

Bristol Conference 1962 - Part 2

by William MacDonald

The time is short, and we should prioritize our relationship with the Lord and make the most of the time we have left.

Duration: 29:44

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7:29, Colossians 1:28

Topics: "Conference"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the brevity of time and the need to prioritize eternal matters. He quotes from 1 Corinthians 7:29, where Paul reminds believers that the time is short and that they should live with a sense of urgency. The speaker encourages listeners to not be overly attached to worldly possessions or emotions, but to focus on the eternal kingdom of God. He also highlights the importance of knowing and studying the Word of God, as it determines our capacity for enjoying heaven. Additionally, the speaker mentions the significance of the nation of Israel in biblical prophecy as a sign that time is short.

Transcript

7, please. 1 Corinthians chapter 7. Now, I know that we've all had a good diet of Bible ministry. My dear brother Pell and brother McNeil this week, and perhaps you're feeling this morning that your cup is running over, and perhaps you're wondering how much capacity you have for more.

So I'd just like to have a brief meditation with you just now as we come to the close of the conference. And actually, what I'd just like to leave is four words, but maybe four words wouldn't be too much to carry away with us. 1 Corinthians chapter 7. However, it'll be wonderful how I can expand four words.

1 Corinthians chapter 7, beginning with verse 29. 1 Corinthians chapter 7, verse 29. But this I say, brethren, the time is short.

It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that sigh as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world hatheth away. So, Father Paul here is speaking under a great sense of urgency, and he is teaching us that because of the shortness of the time, that everything should be subordinated to this one great master passion of giving ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the four words that I would just like to think with you about

this morning that we might take away in our hearts and minds as we leave the conference, those words, that time is short.

Now, actually, this truth is screamed at us not only in our Bibles, but in the newspapers, too. And as Brother Powell already mentioned, I believe that one of the great weather veins, one of the great indications of the world today is the nation of Israel. Watch the nation of Israel.

If you study about the nation of Israel, about the prophetic scriptures, you can come to only one conclusion. The time is short. You know, when the Lord Jesus was here on earth, he said, Jerusalem shall be prodden down with the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

The city of Jerusalem, since he uttered those words, had been in Gentile hands ever since. One wicked Roman emperor decided that he disproved the Bible, and so he said, look here, you Jews, take and rebuild the city of Jerusalem. And they started to try to do it.

They started to try to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem. And Gibbons, in his history of the Roman Empire, tells us that balls of fire broke out from the ground. Another sage historian, he tells us that balls of fire broke out from the ground and the Jews had to abandon their attempts to rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

And ever since then, the city of Jerusalem has been in Gentile hands. And the Lord Jesus said it would until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And that will be at his second advent, as he's coming to reign, not at the rapture, but at least seven years later when he comes to reign.

Now, the thing that's significant to me is that the armies of Israel, Jewish soldiers, are at one side of the city of Jerusalem today. And all they really have to do is mark a single mile and the city of Jerusalem will be in their hands. That's all they have to do.

How near is the second advent of Christ? Well, it's really only one mile away, as far as current events are concerned. That's all. You know, when the Jews and the Arabs were fighting, the Jews all but had Jerusalem in their hands.

And just as the victory was about to fall to them, the United Nations stepped in and they said, just a minute, boys, we're going to draw a pink line so that the Jews were out of Jerusalem. Was that a strange thing? Who taught them to do that? And then the fighting broke out again. And once again, it seemed that the Jews had the victory absolutely theirs.

And again, the United Nations stepped in, they said, just a minute, friends, and they made a no man's land, just a short corridor of land. And the Jews are on one side of it. And the Arabs are on the other side of it inside Jerusalem.

There's only one section of the old city of Jerusalem that the Jews control today, and that's known as David's Citadel or Mount Zion. One corner. And yet military strategists say that whoever controls that little hill controls the whole thing, as far as military strategy is concerned.

The Jews control that. And so I say that I just study the nation of Israel, read my newspapers, and I find that I find that the coming of the Lord, not the rapture, mind you, even, but the coming of the Lord is only a mile away. And if his coming to reign is only a mile away, how much closer is his coming for the church? You know, in a sense, the Jews, the nation of Israel, are the only people who got anything out of the last

three wars.

You say, well, the United States won. I'll just say they lost more than they won. They lost more than they won.

But the Jews walked away from the First World War with the Balfour Declaration, which guaranteed them a national homeland. And the Jews walked away from the Second World War. Well, they got their nation back.

And then the Jews had a war with the nation of Egypt, and they walked away with all the armaments that Russia had given to Egypt. You think these things aren't significant? Well, you can hardly read the Bible and not realize how very significant they are. And then I see another weathervane on the horizon, and that's this great ecumenical movement, all the churches going together.

A great amalgamation of apostate Protestantism and apostate Catholicism, and it's heading up pretty fast. And you and I, if the Lord doesn't come, might live to see the day when all religious activities will be channeled through this great apostate system, moving very, very fast today. There are sections of the United States where it's practically impossible to get on the radio with the gospel unless you work through the National Council of Churches of Christ, so-called.

And they would like to control all of these religious activities. After all, they represent most of the churches, most of the church people in the United States today. Is it without significance that the head of the Church of England has visited the Pope in our day, and that the Queen Mother of England has visited the Pope, and that Princess Margaret has visited the Pope, and now that the head of the Church of Scotland has visited the Pope in our day? Ten years ago, this would have been impossible, but it's happened in your lifetime and mine.

And what do these things say? They say, look up for your redemption, draw nigh. And then nobody can tell me that the great apostasy hasn't set in. And look around you in the colleges today.

Everything in connection with the name of Christ is banned, but infidelity isn't banned. It's becoming more popular all the time. Godless communism is spreading on every hand.

Let the kingdom of heaven suffer violence. And then, you know, I think that there's something else very, very significant on the horizon today, and that is the abandonment of the hope of Christ's imminent return. Would it shock you if I were to tell you that I could number on both hands the Christian schools in the United States today that believe in the imminent hope of Christ's return? Now, you know a lot of Christian schools, but a lot of the schools you know, if you were to ask them, could Christ come tonight, they'd say no.

They'd say no. You just check in their statement of faith. They have a broad statement that they believe in Christ coming again, but they don't believe he could come tonight.

Not very many of them. I could name them on both hands, and I believe this is very, very significant. What is it? The denial of the possibility of Christ coming.

These people know more than God knows, according to their own teaching, because the Bible certainly doesn't say that. And then, you know, the men of the world are perplexed today. We're on the verge of what men call a population explosion, and they're wondering what's going to happen.

And you know what is a crucial problem? You know, the people in Japan, the way the population is mounting, the people in Japan are practically pushing each other off into the sea. They don't have enough land to provide food for the people of Japan. And one of the great programs that's going on in that nation today is using seaweed for food.

You ever eaten seaweed? Well, I have. You go to any Japanese restaurant, you'll eat seaweed. Part of their diet now.

Part of their diet. And it's inevitable that if the Lord Jesus does not come and intervene, there are going to be great world tensions. So, all of these things remind us that the time is short.

There may never be another Bristol conference. And this is a message for us this morning. The time is short in our own lives.

The time is short, for instance, for Bible study. You ever think of that? You know, a lot of us have great intentions of really getting into the Word of God someday, and really studying the Word of God, but not now. I want to tell you this morning, the time is short.

Billy Graham was interviewed in Los Angeles not too long ago, and they asked him, a newspaper reporter asked him, if you had the last 10 years to live over again, how would you live them differently? He said, I'd saturate myself with the Holy Scriptures. That was his answer. He said, I'd learn to pace myself, that is, to pace his life, and I'd saturate myself with the Holy Scriptures.

Let's speak to my heart. Some time ago, our dear brother Robert Little was speaking up in the Evanston Assembly near us, gifted servant of the Lord. And at the end of the meeting, a white-haired man came to him and talked to him.

He said, Brother Little, I hear you up there, and I hear you expounding the Scriptures. You know, he said, I'd give anything if I could teach the Word of God like you, if I even understood it the way you understand it, let alone teach it. He said, Brother Little, he said, how can I do it? And Mr. Little looked at him, he said, Brother, it's too late.

That's what he said to him. It's too late. I think one of the most mischievous notions that has ever entered into the human head, or the head of a Christian, is the idea, well, I don't have to study my Bible down here, because when I get to heaven, I'm going to know everything.

You know, that just isn't true. It's about time we woke up and realized that you and I will never know everything. Somehow or other, we think that when we get to heaven, there's going to be a mighty, supernatural, miraculous transfusion of knowledge, and then everything, nothing we won't understand.

Well, it just isn't true. The only person who knows everything is God, and we'll never know everything. Omniscience, or that is all knowledge, that's an attribute of God, but it'll never be an attribute of mine or yours.

I'm what we call a finite creature here, that is a limited creature, a creature with limited knowledge, and I'll be finite throughout all eternity. And I'm going to go on learning throughout all eternity, too, because in the ages to come, he might show the riches of his kindness and his great goodness. Well, if he's going to be showing it, I'm going to be learning it throughout all eternity.

And that teaches me I'm going to be a learner in eternity. What will be my beginning knowledge in eternity? What do you think it's going to be? What I'd like to suggest to you is this, that the knowledge of the Word of God that you have the day you die or the day Christ comes will determine your capacity for enjoying heaven. Mind you, it's the blood of Christ that'll make you fit for heaven, but the knowledge of the Word of God that you've gained in the meantime will determine your capacity for enjoying heaven.

People say, well, Mr. McGowan, you just don't understand. I'm not a student. I'm not a student.

Listen, God gave his Bible for everybody, and I've never known him to withhold knowledge of the Word of God from them, from those who really wanted it. The whole thing is desire. That's what it is.

The whole secret we find at Emmaus Bible School, the whole secret of the education process is motivation. Dear friends, you and I do what we want to do. How do you think Mr. Pell got his knowledge of the Word of God? I'll tell you a little secret.

He got it by sitting hour after hour at the television set. You believe that, don't you? Neither do I. That isn't how he got it. He got it because he had a strong motivation to get into the Word of God and to study it and to make it his own.

The time is short, and I'll tell you, we might have all kinds of good intentions, but they won't be enough. They won't be enough. Actually, there's no excuse for anybody in the United States not getting into the Word and studying it, because there are study courses and Bible study help that just break up the food so fine that anybody can digest it.

Really, there's no excuse. There are countries in the world today where you don't even have a concordance in the language of the people, let alone CHM or a Bible dictionary or anything else. There are.

There are countries in the world that have none of these Bible study help. In fact, the Spanish language is only beginning to get them, and the Spanish language is one of the biggest language segments in the world today. And here we have the accumulation of centuries of Bible knowledge in the English language, and it'll never do you very good in the library shelf.

It's only if we absorb it into our own lives that it will really help us. And so I would say this morning, the time is short for getting into the study of the sacred scriptures. And then the time is short for serving our blessed Lord.

I would say this this morning, that if you have thought of really living for the Lord and really serving him, you'd better hurry. You'd better hurry, because one of two things will happen. First, we might go by the way of the grave, and it's not certainly the Lord Jesus it's going to come to.

There's a sense of urgency about this, and I like what the way Philip translates Colossians 1, 28 and 29. Let's look at it first in the King James, and then I'd like to read it to you from Philip. Colossians 1, 28 and 29.

Whom we preach. That whom, of course, goes back to Christ. Christ in you the hope of glory.

Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. For unto I also labor, striving according to his working which worketh in me

mightily. Now listen to the way Philip translates it.

Really nice, and you catch that sense of urgency in it. We warn every man we meet, we teach everyone we can all we know about him, so that we might bring every man to his full maturity in Christ. This is what I am working at all the time with the strength that God gives me.

Isn't that good? This is what I'm working at all the time with the strength that God gives me. Let me read it again to you. We warn every man we meet, we teach everyone we can all we know about him, so that we might bring every man to his full maturity in Christ.

This is what I'm working at all the time with the strength that God gives me. You know, it breaks my heart when I see young people, Christian young people, devoting their lives to trivial matters, or as Jarrett so beautifully said, going through life hugging the subordinates, content to be minor officials in transient enterprises. Breaks my heart.

I heard recently of a Christian young man who was writing his doctor's thesis, and he wrote his doctor's thesis on a certain form of seaweed in Woodsboro, Massachusetts. That's my idea of nothing at all. Dear friend, is that all we're here for? Is that all we're here for? And I have a young Christian friend, at least a professing Christian, and he's making the passion of his life the study of turbulence in the upper atmosphere.

But I like Paul's attitude better. Warning every man we meet, teaching everyone we can all that we know about him, so that we might present every man's perfect insight. This is what I'm doing all the time with the strength that God gives me.

And so the time is short, dear friend, that we have thoughts of serving the Lord. We've got to get at it. We've got to be in a hurry.

And then the time is short for real Holy Ghost prayer. You know, I believe, I've got to be careful, but if there are going to be disappointments in heaven, I believe that one of my greatest disappointments will be that I didn't pray more. Because when we get to heaven, we're going to find out that God answered every prayer, and we'll wish we had prayed a lot more.

But you'd be shocked if you get to heaven and find that God answered every prayer you ever uttered. You'd be shocked to find out that every tract you ever distributed was used of God. My, we should pass out a lot more, but I believe that everyone is.

I believe every silent messenger is used of God. I believe that in that day we'll wish that we had been bolder in our faith and in our asking of the Lord, that we had claimed greater territory for the Savior. You heard the story of the little girl who was asked the question, if you'd been living when Christ was on earth and had met the Savior kind, what would you have asked him to do for you, supposing you were stone blind? The child considered and then replied, I suppose that without doubt I'd have asked the Lord for a dog with a chain to lead me daily about.

How often thus in our faceless prayers we acknowledge the chain we've only asked for a dog with a chain when we might have had open eyes. And I think that'll be something of our feeling in heaven that in many ways we've only asked for a dog with a chain when we might have had open eyes. And then the time is short not only for our study of the word of God and not only for service for the Lord and not only for prayer, but the time is short for investing what we have for the Lord.

You've been reading the papers about the stock market? Not very predictable, is it? I'd like to ask you a question. Think of all the things you own today, of all the material things you own. Just think of it for a minute.

Make a little inventory. Say it isn't very much. Never mind.

Whatever it is, think of it. Now, I'd like to ask you this question. Supposing the Lord Jesus should come before midnight, how much would it all be worth then? How much? Not very much.

What do you have in a material way that would still be worth anything in a material way? Well, I know something that we'd have. We'd have the word of God. So, forevermore thy word is settled in heaven.

Heaven and earth may pass away, but my word will never pass away. That's something that's really worthwhile. But you think of all the other tangible things you have, and really they wouldn't be worth anything to you tomorrow.

Actually, all they do is fall into the devil's hands and help him along in his programs. Wouldn't be worth a thing. And that gets back to what we've been talking about earlier in the week, the importance of investing for eternity.

I'd like to read you an excerpt from a book which you perhaps know, The Diary of Jim Elliott, called Shadow of the Almighty. As far as I'm concerned, the book Shadow of the Almighty is the greatest book that has been published in my generation. If you haven't read it, you should.

The Diary of Jim Elliott, a book with spiritual impact. And Eddie Elliott writes as follows in that book. When he died, Jim left little of value as the world counts value.

He and I had agreed long before that we wanted no insurance. We would store our goods in heaven, share what the Lord gave us as long as we had it, and suck him literally for the future. In accord with the principles Paul set forth to the Corinthians, it's a matter of share and share alike.

At present, your plenty should supply their needs, and then at some future date, their plenty may supply your needs. And that way we share with each other. As the scripture says, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack.

When the children of Israel were given manna in the wilderness, they received enough for one day. They were not told to lay up for tomorrow. So, of material things there were few.

A home in the jungle, a few well-worn clothes, books, and tools. The men who went to try to rescue the five brought back to me from Jim's body his ziplock, and from the Qorai beach the blurred pages of his college prayer notebook. There was no funeral, no tombstone for memorial.

The press reports of five wooden crosses on the beach were not true. No legacy then? Was it just as if he had never been? The world cast it away, and the lust of us. But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Jim left for me in memory, and for us all in these letters and diaries, the testimony of a man who sought nothing but the will of God, who prayed that his life would be an exhibit to the value of knowing God. And then Jim, in his own diary, had written these words that really probed my heart. I'll tell you when I read them, I'd like to share them with you.

I wrote them in the front of my Bible. Father, let me be weak that I might loose my clutch on everything temporal. My life, my reputation, my possessions, Lord, let me loose the tension of the grasping hand.

What do you think of that? Tell you that's inspired writing. Let me loose the tension of the grasping hand. You know that we're born into the world grasping, but you never saw a corpse grasping.

The hand is always relaxed in death, and Jim wanted his to be relaxed before then. Let me loose the tension of the grasping hand. Even, Father, would I lose the love of fondling.

How often I've released the grasp only to retain what I prize by harmless longing, the fondling touch. Rather open my hands to receive the nail of calvary. As Christ was open, that I, releasing all, might be released, unleashed from all that binds me now.

He sought heaven, gain equality with God, not a thing to be clutched at. So, let me release my grasp. Here's a man who lived in our generation, and he talked and wrote like that, and has lived it out in his life.

And so, that should be a reminder to us that the time is short. The time is short for investing what we have for the Lord Jesus. Then, I'd like to say a word that the time is short that we should remember this in training our young people.

You know, I'm afraid, as I said before, that a lot of Christian parents are training their young people as if they were going to live here forever. They are, and it isn't true. The time is short, and all that we do should be done in the light of the soon coming judgment seat of Christ.

God forbid that we should seek a place for our children in a world that gave him nothing but a cross and a grave. I'll tell you, they shoot men in the army for being traitors. They do, and it's all too possible for us to be traitors to the Savior who redeemed us by his blood, and we should think seriously about this as we map out careers for our young people.

At the businessman's breakfast the other morning, we mentioned the case of a servant of the Lord who went into the home of some Christian people, and there was a young daughter there just finishing high school. He said, well, what are you planning to do? She said, well, I plan to go into nursing. Well, he said, I hope you keep the mission field in mind.

He said, you know, the need there is great for servants of the Lord with a skill like that, and the mother said to him, don't you talk to my daughter like that. That isn't what I have planned for her. Dear friends, the time is short, and all of our plans should be made in the light of that fact.

And then just one final word. Should there be anybody here who doesn't know the Lord Jesus, I'd like to say this, that time is short, and I believe it with all my heart. I'd like to ask you a serious question.

There are no tricks involved. How many people in the room expect to be here on a hundred years from today? How many? Raise your hand. I don't see a hand.

There's not a person in this room who expects to be here on the earth a hundred years. If you are here today on faith, I'd like to ask you, where will you be a hundred years from today? How many people here, and there will be some, how many people here honestly, if the Lord doesn't come, honestly expect that they really might be here 50 years from today? And I know there will be some, any? Well, the insurance company would admit the possibility, other things being equal, that more of you than raised their hands

would be here, and they would grant you life insurance on that basis, but that wouldn't insure your life. It really insures your death life insurance, doesn't it? More than your life.

I've got to be careful. I forgot about Dick Andrews then. But never mind, there weren't very many that raised their hands.

Even if the Lord didn't come, there weren't many. I don't expect to be here 50 years from today. I don't really.

If you're here on faith, where would you be 50 years from today? And if the word of God teaches us anything, it teaches us the Lord could come at any minute. Let me ask you this, if he came today, where would you be? If he called your soul home, away today, in dreams, where would you be that one minute after you die? Depends, it's urgent. But I know one thing, that every man and every woman, and every boy and girl, hears the gospel sometime for the last time.

That's true. Sometime for the last time. And this may be your last time.

It very well may be your last time. I'll tell you this, you could never get this group of people that's in the room this morning, you'd never get them together again at a Biblical conference. This is a lot as far as this group of people can go.

How vividly the Lord teaches us this. Every time we hear the sirens screaming, every time we see the hurts go by, every time we pass the hospital, God preaches to us from all of these things that life is uncertain and we're soon to pass away. We'd urge you this morning, be in time.

If God isn't speaking to you, remember this, the time is short. If you're going to trust Christ, God only has one time now. Now is the accepted time.

Now is the day of salvation. Tomorrow doesn't enter into the gospel. There is no tomorrow.

As far as the gospel is concerned, God says come now and trust the Savior and be saved. Really it's a form of insanity to put it off, because you have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Isn't it true? It shows you how the human mind has been perverted by the instance of sin, that the devil can come with all his lies and actually convince men to put it off, but they'll do it sometime later.

God says do it now, accept the Savior, and enter into life forevermore.

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