

Wasting Away and Renewal

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[0 : 00] We are rapidly approaching that moment in the cycle of the years, when it's generally thought that something very significant should happen between one minute and the next minute, which marks the transition from one year to another year.

And I suppose we have tried valiantly to fill that moment with great significance, to mark in that moment the passage of time in a significant way that's different from the fact that one minute dissolves into another minute, I guess, 59 times in an hour, every hour, every day, all the time.

So that it's not easy to give special significance to one particular minute, but I suppose going to church at midnight suggests that we're making at least a sincere attempt to mark the significance of that particular passage of time.

And if you think I'm being unduly pessimistic about the high, festive, full of New Year's, I derived it from an article in the province, which pointed out that there really isn't very much significance, and we try and add some to it.

And I thought it might be helpful to just suggest something to you, which occurs in this passage from 2 Corinthians, which talks a lot about time.

[1 : 48] So I'm going to ask you to reflect on that for about 12 minutes, and then I'm going to ask you to pray. And as we pray quietly, then the New Year will be brought in for the first time by the ringing of the bell in the church town.

So that will be our way of marking the transition from one minute to the next, from one hour to the next, and from one year to the next.

And when that's over, the bell is run. And our chief will lead us in the conclusion of our service. So look, if you will, at 2 Corinthians chapter 4, and really the passage which begins with verse 16, where Paul writes, So we do not lose heart.

And he suggests that the reason why we might lose heart is that our outer nature is wasting away, and we all mark the inexorable passage of time in our bodies, our outer nature is wasting away.

But that there is an inner reality to which our attention is drawn with some vigor by St. Paul, when he says, it is a daily occurrence for us, that our inner nature is being renewed every day.

[3 : 31] And so the two processes are kind of in conflict, one with the other. The outer nature is wasting away. The inner nature is being daily renewed.

Now, it goes on there to speak about this slight momentary affliction.

Now, it would be very hard to conclude that what he means by this slight momentary affliction is not the whole of your life or mine put in a fairly brief form in the scriptures.

That your life is a slight momentary affliction. And my life is a slight momentary affliction. And Paul says about this slight momentary affliction, which is your life or mine, that it is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

And so you have a beautiful contrast between a slight moment on the one hand, which may be the whole of your earthly existence, which is measured just in a little bit of time that passes in the course of your earthly life.

[5 : 02] But this slight momentary affliction has, as its purpose to prepare us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

And I must confess that in addition to reading the Proverbs, I also went to a movie last night, which is a movie out of Africa.

And I often sit in movies feeling that they are preaching a sermon at me, which I don't particularly want to hear, or somehow I feel a bit paranoid about them sometimes.

Last night, there was a passage which I think was taking the native African, giving him a spiritual eminence, which white men failed to see.

They said of this particular tribe, the Maasai tribe of Kenya, that they lived entirely for the moment. Their whole life was right here and right now.

[6 : 18] And the implication was that we who are the, I mean, I took it to be, the victims of biblical Judeo-Christianity, that we're always living for something way off in the future, maybe heaven at the end of this earthly life, and that we're way up there.

And these more primitive people, as they were portrayed, were much wiser than us because they live right in the moment.

And as I have thought about that, I have been impressed with the fact that Christians are called to live right in the moment. But to find that moment, a symbol of eternity.

So the whole of God's eternity packs itself into every moment of our lives. And that the significance of a passing moment is that in it is reflected eternity.

And that that's what we need to, that's what we need to begin to grasp. Right here, right now, in this moment, is all the reality of eternity, which we have been given this moment in order to understand.

[7 : 58] This moment has been given to us for that. You remember how, all the way through John's Gospel, Jesus says over and over again, I am, I am the door, I am the bread, I am the water, I am the good shepherd.

Always, I am. Meaning, of course, I am right now, in this moment. And that we confront Christ as being the eternal God present in this moment right now.

So that whatever phase, the slight momentary affliction, which is your life, is in. Whatever phase that slight momentary affliction is in, the whole eternal reality of God is present there too.

And that what we need to do is to turn from the weight and burden, sometimes, of that momentary affliction and to see in it the eternal weight of glory, which is beyond all comparison.

Paul goes on and says, we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen. The things that are seen are transient. The things that are unseen are eternal.

[9 : 40] And in the same way that he talks about time, he also talks about things that are visible. And the visibility of things, he says, the thing that you see in seems to have so much substance to it, he says, is, it's a transient thing.

It will rot and rust and decay and be gone. But the reality which it represents is an eternal realm. So that in the moment of time, he's seen the reality of eternity.

And in the things that are seen, there is eternal significance. And so you are called, as a disciple of Jesus Christ, as a believer in Jesus Christ, to receive a moment of time from him, whether it's a moment of joy or a moment of affliction, whatever kind of moment it might be, there is present to that moment for you and for me the eternal reality of who God is right there.

and it just breaks in on, on the moment as Christ broke in on our world and broke in on our history.

And so I, I want you just to spend some time claiming all the, the goodness and love and grace of God for this moment in which we are to be quiet, quiet in our hearts before him.

[11 : 40] And to see in this significant moment as the old year ebbs out and the new year breaks in, to see in that moment the eternal weight of glory which is beyond all comparison.

So let's just kneel and be quiet and wait for the bell to ring in the new year. And the bishop of the Lord and the flame of the dark is the deceased king.

The■ and the man digamos My name is greatly■ out of the ■■■■ and oh my God By if you take a■ and affect you and you come also The Olivetral Glen■■■ regardez the Sanctuary Sanctuaryena Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[14 : 13] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.