I ask it of you can we only give seconds to the matter of prayer and expect to know the power of God on our lives that McShane knew one of his last recorded prayers in public was uttered while he was delirious, he had contracted typhus fever, he was a dying man at the time and imagining that he was in his beloved pulpit he would sometimes be heard on his bed preaching and calling on sinners to repent, at other times he would engage in prayer and this particular petition that was heard concerned the land of Scotland and the town of Dundee that he especially loved and he cried out, this place Lord, this people, this parish even in the throes of death he was found in prayer we've talked of his piety, we've talked of his prayer life I must work the works of him that sent me while it

is day, the night cometh when no man can work certainly that applied mostly and particularly to the preaching of McShane, what a preacher he was the printed sermons of McShane reveal something of the heart of the preacher and I love to read those sermons like the basket of fragments like the remains, the sermons that were left behind, he never actually issued a published sermon himself and he didn't ever write a book except for one or two small pieces such as a little message called reasons why the young should flee to Christ where he shows a great burden for children and young people but his sermons were taken down by others in shorthand and even in perusing those sermons that have been produced from that, one senses just how powerful they must have been in their original preaching

because even in their present form they breathe life and power they're of such a quality as when you read them they make you wish that you had the privilege of hearing McShane in the flesh, what a preacher he must have been but there's one feature I think that stands out pre-eminently in the public ministry of McShane and that was it was full of Christ the preaching that sounded forth from Saint Peter's pulpit was permeated with one subject, Jesus Christ and him crucified he relished the task of proclaiming the finished work of Christ that there is a saviour from all sin just like the prince of English preacher C.H.

Spurgeon it was said that McShane seemed especially to excel at the seasons of communion, he was always at his best at the Lord's table as he discoursed upon the sufferings of the saviour and of course his love for that feast could be seen by his desire to break away from the normal practice of reformed churches in Scotland in relation to communion seasons, it was usual in such churches to hold the Lord's supper only twice per year but to keep the feast so infrequently seemed wrong to McShane and so in his own congregation he broke with tradition and he changed the times to once a quarter or four times per year when they would have an entire season given over to the Lord's table and as was normal practice and still is in many churches in Scotland the congregation spent a week in preparation for communion, holding services each day and the services would commence on a Thursday continuing on Friday and Saturday, the high day was the Sabbath, the day of the feast itself and then the communion season would conclude with a day of thanksgiving and praise on the Monday McShane took great delight in preaching

the word and a deep spirituality of thought is evident in his sermons a lot of his sermons were based incidentally upon the Old Testament quite rightly he believed that there was much typical teaching to be found in it, it was full of Christ and he preached Christ and he was ready to preach Christ as well not only to the multitudes he was not one of these preachers who would refuse an engagement if he thought there was going to be less than 100 people there he was just as happy preaching to the small rural flocks as he was to the large crowds in the cities, that's a testimony to his humility, he never showed any concern about numbers but was ever prepared to travel far to visit and to comfort even one soul he loved to preach the gospel his sermons apparently were well prepared not for him, the practice of standing before a congregation just to say the first thing that came into his head he prepared for his pope administrations carefully and part of that preparation involved the visiting of the dying on Saturdays, that might seem strange to you, but he felt that he wanted his heart to be touched by what he saw in his visitation, so that he would be in a serious frame for his sabbath work, and he used to go to see the sick and dying of a Saturday so that he could, in his own words, look over the edge into eternity for him that was ideal preparation for preaching the gospel in a serious way his preaching was not dry or doctrinaire either, it wasn't boring it was down to earth it was practical, but it was full of solid meat and sound doctrine, and he employed simple illustrations and useful anecdotes, and I believe that's the mark of a great preacher that his preaching is at the same time simple and profound.

A lot of the work in St Peter's church and I'm cutting out a lot of things that I would like to say but much of the work that went on in his congregation was done by members of the congregation and I think that that is a challenge to us this was an active church, it was not as many would accuse our churches today of being it was not a church where there was a one man ministry, I don't think there's such a thing. It was a beehive of industry but McShane was the minister and he led his people, he was not an armchair general he led from the front and the people followed him for instance, in addition to his elders, the minister established a large staff of tract distributors who met regularly for the reading of God's word and for prayer as well as for giving out the word there was a lot of work done among the young people in Dundee. McShane had a high regard for the Sabbath school and for the youth work he loved boys and girls and they in turn responded well to him.

He was a great believer in the principle that the minister should, like a general with his troops lead from the front and so he took a personal interest in all the work of the church including the children's work even himself speaking often to the assembled Sabbath school and every week he held an evening class for the young people of his congregation. Oh he was one who believed I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day the night cometh when no man can work that was a thought that was before him all of the time that he needed to number his days that he might apply his heart unto wisdom and oh what a preacher McShane was for eternity. On one occasion he said to his congregation, oh brethren it is a wonder I can stand here and look upon you sitting there with dry eyes bethink yourselves in time are you still content to remain children of wrath enemies of God and heirs of hell oh that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people.

Oh McShane was a thorough going Calvinist he was a man who believed in the doctrines of grace but he believed in Calvinism on fire he believed in pleading with men to come to Christ and sinners were saved in their multitudes under his faithful and pointed preaching. He said on one occasion imploring his hearers to get right with God I sometimes feel brethren that I would willingly lie down beneath this sod in this church yard and be forgotten and trampled on if only you were friends of Christ it wasn't too long after that that he was beneath this sod in that very church yard but he wasn't forgotten and he wasn't trampled upon and

many who heard him were made friends of Christ it was interesting the last two sermons that he preached they were unfamiliar themes for him his morning message that final sabbath in St.

Peter's was based on Hebrews 9 verses 12 and 13 dealing with the work of Christ the one whose blood is greater blood than that of bulls and of goats the sabbath afternoon sermon being taken up with the words of Romans chapter 9 and verse 22 and I'll read that for you just now Romans 9 and verse 22 what if God willing to show his wrath and to make his power known endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction oh he was a man who pleaded with men and that very day it was said as he had done on many former occasions he urged his unregenerate hearers to trust in the Saviour telling them of their need of Christ you know McShane's ministry was a very brief one but it was no less powerful for that because there's many a minister that's continued preaching for maybe

40 or 50 years but he's never experienced the power nor seen the results that this man did in a relatively short period of 7 and a half years you see men and women it's not the quantity of time that we serve that really counts it's the quality of that service and that's a lesson that we do well to learn if I had time I could talk to you about the poetry of McShane when we read this text that sums up his life it reminds me of one of his poems when it says there the night cometh when no man can work he wrote a poem called the time is short the time is short the season near when death will us remove to leave our friends however dear and all we fondly love the time is short sinners beware nor trifle time away the word of great salvation here while it is called today the time is short ye

rebels now to Christ the Lord submit to mercy's golden scepter bow and fall at Jesus feet the time is short ye saints rejoice the Lord will quickly come soon shall ye hear the bridegroom's voice to call your spirits home the time is short it swiftly flies the hour is just at hand when we shall mount above the skies and reach Emmanuel's land in all of his writing you will find that he entertained the thought that he was not going to be long for this old world I think he lived with eternity's values in view when this passing world is done when is sunk yon glaring sun when we stand with Christ in glory looking o'er life's finished story then Lord shall I fully know not till then how much I owe there are actually nine stanzas in that hymn of which we don't sing but maybe four or five normally

I could talk today about the passion of McShane oh how he wanted to work the works of him that had sent him while it was day I only learned when I was studying his life afresh that he actually wanted to be a missionary on the foreign field it was not the will of God but he loved missions particularly Jewish missions at one time he referred to the inclination to missions when he said I am now made willing of God shall open the way to go to India here am I send me that was not to be the case however the Lord had other work for his servant to do but nevertheless he had a true missionary spirit throughout his entire life realizing the mission field was not the place he did say on one occasion I think of the souls in Burma but are there not souls around and about me here that need Christ and

that's the spirit that we all must entertain if you cannot cross the ocean or the heathen lands explore you can find the heathen nearer you can reach them at your door what a preacher McShane was he was one who thought so much about Christ and spoke so often about him that the Christ like image became gradually his that passion for Jesus was the great secret of all his devotion speaking of morning prayer on one occasion he said who would not rise early to meet such company he loved the Lord and he loved the souls of men how he desired to save souls he said on one occasion remarking on the work of gospel ministers our object is not to get duty done but to get souls saved that was his work I must work the work of him that sent me while it is called today I can't close without telling you

how that he was always on the lookout for opportunities to speak a word for his saviour and one particular story illustrates that one day he was out walking in Dundee when he happened to pass by a blacksmith shop and the blacksmith was working at the furnace blowing with the bellows to get the furnace going and he opened the door of the furnace to feed it with fresh fuel as well and McShane stopped and paused for a moment there in the blacksmith shop and said to the man in his own mild way does that blazing fire remind you of anything and then he just turned said nothing more and went on his way the blacksmith had hitherto been a very careless and heedless man about his soul and his eternal destiny but now he was compelled strangely to consider these things and for quite some time

thereafter he was unable to shake off this solemn and searching question does this fire remind you of anything and he could obtain no rest nor peace until he made his way to the St Peter's Church and there he was converted to Christ at a subsequent date the blacksmith became a member of the congregation in Dundee, a simple word in season had been used to bring a soul to Christ even after his death souls were brought to Christ through his ministry there was a minister of the Church of England, a canon in the city of Liverpool who came to know the Saviour through reading that book, the memoir and remains of Robert Murray McShane he actually had passed by a bookstore one day when he spied a copy of the memoir in the window he decided he must have it, made the purchase and as a direct result

of reading the life and work of this departed man of God he became a follower of Christ, he being dead yet speaketh we've talked here about McShane and various things about his life but I think that I must say before we finish that when McShane was gone he was sadly missed and that should be a challenge to all of us, the night came for him the night cometh when no man can work and I say to you this morning as a Christian the night will come for you the day will come and this could be the last day we don't know that when our service for the Lord on this earth will be over how are we living? are we living with eternity's values in view? again I speak to those that are not saved and I say to you the night cometh the night cometh when you will no longer hear the gospel, when you no longer

will be challenged concerning your need of a saviour the Bible says now is the accepted time now, not next week not next month, not next year, not some other time, now is the day of salvation, seek ye the Lord while he may be found call ye upon him while he is near McShane once said another pastor one day shall feed this flock another singer shall lead the psalm, another flock shall fill this fold and how true that was and how true it is but today we ourselves need to take stock we need to take note of what the Bible tells us that the night cometh when no man can work I love McShane I have to say of all the men that I will preach about this week he is my favourite I spent ten years ministering in Scotland on the other side of Scotland in Glasgow but everyone that used to come visit me I

didn't need much of an excuse to drive the eighty miles or so up to Dundee to go to St.

Peter's Church and I've had the joy a number of times of standing in that pulpit the very one where McShane preached which is now in the basement of that church and thought often times about that man of God and the messages that he preached and the souls that were saved and I pray that the Lord would make me even to some degree and measure a McShane for his glory I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day the night cometh when no man can work may this be a challenge to all of our souls for his name's sake Amen

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