

On Insensibility to Eternal Things

by Thomas Reade

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being aware of our mortality and eternity, and preparing for the afterlife by seeking true wisdom, being delivered from unbelief, and being captivated by redeeming love.

Scripture: Psalm 90:12, Daniel 12:2, Matthew 25:46, 2 Corinthians 4:18, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Eternal Consequences", "Spiritual Awakening"

Description

Thomas Reade preaches on the insensibility to eternal things, urging the congregation to reflect on the brevity of life and the vastness of eternity. He emphasizes the importance of awakening from spiritual lethargy and seeking true wisdom to understand the value of time and the need for salvation. Reade highlights the contrast between the temporary pleasures of this world and the eternal consequences of sin, urging listeners to consider their eternal destiny and the urgency of being born again to find true happiness and rest in God's heavenly kingdom.

Transcript

2. ON INSENSIBILITY TO ETERNAL THINGS

Come, Oh! my soul, call in your scattered thoughts; collect your wandering desires, and meditate with solemn awe on everlasting things. How busy is the world! How big with designs, all resting on tomorrow! But tomorrow's sun may never rise on thousands who are fondly hoping to behold a range of following years. Short-sighted mortals! He who rules over all, has assigned to each a limit, beyond which the worldling cannot pass. Man has an appointed time upon earth; his days are days of an hireling.

Oh! for true wisdom to learn the measure of our days; and to compute with justness the extent of life. The volume of inspiration has done this with peculiar force and beauty. There human life is compared to a sleep; to the rapidity of a flood; to a tale that is told; to a vapor that appears for a little time; to a flower which flourishes in the morning, and in the evening is cut down and withered; to vanity; to a shadow that passes away. Eternity--that solemn word soon passes from the lip; but who can grasp the mighty, the immense idea, which this word ETERNITY conveys?

All thought is lost in its immensity, and swallowed up in its fathomless abyss. The mind may conceive, though faintly, of millions of ages heaped upon millions, until numbers lose themselves; or rather until we are lost in the vast calculation. But who can measure eternity? compared with, whose everlasting lines, myriads of years are infinitely less than atoms floating in the mid-day sun? All men are hastening to

eternity. All are standing upon the brink of an interminable state of being.

Yet all, except the little flock of Christ, are living as if life would never end; and die as if beyond the grave there was nothing to awaken their solicitous concern. Awful insensibility! How fatally has sin blinded the mind of those who believe not! Men are willing to believe that which they wish to be true. They flatter themselves that all will be well at the last, though they follow the corrupt desires of their hearts, in direct opposition to the revealed will of God. Here indeed, in this present world, the wicked, from their animal nature, have many objects to gratify their sensualistic appetites, even at the very time when their spirits are enduring the stings and lashes of an upbraiding conscience.

But in eternity, where the body shall no longer be the seat of carnal desire; in eternity, where all the sensual gratifications shall forever cease; the soul will experience no change from pain to pleasure, or from pleasure to pain; but all will be either unmixed pain or unalloyed pleasure. Surely no thought can be more awakening than this; and yet with what subtlety does the heart evade its force; with what shocking indifference is it treated by a world of dying sinners! "Oh blessed Jesus! compassionate High Priest, awaken my drowsy sense.

Deliver me from the fatal lethargy of unbelief. Captivate all my heart by the sweet constraining influence of redeeming love. You who are the Sun of Righteousness, dispel the mist of error; dissipate every darkening cloud which would intercept your cheering beam; and let all your brightness burst upon my ravished sight. Reveal yourself as my Savior; let all your goodness pass before me; say to my trembling heart--"I am your salvation"--then shall I be able to contemplate eternity, with joyful expectation; knowing, that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."

Moses was well acquainted with the insensibility of the human heart to eternal things, when he prayed, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." We are walking every moment on the verge of eternity! A slight accident can loosen the cords which unite soul and body; and thus bring us instantly into the world of spirits. Then why should we calculate upon length of days? Why should we act as if we had years at command? This moment only is our own.

So precious is time, that Infinite Bounty deals it out by seconds. And yet how prodigal we are of time, as if it were of all things the easiest to attain, or its loss the easiest to repair! Dying sinners whose consciences are awakened, and whose eyes are opened to see their danger, know the incalculable value of time. They feel every moment to be inconceivably precious, if, in this fleeting remnant of time, they can find the Savior whom they have basely slighted, and through his pardoning grace be saved from the wrath to come.

It is at dying beds that we learn something of the value of time. The keen self-reproaches of the convicted sinner show the folly of wasting days and hours, which have a value beyond the power of human calculation. The shortness of life is continually forcing itself upon us by the passing funeral-bell, the funeral procession, and the weekly voice of the obituaries. Yet its very commonness, which ought to alarm us, tends only to lull us into a strange security. This is observable in large towns, where multitudes are continually summoned into eternity; while in villages, where deaths are less frequent, a solemn awe is usually excited; at least for a time.

"Whatever others do, Oh! may I think seriously on my dying hour. Lord, teach me so to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom. Enlighten my understanding to perceive what things I ought to do, and give me grace and power faithfully to fulfill the same." We are born in sin; therefore, to be happy we must be born again. We have lived in sin--and to be happy, we must be delivered from its reigning power.

As in this world there is no peace to the wicked, so, in the next, they have no rest day nor night; for the smoke of their torment ascends up forever and ever.

Oh! that they were wise; that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end. All that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Then those who be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever. "Oh! blessed Lord, sit upon my heart as a refiner's fire, and as a purifier of silver; that the dross of corruption may be purged away, and my soul prepared for the hour of death, and the never-ending glories of your heavenly kingdom."

My soul, on Pisgah's mount ascend, Where Moses once admiring stood; There view the promised land extend Beyond the swelling Jordan's flood. By faith survey the landscape over, Where living waters gently flow; Until earth usurp your love no more; Until all your kindling passions glow. In that blest region of delight, The saints not sin nor sorrow feel Eternal day excludes the night, And all possess the Spirit's seal. The ransomed soul, in glory clad, Shines brighter than meridian sun; The weary pilgrim, now so sad, There finds his toilsome journey done.

Cheer up, you saints, oppressed with grief With joy expand your drooping wing; Jesus affords the kind relief; Jesus extracts the envenomed sting. Soon will you reach the blest abode, Where happy pilgrims ever reign; Soon shall you see the face of God, And all the bliss of heaven obtain.

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