

What Is Your Vision?

by Leonard Ravenhill

Leonard Ravenhill challenges believers to live with an eternal perspective, emphasizing the importance of prayer, repentance, and spiritual readiness as the bride of Christ.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:3

Topics: "The Role of the Church", "Eternity Consciousness"

Description

Leonard Ravenhill emphasizes the critical need for ministers to have a vision rooted in eternity rather than the immediate, urging them to reflect on their responsibilities and the weight of their words before God. He draws parallels between the struggles of biblical figures like Paul, Moses, and Elijah, highlighting their endurance and focus on the unseen eternal truths amidst worldly distractions. Ravenhill calls for a revival of prayer and a deeper understanding of the church's role as the bride of Christ, stressing the urgency of living with eternity's values in view. He challenges the complacency of modern believers, reminding them of the suffering of Christians worldwide and the need for genuine repentance and spiritual awakening. Ultimately, he implores ministers to seek a closer relationship with God and to be examples of faithfulness in a world that desperately needs hope.

Transcript

From Leonard Ravenhill's last meeting, a prayer meeting for ministers at Calvary Commission. Sept. 14, 1994.

We are going to look at what Paul had to say about ministry, in 2 Corinthians 6:3-8

Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry may not be blamed. But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true...

This word may not seem very relevant to us, but I don't let one day go by that I don't pray for my oppressed brother in Bosnia. I saw on the news this morning of a new wave of persecution there. How many young men have died there in the last two or three years - died a martyrs death?

How easy it is to sit and clap our hands and tap our feet and sing, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness..." But, what about when you come to the third stanza?

When all around my soul gives way

When your whole life... your wife is raped in front of your eyes... you have no life... no church... everything goes ... you are dragged through the town. That is what is happening over there this very hour as we are here. I don't think we value our privileges as we ought. Paul talks about redeeming the time, buying back the opportunity. Of the things we waste, we certainly waste time. The word that has been very much on my mind these past two or three weeks is in Ephesians.

Ephesians 2:7 "But in the ages to come ... "

How often do we preach on that? I think there is a danger of something I call "The Peril of the Immediate." We are living in the framework of the immediate. We live there as much as other men. We are not supposed to. We are to live as men branded for eternity.

"In the ages to come..."

Look at Elijah. Elijah was told to hide in the cave. He goes in there for three whole years! Most of us can't stand three hours without turning on a radio or TV. Try three days, try three weeks, cutting yourself off from everything external, everything worldly that has been labeled and poisoned by the world systems. We need to think and get things straight.

Hebrews 11 tells me Moses endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

Paul tells us the things that are seen are temporal and the things that are unseen are eternal. We need to be careful of living in the visible all the time. Visible values, the durability of things that are only for time.

Think of Moses when he was on the backside of the desert, not for four days, not forty days, but forty years - one third of his life! There was a price on his head after having been kicked out of the greatest royal family in the world. He no longer had seven course meals. He lived on the back side of the desert. Do you think he ever thought that one day he would stand on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus and Elijah? He endured as seeing Him who is invisible - Christ. And what did he do? He considered the reproach of Christ - not the Kingdom of Christ - the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

Did he see Him coming in the clouds?

Did he ever see by faith that he would stand on the Mt. of Transfiguration?

Did he go further, to the end of the age when a multitude which no man can

number out of every kindred, tribe and tongue would sing the song of

Moses and of the Lamb?

We live too much in this world. We're earthbound. How many of us know someone who is eternity conscious? What America needs is somebody who will go through every church in the country and preach for a week on eternity:

Preach one day on the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Preach one day on the Judgment of believers.

Preach one day on the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Again, I've told you before,

I don't just want to go to heaven,

I want to go to the marriage supper of the Lamb,

I don't just want to go to the marriage supper,

I want to be part of the Bride.

The last word of Jesus was not "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel" - that was for the eleven disciples.

The last word of Jesus is in Revelations: Repent, repent, repent.

What is Jesus coming for? A bride.

The Word of God says He is coming for a bride without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Do you think the church is that today?

What does Jesus say about the church?

That she is poor, wretched, naked, blind and pitiful.

A while ago I went to a wedding of a millionaire's daughter. As the bride came down the aisle it was just as though a voice said to me, "look." I looked at her. She was beautifully dressed, very educated, quite brilliant. As I looked at her coming down the aisle, I thought, "Is Jesus Christ coming for a bride who is poor and wretched? If I was an artist I would paint the bride on a crutch, one leg almost withered, wearing rags, the other garments looking scruffy like a woman off the streets. Poor, wretched, naked, blind and pitiful - so something has to happen to the church before the Lord Jesus returns!"

One fact should be already decided in our hearts and that is to live with cruelty towards our lives, and abasement of our lives in this present evil world.

What about Elijah? He goes into a cave for three years - three years is a pretty good long time isn't it? He did it.

It says in I Kings 17, "go hide thyself."

It says in I Kings 18, "go show thyself."

One minute he's found before a king,

later he dares to stand before the Israelites...

A man who is intimate with God, is never intimidated by man.

The fear of man goes out entirely.

I certainly believe with all my heart we are not eternity conscious, we live for the everyday. We ought to live with eternity's values in view. Those people were excited - and us?

We have labored for Christ,

we have labored with Christ,

one day we are going to see Him.

As the hymn writer said,

"Face to face with Christ my Savior,

face to face what will it be ,

when with rapture I behold Him..."

Who would be delighted right now to go and stand before the King? You will have to answer for all your preaching...Very often we take a text and drown it in words...

I woke up this morning about three o'clock thinking about that.

I've been preaching for over 70 years.

Take 120 words times 60 minutes, times 60 times a year,

times 70 years... and I have to give an account to God for all those words.

The more I read the Word of God the more it pierces my heart. It makes me stop and think and meditate. I meditate now more on eternity than I ever have in all my life. Our people are not eternity conscious. Do you think a person who is ready for eternity would miss a prayer meeting? I don't know of anywhere on Earth where there is more freedom than in a prayer meeting where God anoints those who pray and you almost, as it were, rub shoulders with God.

Again I say, when Ahab was breathing down the neck of Elijah, and Jezebel was digging a pit for his feet, do you ever think he thought for a moment he'd stand on the Mountain of Transfiguration with Moses and Jesus?

Apparently Moses could see through the space in time... he could see and he endured. "He chose to suffer."

Suppose you were a twenty year old or a thirty year old in Bosnia or one of these other countries today. You wouldn't have a home to go home to.

Some of these young men today come into my office and say,

"These are wonderful days to be alive".

Sure they are - you go from an air conditioned home,

to an air conditioned car, to an air conditioned church,
where you collect a copious offering and go home to rejoice in the Lord.

What about those who get nothing?

Paul gets to a place where he says, "I have nothing, yet I possess all things." Paul goes through all sorts of cleansing. He did not end up in Romans 7 "it is sin that dwelleth in me." He ended up in Galatians 2:20, "Not I, but Christ liveth in me." That is the ultimate in the Christian life. I don't care how many tongues we have or how many miracles we were able to perform. The word of God says again, "Christ liveth in me." The life I now live in this mortal body is Christ controlled.

People say that in the Old Testament Christ was with them but not in them. But Peter doesn't say that! Christ was in them. Do you think a man could go and pray and say on behalf of the rotten nation he lived in, "Lord kill me," again, he also says, "Take my life. I don't care. I'm not bothered by living."

I want to be so God possessed.

Of course, some say that's fanaticism.

People get weary of hearing about all the trouble in Bosnia
but they can't wait to hear what is going on with the baseball strike.

And I'm talking about men in ministry, I mean preachers.

They rush out from church Sunday morning for home and go watch
baseball or football.

So they are trying to serve two masters.

No man can do that; you can only serve one master.

The more I read this word I find Christ didn't come to just take me to the cross - as Paul says in Romans 6, you can be crucified with Him. But I think the most amazing thing Jesus said is, "The prince of this world cometh and findeth nothing in Me." He wastes his time tempting Jesus!

He had come through forty days of relentless temptation and trials, after that He was put out of the synagogue, and after that He is being put out all the time.

He was born outside - we sing, "Jesus was born in a manger".

He was buried outside - because He would defile the city if they buried Him
within.

He is still outside - the church.

Isn't it amazing? In the book of Revelation Jesus is still outside the church standing and knocking, trying to get in. How many churches would He have to say that of today?

We must allow God to be in complete control of us with no ambitions of our own, with no concern but to glorify the Father. There's not much time left. As I said last night, "Believer, we are not in the last days - we are in the last of the last days! In Hebrews 1 it says, "God, Who in sundry times and in divers manners spake, hath in these last days spoken by His Son..." that was 2,000 years ago. As for reading the Book of Revelations, it speaks of things that will shortly come to pass. Dr. Tozer used to say to me very often that we were in the last chapter of Revelations.

More and more and more we should be the light in this dark world. You may not know what a wonderful privilege you have of being an example to young men.

Show them

you're not tied up with money,

you're not tied up with position,

you're not tied up trying to be the best preacher in your

denomination.

Live close to God day by day.

"The Spirit beareth witness."

John Wesley preached on that more than anyone else. I've never heard anyone preach on Romans 8:16, "the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit." In the Acts of the apostles it says the same thing: We're witnesses, so is the Holy Ghost.

We don't need outward acknowledgments. We don't need outward labels.

When I think of what it means in Jude, "Praying in the Holy Ghost," it means more than just tongues, it means the Holy Ghost running in me. If I'm filled with the Holy Ghost then what grieves the Holy Ghost will grieve me. It's not all joy and excitement.

Did the disciples ask the Lord "teach us to preach"? No. They heard the sermon on the mount, the greatest sermon ever preached birthed but

They never said, "Lord teach us to preach."

Jesus sang a hymn and went into Gethsemane, I think He sang often, but

They never said, "Lord teach us to sing."

They never said, "Lord teach us to laugh." No. They said,

"LORD TEACH US TO PRAY."

If I could go back in time, I think I would spend more time in the Word of God and getting into the depths of the lives of men like Praying Hyde. I was told of a man whose friend prayed with Praying Hyde. He said, "I was in India for a convention and I asked for the privilege of praying with Praying Hyde. John Hyde said, 'I will be praying tomorrow morning.' As I went in to pray it was nine in the morning. Then someone knocked

on the door and I thought, 'You just get praying and someone interrupts.' Then there was another knock at the door. I didn't move, Praying Hyde didn't move. Then someone opened the door and said, 'It's a quarter to three and you preach at three.' I had been on my knees from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon and didn't even know where the time had gone! It was an awesome experience listening to this man pour his heart out in prayer."

I'm not saying everyone gets to that level - but I believe the greatest thing we can do is pray. Every time I pray, I don't want God to make me popular, I don't want to have the biggest church in town. - Jesus never had the fastest growing church, in fact His church went down and down until one day there were only eleven and He said, "Will you go away also?" - I don't think we should pray for God to take people out, I'm saying this, you ought to get near to the heart of God.

I trust that God will give you that privilege of travail

that very few people have had.

Paul had it. I don't think a day goes by that I don't think of Paul travailing in birth. Look at his theological background. Look at the epistle to the Romans, look at his epistle to the Ephesians and yet with all that he is still craving that he may get near to the heart of God. "I could wish myself accursed... my own death." I don't think you have to die a martyr's death to be a martyr.

You can be a living sacrifice,

you can die to advantages,

you can die to temptations,

you can die to privileges,

you can die to all those things that don't add to spiritual life, that don't add to spiritual vision, that don't add to spiritual understanding.

When God works in me, He is so altogether different from the theological concept I once had...

Don't live in the immediate. Remember, Moses saw Jesus in the distance.

I see Jesus coming to rule on the Earth. Not to die, not to be pushed around, but He's coming to rule the Earth. The Word of God says at least some will reign with Him. Who? Who reigns with Him?

The overcomers,

overcoming temptation,

overcoming the world,

overcoming our own desires,

being completely God controlled.

I thank God for what He has done in my life. He hasn't stopped and He won't stop. The Word of God say, "We shall all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ." And, "Will not the Judge of all the Earth do right?"

" That is going to be awful, but if I didn't believe that I think I would go insane.

Who is going to account for all the bloody massacre in Rwanda today?

All the wars of the Earth,

all the Generals, the Kings of England the Presidents of the United

States, are going to stand before God.

When He takes all the masks off and uncovers everything.

Everybody - every preacher will stand before the God.

This is the final reckoning day, I want to live with eternity's values in view.

If we judge ourselves in the light of God's Word we need not fear the judgment.

If we walk in the light as He is in the light... that's all He asks of us, to walk in the light.

And this is what I desire:

That you would get more vision than I've ever had.

More power than I've ever had.

More understanding than I've ever had.

God help us. This is the most difficult period in human history. Never have there been so many nations upside down. The World is like a ship caught in a storm:

it has no anchor,

it has no compass,

it has no chart.

I believe, brethren, you will live to see many from Washington begging the Church of Jesus Christ to bring deliverance. They have ignored it, laughed at it, they have scorned it, but they will come to a place they are so politically helpless, so financially helpless, so morally helpless they will have to call on God. He is the only sure answer.

One thought that amazes as I study the life of Noah is that there is no mention of his prayer life. But when I come to Ezekiel 14, the three most righteous men that ever lived, Noah is one of them, Job another and Daniel. What awesome prayers they offered, but there will come a time when God won't listen to you anymore.

One fellow said, "I just finished three years in Seminary." I asked him,

"Did anyone ever preach a sermon on eternity?"... "No."

"Did you ever hear a sermon on the judgment seat of Christ?"... "No."

"Did anyone preach a sermon on 'The Bride of Christ?'... "No."

The man burst into tears. I said,

"In God's name, why do you go to seminary? To learn how to bury the dead?"

There is an eternity in front of us! There is a world that now is in more rebellion than ever! "As in the days of Noah" they rebelled against God. For 100 years Noah never preached a new message, he preached repentance, he preached righteousness. Alexander White used to say, "You can preach divine healing, you can preach prophecy, you can preach anything, but you can't preach righteousness; people won't have it."

I still hope God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh. Let Him pour out His Spirit, not our man-made thing. We laugh and watch TV all night. When the burden of the Holy Ghost takes hold of you, you taste what happens in revival. I think revival preaching is open heart surgery. The other preaching isn't a semblance of the message.

I'm trying to say that as bad as it is, and we are living in the most critical hour in human history, God hasn't given up. He's still not willing that any should perish. He still loves men and women. I want to be in that place where I can bear the birth pains.

For years I finished every night of prayer meeting the same way. I would say, "O Lord, don't say to me on that great day, 'Ravenhill, I had many things to say to you but you could not bear them.'" You don't tell your family secrets to your little children. You want to talk to someone who understands.

I BELIEVE GOD WANTS TO GIVE US EARS TO HEAR.

I BELIEVE HE WANTS TO GIVE US NEW UNDERSTANDING.

I BELIEVE HE WANTS TO GIVE US NEW REVELATION.

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