

The Eternal Before the Temporal



If You Want God's Best (Part 9)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue with our theme for the week, "If You Want God's Best…"

In my previous talks on this theme, I've shared with you six different ways in which it's appropriate to complete that sentence; that is, the sentence that begins, "If you want God's best…" In other words, six things that you need to do if you want God's best in your life. I'll just go through those six things and then I'll continue with the theme for my talk today.

First, if you want God's best, want God's best. Don't settle for less.

Second, if you want God's best, focus on Jesus.

Third, if you want God's best, meditate in God's Word.

Fourth, if you want God's best, make friends with the Holy Spirit. He's the administrator of all the riches of the kingdom. You'll get no more than you get from Him.

Fifth, if you want God's best, hear and obey God's voice promptly. And that's something you have to cultivate is the ability to hear God's voice. And,

Sixth, and this is still related to the theme of hearing, if you want God's best, be careful how and what you hear. Not merely what you hear, but how you hear. And I gave you the example from Job that as the mouth tastes food, so the ear tests words. And if our mouth tells us that something is unhealthy or impossible to swallow, then we reject it. And we need to learn to do the same with our ear and what we hear. If it's unhealthy, if it will not do us good, if it's negative, if it's destructive, then we need to reject it, we need to refuse to admit it into our heart.

Well, today I'm going to share with you a seventh way to complete the sentence. That seventh way is: …be more concerned with the eternal than with the temporal. And I'll make the complete sentence for you: If you want God's best, be more concerned with the eternal than with the temporal.

Now I'd like to turn to a passage in which the eternal and the temporal are compared and set side by side. This is in the

writings of Paul in 2 Corinthians, chapter 4, verses 17 and 18, where he says this:

> "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Notice Paul says there are two categories of things. There's the eternal and there's the temporary. And he says the temporary things are the things that we can see, the things of this world, the things which we contact with our senses. But the eternal things, he says, are unseen, they belong to the other world, an invisible, eternal world. And he brings out a tremendously important principle. He says our light affliction works for us an eternal weight of glory while we are looking, not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

So, most of us are going to go through affliction, let's face that fact. Sooner or later in life we're going to face trouble, hardship, difficulty. But that will do for us something of eternal value on one basic condition: while we continue looking at the things which are not seen. But, if we take our eyes off the eternal and begin to look only at the temporary things, at the things of this world which we contact with our natural senses, then our affliction is no longer working for us that eternal glory which it's God's purpose for us to have. So that, when we come into trouble or affliction it's very, very important that we learn to respond the right way which is not to be distracted from the eternal by the problems and by the trouble but to keep our eyes steadfastly fixed on the eternal, on the unseen.

Now, Paul deliberately expresses a paradox there when he talks about looking at the things which are not seen. That's a deliberate paradox. Because how can you look at things which are not seen? The answer is, of course, that we contact the eternal, not by our physical senses, but by faith. We contact the temporary by the senses, we contact the eternal by our faith. And, a little further on in the same epistle, Paul says, "we walk as Christians by faith, not by sight." In other words, we are not primarily influenced by the temporary, by the things of this world that we contact with our senses, but we walk by faith, we are directed, we are governed, we are controlled, we are motivated by the things of the unseen world, which are eternal.

Now, a little further back in 2 Corinthians, chapter 3, verse 8, Paul gives another extremely important related revelation. And that is that the eternal is revealed to us in the mirror of God's word. In the New Testament, in various places, the word of God, the Scripture, is compared to a mirror. But we're told it's a mirror which does not show us our natural person, our physical body, our outward appearance, but it's a mirror which shows us the unseen, eternal things. It shows us our spiritual nature. It shows us the things of the spiritual world. And, in this context, Paul says, in 2 Corinthians 3:18:

> "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

So, again, the same principle is brought out, it's only while we look in the mirror of God's Word and see the eternal and the glory which God has prepared for us there, that the Holy Spirit works upon us to transform us into the likeness of that glory. But, if we take our eyes off the eternal, then the Holy Spirit can no longer work His transforming work in us. You see, Jesus is Lord both of the eternal and the temporal and He will bless us in both realms, the eternal and the temporal, but only if we keep our priorities right. If our priorities are wrong, then we miss the blessing of the Lord, the Spirit of God is not able to work upon us.

Here's an example of a man who kept his priorities right. It's the example of Moses, as he is described in Hebrews 11, verses 24-27:

> "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

Notice that key phrase, "...he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." That's the eternal God, the eternal realm, the eternal realities. How did he see them? Not with his senses, but by faith. And because by faith he contacted the unseen eternal realities, he was not moved away from his calling, he did not lose his sense of values, he did not esteem the riches of Egypt greater than the eternal riches of God. He was willing to forego the riches of Egypt in order to attain to the eternal riches of God. His priorities were right because, by faith, he kept his eyes on the unseen eternal realities.

In this connection, I want to give you what I believe to be a very important warning. I think it's particularly important for people in our contemporary culture and civilization. The warning is this: Do not pursue riches. Do not make them your goal. Paul has got something very sad and very solemn to say to Christians who pursue riches. In 1 Timothy, chapter 6, verses 9-11:

> "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. [The end of that motivation is ruin and destruction.] For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness."

Don't pursue riches, pursue the eternal realities, the eternal riches. Because if you pursue the temporal riches, if you set your eyes on them and make them your goal, you're going to be sorry. You're going to pierce yourself through with many griefs. You're going to fall into a trap and into "many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction." Hear those words and, if that is the way your heart is set, turn back today.

There is an alternative, thank God. The alternative is not that we pursue riches but that we seek the kingdom of God and let God add to us that which we need in abundance, because God is not stingy, He's generous. Once He sees our motives are right, then He can release His generosity towards us. Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 6, verses 31-33:

> "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. [Jesus says that's the way the nations of the world think and they're not happy. They're frustrated, they don't attain to what they're looking for. And then He goes on to say:] ...your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. [You don't need to tell God that you need food or clothing. But He says this, listen:] ...seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness [that's the eternal things] and all these things [the temporal things] shall be added to you."

You see, there's a great difference between pursuing the temporal or pursuing the eternal and letting God add the temporal to you. You have to have your priorities right. Put the eternal before the temporal.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll continue and complete this theme. I'll share just one more thing that it is important for you to do if you want God's best.

Radio Program

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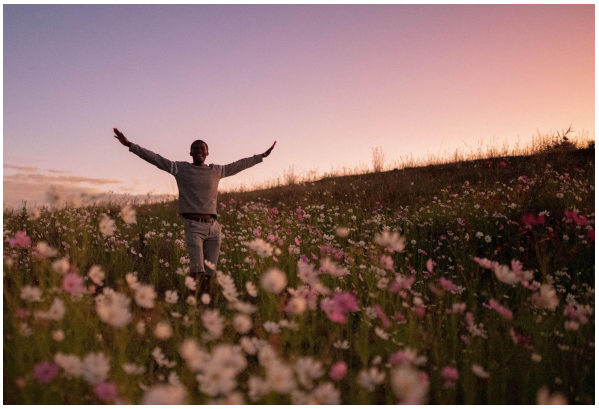

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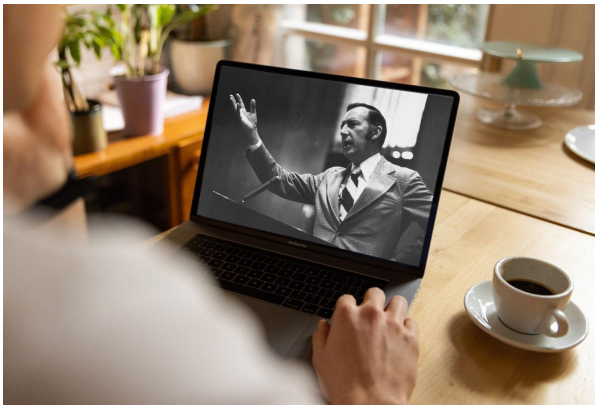

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