

In the Beginning God

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of starting each day and each year with God, and living our lives according to his principles and values.

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Psalm 5:3, Psalm 16:8, Psalm 88:13, Proverbs 3:6, Isaiah 26:3, Matthew 6:33, Philippians 1:21, Colossians 3:17, James 4:8

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "Daily Devotion"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the necessity of placing God at the forefront of our lives, encapsulated in the phrase 'In the beginning God.' He argues that without God, life lacks completeness and direction, and that true consecration begins with recognizing God's ownership over us. Miller encourages starting each day with God, asserting that a prayerless day is fraught with peril and loss. He illustrates that every aspect of life, including business and personal relationships, should be conducted with God in the first place, ensuring that our lives are blessed and guided by His presence. Ultimately, he reminds us that only through God's guidance can we achieve the fullness of life intended for us.

Transcript

No life can be complete, however much of beauty it may have in it--which leaves out God. No path can be a safe one, however sheltered it may seem--in which God is not leading us. We never can find our way home--unless we are guided from heaven. We should make sure that, whatever other friends we have, we have Jesus Christ!

The first words in the Bible very strikingly tell us the place that God should have in every life, "In the beginning God." It is no wresting of the Scriptures to take these words, apart from their connection, as presenting the sublimest truth in all the range of thinking. They carry us back into the eternal past, before there was anything else but God. "Before the mountains were brought forth, before you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God."

This is the meaning of the words as they stand thus picturesquely at the beginning of the Bible. But there is also a fitness in considering the words in another sense. Not only was God before all things and the Author of all creation--but he should be given a place at the beginning of everything. "In the beginning God" should be the watchword of all life. We belong to God and should recognize his ownership by voluntarily giving ourselves to him. This is the initial act of every true consecration. When we have done this, God stands at the beginning of everything for us. We enthrone him in our heart, giving him our

supreme affection. We look to him as Lord, waiting at every step for his command. We trust him as our Father, turning with every want to him. Thus in all our personal life God is first, if we are living in true relations to him.

Then there are special applications.

The words should be written over the gateway of every new day, "In the beginning God." God's face should be the first we see in the morning when we open our eyes. His voice should be the first we hear with its benediction of love and grace. He should be the first to whom we speak, lifting up our hearts in praise and in supplication for guidance and blessing. "In the morning, O Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before You and wait in expectation." Psalm 5:3. "I cry to You for help, O Lord; in the morning my prayer comes before You." Psalm 88:13

A day with God truly at its beginning, cannot but be a prosperous day. It may not be easy. It may not be cloudless. Its burdens may be heavy. Its tasks may be hard. It may have its crosses, its sorrows, its tears. But nothing can go really wrong with our life--if we have truly put it into God's hands in the morning.

Yet there are people who never pray. They rise from their bed in the morning, after enjoying a night's protection, and after receiving blessings from God in sleep--and never say a word nor have an emotion of gratitude! They go out into a new day, with its wilderness of unrevealed experiences, not knowing what they are to meet, through what dangers they must pass--and yet never whisper a prayer for guidance, for help, for blessing. How can anyone who thus begins his day--expect all things to go well with him? A prayerless day is a day of peril.

A prayerless day, never can be anything but a day of loss and failure. It may not seem so. Business may be prosperous as ever. The table may be bountifully spread. God "makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust." But however happy a day may seem to be, if it lacks heaven's benediction it is a sad day.

One writes, "We need to lift our eyes each morning to the perfect standard, and to test our lives each night by the divine character. And when this shows us forthwith our own crookedness and selfishness, and convicts us of evil, we need to ask humbly for daily pardon. So also, amid the tumult and dazzle of the busy world, we need to drink in daily quietness from the fountain of the peace of God. Under the strain of our daily temptations we are driven back on Christ's unseen grace and strength. Thus every fresh trial and worry and failure becomes to the Christian--a fresh summons which calls him to prayer."

If we would have our days bright and beautiful and full of peace, we need only to start at God's feet and to keep him first in our life through all the day to its close. We have it in one of the Psalms, "I have set Jehovah always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."

The words are peculiarly fitting also for a birthday motto, or for the opening of a new year. We cannot see into the year's life, to know what it may hold for us--but we need not care to know. Faith is better than sight. Walking with God in the dark--is safer than walking alone in the light.

There is something very suggestive in the way the Christian world designates the years, Anno Domini, "In the year of our Lord." The birth of Jesus Christ introduced a new era. Time before that, is not counted--the only years that it is worth while to record are the years since Christ came. We should strive, therefore, to make each year indeed a year of our Lord. We can do this by giving Christ his true place at the beginning

and then by having him in all our life throughout the year. But the mere writing of the legend, "In the year of our Lord," on our letter sheets and at the head of our business papers, will not itself consecrate the year.

A man bought an illuminated scroll, neatly framed, and brought it home. On it were the words, "God Bless Our Home." It was hung up in the dining-room and was an ornament to the room. But somehow it did not seem to bring the blessing. The home continued to be full of wrangling and strife and all manner of ill nature. There was no more love after the scroll was hung up than before. An illuminated motto will not sweeten a home, nor bring good into it. Neither will the writing of Anno Domini, "In the year of our Lord"--over a year make it beautiful, or cast any glory upon it.

We make it truly a year of the Lord, only by giving Christ the first place in all its life. He must be first in our business. This means that we must conduct the business as his, not as our own. We must do it according to the principles of righteousness and truth which he has laid down, making every transaction as holy as a prayer or a sacrament. He must be first, also, in our personal life. It is possible to carry on a business honestly, on principles ethically Christian, and yet not to have God in the place which belongs to him. He wants our life first, before our business. "Not yours--but you," is the claim he makes. "In the beginning God," as our motto for a new year, means God enthroned in our heart and filling all our life.

Paul expressed the truth when he said, "To me to live is Christ." He held up the same ideal also when he exhorted, "Whatever you do, in word or in deed--do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." We need to look to our own personal life, that there God may always be first. Then there will be no failure in the things we do. If we love God supremely--we may do what we will. In all the details of our plans, dreams, aspirations, and hopes this should be the motto, "In the beginning God." No friendship should be formed--unless it has the divine approval, and unless God be its cementing bond. No ambition should be cherished--unless the honor of God be its goal. No new work should be undertaken--unless in it God has the first place. There is a promise that if we acknowledge him in all our ways--that he will direct our paths. If only we give God his place at the beginning of everything, all our life will be blessed.

One of Frances Ridley Havergal's poems, tells us of an Aeolian harp which a friend sent with a letter describing the wonderful sweetness of its tones. Miss Havergal took the harp and thrummed its seven strings--but there were no thrilling strains, only common music. She read the letter again and found instructions which she had overlooked at first. Then she raised the window and put the harp under the sash. Now the wind swept over the strings and the room was filled with melodious strains which no fingers of man could have produced. Only when the breath of heaven blew upon the harp could its marvelous music be brought out.

The human soul is such a harp. Human fingers call out much that is lovely and sweet, but it is only when its chords are swept by the breath of heaven, by the Holy Spirit, that its noblest music is called out.

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