

Living by the Day

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller's sermon teaches the importance of living each day fully, trusting in God's provision and strength for daily challenges.

Scripture: Exodus 16:4, Deuteronomy 33:25, Psalm 68:19, Lamentations 3:22, Matthew 6:34, Philippians 4:19

Topics: "Trusting God's Provision", "Living in the Present"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the importance of living in the present, urging believers to focus on today's responsibilities rather than being overwhelmed by the vastness of life. He illustrates that life is not meant to be faced all at once but rather day by day, with God providing the necessary strength for each day's challenges. By trusting in God's provision and living one day at a time, individuals can find peace and purpose without succumbing to anxiety about the future. Miller draws on biblical examples, such as the Israelites receiving daily manna, to reinforce the message that God equips us for our daily needs. Ultimately, he encourages a mindset of gratitude and reliance on God for each day's journey.

Transcript

"Time was, is past--you can not it recall.

Time is, you have--employ the portion small.

Time future, is not--and may never be.

Time present--is the only time for thee."

"As your days--so shall your strength be." Deuteronomy 33:25

It is life's largeness which most discourages earnest and conscientious people. As they think deeply of life's meaning and responsibility, they are apt to be overwhelmed by the thought of its vastness. It has manifold, almost infinite, relations toward God and toward man. Each of these relations has its binding duties. Every individual life must be lived amid countless antagonisms, and in the face of countless perils. Battles must be fought, trials encountered, and sorrows endured. Every life has a divine mission to fulfill--a plan of God to work out. Also, the brief earthly course--is but the beginning of an endless existence, whose immortal destinies hinge upon fidelity in the present life. Looked at in this way, as a whole, there is something almost appalling in the thought of our responsibility in living.

Many a person who thinks of life in this aspect, and sees it in its wholeness, has not the courage to hope for success and victory--but stands staggered, well-near paralyzed, on the threshold. "I cannot possibly meet all these responsibilities, and perform all these duties. I can but fail in the end, if I try! Why should I try at all, only to suffer the shame and pain of defeat?" Despair comes to many a heart when either duty or sorrow or danger is looked at--in the aggregate.

But this is not the way we should view life. It does not come to us all in one piece. We do not get it even in years--but only in days--day by day. We look on before us, and as we count up the long years with their duties, struggles, and trials--and the bulk is like a mountain which no mortal can carry; but we really never have more than: one day's battles to fight, or one day's work to do, or one day's burdens to bear, or one day's sorrow to endure, in any one day.

"I think not of tomorrow,

Its trial or its task,

But still with childlike spirit

For present mercies ask.

With each returning morning

I cast old things away.

Life's journey lies before me;

My prayer is for today."

It is wonderful how the Bible gives emphasis to this way of viewing life. When for forty years God fed his chosen people with bread from heaven, he never gave them, except on the morning before the Sabbath, more than one day's portion at a time. He positively forbade them gathering more than would suffice for the day; and if they should violate his command, what they gathered above the daily portion would become corrupt. Thus early, God began to teach his people to live only by the day--and trust him for tomorrow.

At the close of the forty years, the promise given to one of the tribes was, "As your days--so shall your strength be." Strength was not promised in advance--enough for all of life, or even for a year, or for a month--but the promise was, that for each day, when it came with its own needs, duties, battles and griefs--enough strength would be given. As the burden increased, more strength would be imparted. As the night grew darker, the lamps would shine out more brightly. The important thought here is, that strength is not emptied into our hearts in bulk--a supply for years to come--but is kept in reserve, and given day by day, just as the day's needs require.

"Oh! ask not, How shall I bear

The burden of tomorrow?

Sufficient for today, its care,

Its evil, and its sorrow;

God imparteth by the day

Strength sufficient for the day."

When Christ came, he gave still further emphasis to the same method of living. He said, "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today!" Matthew 6:34. He would have us fence off the days by themselves, and never look over the fence to think about tomorrow's cares. The thought is, that each day is, in a certain sense, a complete life by itself. It has its own duties, its own trials, its own burdens, and its own needs. It has enough to fill heart and hands for the one full day. We cannot live its life well, and use any of its strength outside of itself. The very best we can do for any day, for the perfecting of our life as a whole, is to live the one day well. We should put all our thought and energy and skill into the duty of each day, wasting no strength, either in grieving over yesterday's failures, or in anxiety about tomorrow's responsibilities.

"Bear the burden of the present,

Let the morrow bear its own;

If the morning sky be pleasant,

Why the coming night bemoan?

Grief, nor pain, nor any sorrow,

Rends your heart to Him unknown:

He today and He tomorrow--

Grace sufficient gives His own."

Charles Kingsley says, "Do today's duty, fight today's temptation, and do not weaken and distract yourself by looking forward to things which you cannot see, and could not understand if you saw them."

Our Lord, also, in the form of prayer which he gave his disciples, taught this lesson of living by the day. There he has told us to ask for bread, for one day only. "Give us this day our daily bread." Here again, he teaches us that we have to do only with the present day. We do not need tomorrow's bread now. When we need it--it will be soon enough to ask God for it, and get it. It is the manna lesson over again. God is caring for us, and we are to trust him for the supply of all our needs as they press upon us; we are to trust him, content to have only enough in hand for the day.

"Why should you fill today with sorrow

About tomorrow, my heart?

One watches all with care most true;

Doubt not that He will give you, too,

Your part!"

If we can but learn to live thus by the day, without anxiety about the future--the burden will not be so crushing. We have nothing to do with life in the aggregate--that great bulk of duties, responsibilities, struggles, and trials that belong to a course of years. We really have nothing to do even with the nearest of the days before us--tomorrow. Our sole business is with the one little day, now passing. And its burdens will not crush us; we can easily carry them until the sun goes down. We can get along for one short day; it is the projection of life into the long future, which dismays and appalls us. So this lesson makes life easy and simple.

"One day at a time. Every heart that aches
Knows only too well how long that can seem;
But it's never today which the spirit breaks,
It's the darkened future, without a gleam.
One day at a time. A burden too great
To be borne for two, can be borne for one;
Who knows what will enter tomorrow's gate?
While yet we are speaking, all may be done.
One day at a time. But a single day,
Whatever its load, whatever its length;
And there's a bit of precious Scripture to say,
That according to each shall be our strength."

But is there to be no forethought? The best forethought for tomorrow is today's duty well done. It is so in school: one lesson well learned leads up to the next, and makes it easy; and each day's lessons mastered through the years, give scholarship in the end. It is so in all life; if today is well lived, if all its responsibilities are promptly and wisely met, tomorrow will come bright with new hopes.

God gives guidance, also, by the day. One who carries a lantern at night does not see the whole pathway home; the lantern lights only a single step in advance; but, when that step is taken, another is thereby lighted, and so on, until the end of the journey is reached. It is thus that God lights our way. He does not show us the whole of it when we set out--he makes one step plain, and then, when we take that, another and then another.

"If you have yesterday, your duty done,
And thereby cleared firm footing for today,
Whatever clouds may dark tomorrow's sun,
You shall not miss your solitary way."

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