

WHERE WILL YOU SPEND ETERNITY?

"Whither goest thou?" John 16:5

Perhaps the greatest human leader of men the world has ever known was Moses. He led about two million slaves away from the most powerful nation in the world. Coming from Egypt to Sinai, the law was given by which the former slaves should be governed and which is the basis for all civilized governments. In the midst of his last great address to his people we hear his plaintive cry, in which he challenged them to a sane consideration of life here and hereafter. He said, "For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them. O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Deuteronomy 32:28-29.

Human nature is the same through the centuries. The people of Moses' day forgot God, as do many of the people of our day. There is a terrific down-drag in modern society. Trends, in too many places, are away from God and away from the church. People are daily receiving God's blessings and ignoring their Giver. They give themselves to the tangible, material things of life and think little of where they came from, what they are here for, and where they are going. It is reasonable, sensible, and right to think of the future. Not to think of it is as foolish as the proverbial ostrich which, when in danger, thrusts its head in the sand. Moses said that good sense, wisdom, and prudence will take the long look.

By the "latter end" Moses meant the time of death. Man does not like to consider the subject of death. He labors to keep out of sight such things as the shroud, the mattock, and the grave. He would live here always if he could; and since he cannot do so, he at least will put away every emblem of death as far as possible from his sight. Perhaps no other subject of equal importance receives so little consideration. Frequently we remark, "We must live." But if we were wise, we would alter that expression and say, "We must die." Instead of life being a necessity, it is a prolonged miracle. Because death is a necessity, we shall display wisdom by considering the end of life.

God does not want us to live all our lives in the fear of instant death. He does not want us to have the thought of death continually before our minds. That sort of thing would overwhelm us. But it is too important an event to every one of us, for any person with common sense not to take it into account seriously.

Death is a certainty. The Arabs have a saying that there is a black camel upon which death rides and it must kneel at every man's door. Death is not a thing which may or may not happen to us. It is not a thing like an accident or a sickness, or a special misfortune, which many men escape, and so may we, but it is something which we cannot escape. Each of us knows that he or she shall one day die, as surely as the sun will rise tomorrow. While it is right to let this thought have a place in our minds, it is not good to dwell on it all of the time.

Some of us are near the threshold of another world; our lives are nearly gone, although it seems but yesterday since we played at mother's feet. Some of you are going down the western slope, and there are not many milestones left. The years, oh, where have they gone? They have slipped away unnoticed, and they can never be recalled. There are many wrongs that can never be righted, and many mistakes that can never be corrected.

To God the time, the manner, and the place of my death are well known. But to me they are quite uncertain. I know not when nor where I shall close my life.

Death may overtake us at any time--in childhood, in youth, in maturity, or in old age. Death will separate the soul from the body, dissolve all earthly ties, level all distinctions, strip us of all earthly possessions, and finish our period of usefulness.

When one comes to leave this present world, the important question which he must face is, "Where will you spend eternity?" In the light of this question, I should like to emphasize five great truths.

I. There Is An Eternity.

Only one time do we find the word "eternity" in the Bible. Isaiah 57:15 reads in part as follows: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy." Throughout the Scriptures the fact of eternity is inferred. The age-old question of Job, "If a man die shall he live again?" can only be answered correctly in the affirmative. Many times Christ referred to the future life, and He even drew back the curtain to let us look in upon Lazarus and the rich man.

History also argues that there is an eternity. The earliest record of the Egyptian tells us that he believed in a future life beyond the river Styx; that the legendary boatmen met him there and rowed him across where he lived in another world. In the Egyptian Museum at Cairo are many things which were taken from the grave of King Tut. It was a belief in the future life that placed these things in his grave. The American Indian was not told by Europeans, Asiatics, or Africans that there was a future life, but he believed in it and worshipped what he called the "Great Spirit". In many cases, his bow and his arrow, and sometimes even his dog, were buried by his side, for he believed that these things would add to his happiness in the "Happy Hunting Ground" to which the good Indian went.

Our own hearts tell us that there is an eternity. You may call it intuition, instinct, or whatever you please; but God has planted a belief in eternity in the heart of man. A boy was flying a kite one March afternoon, and it had gotten out of sight. When a man asked him what he was doing, he replied, "I'm flying a kite." The query followed, "How do you know you are, you can't see it?" The boy said, "I can tell by the tug of the string." There is something that tugs at every human heart, impressing one that there is an eternity. God has made us that way. Emerson said, "When God wants to carry a point with His children He plants His argument in their instinct." Augustine was right when he stated that man is restless till he rests in God. God would be a tyrant should He give to human beings that longing and desire and never a possibility of realizing it.

Yes, there is an eternity. That is certain. You may try to shut your eyes to the fact, but the fact stands. Look ahead. You may live many years, but then what. The years, regardless of their number, will soon be gone. Then what? Eternity! It will ever stretch on, never any nearer an end. I am glad that as I look out into the future I can see an eternity that absolutely has no end.

II. You Must Spend Eternity Somewhere.

Life here is so brief that the Bible compares it to a shadow, a weaver's shuttle, a hurrying messenger, a handbreadth, a vapor, grass, or a tale that is told. Someone described our stay here as emerging from infancy into childhood, then to the "tender teens, the teachable twenties, the tireless thirties, the fiery forties, the forceful fifties, the serious sixties, the sacred seventies, the aching eighties, shortening breath, the sod, and God."

But think of eternity! Contrast it with the few years here. No finite mind can comprehend the length of eternity. 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. Men who live like beasts naturally wish to believe that they will die like beasts, but there is something in all of us that tells us that it is not so. It is your beastly self that says that death ends all. Your better self denies it. And, then, there is One who came to us out of eternity, came to us from God, with whom He had been through all eternity. And He has told us that there is an eternity for each of us, and that we must spend it somewhere.

III. You Must Spend Eternity In One Of Two Places.

When your heart ceases to beat and your eyes are closed in death, your soul will leave your body and take up its abode somewhere in eternity. There are but two destinies, two places of abode, for the soul. One lies at the end of the broad way, and is called hell. The other lies at the end of the narrow way, and is called heaven. In which of these two places are you preparing to spend eternity? Which will be your home?

You may spend eternity in heaven or you may spend it in hell. No other place is possible. You may have the choice of a number of places to live here, but you have the choice of only one of two places to live hereafter. You may spend eternity in heaven with Christ and all of the redeemed, which is a wonderful place of holiness, happiness and love. Or, you may spend eternity in hell with Satan and all of his followers, which is a terrible place of hate, violence and misery. Where will you spend eternity?

IV. Where You Will Spend Eternity Will Be Determined In This Life.

Christ taught plainly that unless we believe in Him we shall die in our sins, and that if we die in our sins our eternal destiny is sealed. "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." John 8:21. In John 8:24 He also said, "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." Any scheme of future probation or preparation is pure speculation, with absolutely no foundation in fact and contrary to the plain teaching of God's Word. There is no after-death chance. There is no post-mortem gospel to be preached. Where you will spend eternity will be determined by you on this side of your grave. Nobody can determine for you where you will spend eternity.

V. Where You Will Spend Eternity Will Depend On What You Do With Christ.

He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." In the last analysis, the thing that will really count is not your fortune, your fame, your sincerity, your church membership, your Christian parents, your education, your diplomas, your degrees, or your good works; but what you have done with Jesus Christ. If you accept Christ as your Saviour you will spend eternity with Him. If you reject Christ you will spend eternity away from Him. God's Word tells us, "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. Where we spend eternity will be determined by what we do with Christ Jesus in the life that now is. Where will you spend eternity? That is certainly a very pointed and personal question. And notice that it does not say anything about your background, your morals, your sincerity, your wealth, your feelings, your church membership or your good works; but simple "Where will you spend eternity?" You and only you can answer that question for yourself. As for me, I thank God that I know where I shall spend eternity, and that is with Christ in glory.