

This Life and the After Life

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the continuity of life hereafter, encouraging listeners to view death as a natural transition and to hold onto their faith and hopes for eternal life.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:31, Matthew 6:20, John 11:26, Romans 8:38-39, 1 Corinthians 15:54-57, 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:21, 1 Thessalonians 4:14, Hebrews 11:1, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Hope in Christ", "Eternal Life"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the continuity of life beyond death, asserting that there is no real break in existence for believers in Christ. He explains that dying is merely a transition, akin to waking from sleep, and that our earthly experiences will carry on in the afterlife. Miller reassures that all good and beautiful things we cherish will not be lost but will flourish in eternity, much like buds blooming into flowers. He encourages Christians to maintain hope, as even lives that seem unfulfilled will find completion in the eternal realm. Ultimately, he reminds us that in Christ, nothing beautiful or good ever truly perishes.

Transcript

The continuity of life hereafter, is a Bible teaching. There is no real break in life. Jesus said, "Whoever lives and believes in me shall never die." Paul spoke of his death as his departure from earth, as if he were going to another country. He referred to departed Christians as "absent from the body, and at home with the Lord." We should try to be Christian, in our thoughts about dying. The trouble is that we so associate all our friend's life with his body--that when it lies before us cold and lifeless, all of our friend seems to have ceased to be. But the body is not, never was, our friend. It may be cold, and our friend be living in rich and beautiful life.

Life hereafter, will not be so different from life here, as we sometimes imagine it will be. We shall go on with living in the next world, very much as if nothing had happened. Dying is an experience we need not trouble ourselves much about--if we are true believers in Christ. There is a mystery about it; but when we have passed through it, we shall probably find that it is a natural and very simple event, perhaps but little more serious than sleeping over night, and waking in the morning. It will not hurt us in any way. It will not blot out any beautiful thing in our life. It will end nothing that is worth while. The things we have loved here, we shall continue to love. The things we have learned to do well, we shall probably continue to do, at least in some form. Dying is just going out to test our learning here, and to live out our lessons.

It is intensely interesting to think of life as eternal--stretching on forever. Dying is not a boundary--but merely an incident life's path. We can plan for the next thousand years--for the next ten thousand years. Life here on earth, is short even at the longest. We cannot finish in threescore and ten years, the great things we dream of in our best moods. Then, only a few lives reach this full limit of old age.

It is but a little that we can do in our short, broken years. We begin things, and we are interrupted in the midst of them. Before they are half finished--we are called away to something else, or laid aside by illness, or our life ends--and the work remains incomplete. It is pathetic, when a busy man has been called away suddenly, to go into his office, his study, or his place of work, and see the unfinished things he has left--the letter half written, the book half read, the column of figures half added up, the picture begun but not completed. Life is full of fragments, the mere beginnings of things. If there were nothing beyond death, little could come of this poor fragmentary living and doing. But when we know that life will go on without serious break through endless years, it puts a new meaning into every noble and worthy beginning. Every right and good thing, however small it may seem, shall live forever.

There is comfort in this, for those whose life seems a failure here. There are many such lives. They have been crushed and torn by sorrow, defeated in life's struggles. They have toiled hard--but misfortune has followed them in everything they have attempted. There will be time enough in the eternal years, for such lives to grow into full and perfect beauty.

There are lives which are cut off before any of their powers are developed. Yet when we believe in immortality, what does it matter that the bud did not open and unfold its beauties on this side the grave? There will be time enough in immortality for every such life to put forth all its loveliness.

An Easter lily was given, having on its stem several unopened buds. In a day or two these buds had unfolded, and poured their fragrance upon the air. So will it be with the lives Christians who pass from earth to heaven; they will open out in the heavenly warmth until every possibility of their being has reached its best.

There are some godly people who lose hope in this world's disheartenments. Their souls are graves full of buried things. Down into these dark sepulchers have gone early dreams, visions of beauty, sweet thoughts, noble intentions, sacred feelings, and brilliant expectations. They bow in sadness over their dead, saying, "There is no use in my going on. Life is empty for me now. There is nothing left worth living for. Every sweet flower has faded!" Christian faith should dispel any such feeling. Into the grave of Jesus one evening, went the sweetest hopes, the holiest loves, the gentlest thoughts, the brightest visions, the fondest dreams of a little company of loyal friends. At that grave, as the sun sank low, weeping ones stood, saying, "All our hearts' hopes lie buried here--all our joy, all our love!" But three days later that grave was opened, and those buried hopes, joys, and affections were raised up, and lived again in blessed beauty. What the friends of Jesus thought they had lost forever--they had not lost at all. Their hearts' treasures were only buried--that they might spring up in immortal beauty. The dull seeds became glorious Easter lilies.

So will it be with all the precious things of Christian faith which seem to perish. In Christ nothing that is good or lovely can be really lost. The dreams of youth which meant so much to us, and which we seem to have lost--they have served their purpose, and are lost only as blossoms are lost when they fall away to give place to the fruit.

We can lose our beautiful things only in sin. Sin's grave is deep and dark, and there is no resurrection for the precious things of life which go down into it. And oh, what treasures are buried in this hopeless sepulcher! Innocence, purity of heart, sweet feelings, heavenly yearnings, visions of Christ, hopes of glory, holy affections, the strength and joy of life, possibilities of nobleness, childhood's faith, whatever things are true, whatever things are lovely--what heaps of life's best things go down into sin's deep grave! And this grave was never broken open. The stone was never rolled from its door. No vision of angels was ever seen in its dark chamber. What is buried in sin's grave--is hopelessly lost! It never can be gotten back again, though men seek for it diligently with tears. Lost innocence comes twice to none.

But in Christ, nothing beautiful or good ever perishes.

Though we may not grasp and hold the very things we strive to reach, there is a blessing in the seeking which itself more than meets the cost; and besides, we get the substance of our quest, though the form eludes us. The holy visions which seem to vanish as we pursue them, really hide in the depth of our heart, and stay there to brighten and enrich our life forever. So it is with all the precious things we cherish for a time and then seem to lose. If they are pure, true, and worthy things--we have not lost them; we never can lose them. Abraham never got the promised land, though he left all to seek it. To the end of his life he journeyed on in his quest--but died a pilgrim still on the way. Yet in his heart he found better things than he sought, not a country--but the rewards of faith and obedience. There always are godly people who pursue hopes and dreams which they never overtake; yet in their souls they find in their quest holier hopes and fairer dreams, than those which they miss. Those who seem to fail, oftentimes get most out of this world which they can carry to heaven with them.

The same is true of the joys and blessings which we seem to lose out of our hands in life's vicissitudes. We do not lose them. The material forms of things may drop from our clasp--but the spiritual quality or beauty in them, we never can lose.

The beautiful things, holy affections, gentle friendships, tender joys, sweet fancies, precious hopes, radiant dreams, once ours, though only for a little while--are ours forever. The forms may vanish--but the spirit remains.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/this-life-and-the-after-life/>

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