



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 14:6-12

"Eternal Gospel and Everlasting Punishment"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading for today is Revelation chapter 14, verse 6 through verse 12. While you're finding the passage, you may remember that last Sunday I made the comment that this chapter is divided into three parts; three visions each introduced by the same expression in the original text. The first one found in verse 1, "and I looked," and then in verse 6, "and I saw," which is essentially the same in the original text. And then in verse 14, "and I looked." These three visions are the visions that John recounts in this fourteenth chapter. And you'll also notice that in the second of these visions there are three proclamations by angelic beings. And so we'll read now the Scripture with that in mind.

"And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those that live on the earth, and to every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people, and He said with a loud voice, Fear God, and give Him glory because the hour of His judgment has come: and worship Him whom made the heaven, and the earth, and sea, and springs of waters. And another angel, a second one followed saying, Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the Great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality."

A term, passion, is literally in the original text, wrath. So the two ideas of wrath as well as immorality are found in that one expression. And then the third of the angelic proclamations found in verse 9,

"And then another angel, a third one followed them, saying with a loud voice, If anyone worship the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb."

I make just one comment here in the expression, "tormented in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb," it is possible that that expression, "in the presence of the holy angels," is an expression, the technical term is periphrasis, an expression for God. The reason being and John, of course, was a Hebrew, the reason being it was felt by the Hebrews that it was not good to say the name of God and that is in many things bound up with that, but it's possible that, "in the presence of the holy angels" really means, "in the presence of God." Perhaps we would say as Christians, "in the presence of the Father," because we have, "and in the presence of the Lamb." But we can have it, "in the presence of God," because we are looking at the God-man when we think of the Lamb who voluntarily submitted to the leadership and direction of the Father for His mediatorial work. The 11th verse is,

"And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever: they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name. Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus."

You learn here that one of the important things that I probably am not going to say in the message, hope I don't repeat it now, but when we talk about hell, we're talking about a biblical subject. And for those who would say, for example, he is of hell, fire and damnation preacher, as if to suggest that that is something very bad and not really read the Bible very much or at least if they read it, they have not paid sufficient attention to it. Hell is revealed in Scripture, not for sadistic gloating, and if a so called hell, fire and damnation preacher preaches in the emotion of gloating sadistically over the experiences of the lost that is not Scripture. But nevertheless, hell is set forth in Scripture and it is set forth to warn us, to give admonition which we need, that we are looking at things that affect our eternal destiny; eternal, not simply limited, but eternal destiny. So we are talking about a very, very solemn and significant subject. May the Lord bless this reading of His word and let's we bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the admonitions of the word of God, for we need them. We thank Thee Lord that Thou does warn us of the solemn things that lie ahead for men and women, and that there are two destinies that the Scriptures set forth so plainly: One, the destiny of eternal fellowship with the triune God, and the other, the destination of a lake of fire and eternal punishment. We pray Lord that these great truths may be truths that we ponder and think about and meditate upon as we order by Thy grace and through Thy enablement our lives in the present time. We ask especially Lord that if there is some in this meeting today that do not know our Lord, we ask that by Thy grace Thy will touch their hearts and turn them to the reception of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, whom to know is life eternal.

We pray for the church of Jesus Christ in these days. We ask Lord especially that Thou will gather us and direct us in ways that will enable us to be a testimony in this very, very difficult world in which we live in which so many things are happening. We

pray for the church in Europe, in particular, ask Thy blessing upon the many believing individuals and the many believing churches where Christ is honored. Bless them. Give them vital testimony and vital opportunities in these difficult days and in these challenging days of changing times in Europe.

For our President, we pray for him. We ask Thy blessing upon him. Give him courage and give him wisdom. And for others as well who are our leaders whether in this land, or in this state, or city. We pray Lord your blessing upon them. Give them wisdom also. For the church here, Believers Chapel, we ask Thy blessing upon us, upon our elders and deacons, upon the members and the friends and especially the visitors who are with us today, we pray that each of us may grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord.

We thank Thee for answered prayer with reference to the sick. And we pray for those who are still suffering and for those who are bereaved, we pray for them as well. For our children, particularly in this time of the year, may the thoughts of Christmas be true thoughts, thoughts that reflect the glory of our Lord and His incarnation and in His atoning work. We ask that this meeting as we sing together and as we listen to the Word of God, may be used by the Holy Spirit to build us up in our faith for Jesus sake. Amen.

[Message] "Eternal Gospel and Everlasting Punishment." What we are dealing with today in brief form is fundamental Christian doctrine. The title is not a teasing, baiting come-on designed to cheaply provoke interest. These subjects are in the text and they're important. They are not trifles. For example, "an eternal gospel," that in itself should awaken our deepest interest. But as we read verses 6 and 7 we ask ourselves the question, "A gospel of grace or a gospel of judgment or is it perhaps of both?" The fall of Babylon, one of the great topics of the word of God, read Isaiah, read Jeremiah, and then read the eleventh chapter of the Book of Genesis, in which we have the Tower of Babylon.

We think of it as the Tower of Babel, but it is the Tower of Babylon. Babylon is the Greek term, Babel the Hebrew term that is rooted in Hebrew and so we don't want to lose the connection between them. But when we say the fall of Babylon are we talking about the fall of Rome? It is possible that Peter in the fifth chapter of his first epistle used the term Babylon in the sense of Rome. Many commentators feel that it is certain that he did. But is this particular Babylon of the Book of Revelation the Babylon of Rome? If it is we ask ourselves the question, "Is it pagan Rome or is it as the reformers thought, papal Rome?" For they thought the Roman Catholic Church and its principles were really the Babylon of the word of God. Or is Babylon to be taken of the literal Mesopotamian city? And is it then the literal city or is it symbolic since Babylon and the ancient Mesopotamian city was the heart of organized, organized, that's important, organized apostate rebellion against God? In biblical teaching, Babylon is opposed to Jerusalem; Jerusalem, the home of God's people; Babylon, the home of the opposing people. Jerusalem bound up in the principles of sovereign grace and the truth of Scripture, and Babylon, apostasy and heresy against the truth of God. Is it possible that we have a reference in Babylon to the literal Mesopotamian city as being a force in the last days before the coming of our Lord?

One of the remarkable things and this of course does not prove that by any means, but one of the remarkable things is that the nation of Iraq, not your fundamentalist Christian nation by a long shot. Iraq had begun the rebuilding the city of Babylon as you probably know and in the June 25 issue of the *New York Times*, which was a Sunday issue in the travel section, there was a rather lengthy article on Iraq's attention which has been turned to rebuilding some of their historic marks of their past and so that raises again interesting possibilities with reference to the word of God.

The third of the topics is eternal punishment. The great stumbling block of offended modern man who comforts himself with the belief that perdition, hell, is really a myth. There was an Australian Bible teacher and preacher who wrote a book called, *A Bunch of Everlastings*. And those of you who know flowers a whole lot better than I, you

probably know what an Everlasting is. It is a particular species of flowers which are easily preserved which is why they are called, "Everlastings", so Webster told me, but a bunch of Everlastings, therefore, a bunch of flowers that are preservable. Well, Mr. Boreham wrote a book called, *A Bunch of Everlastings*, and he talked about specific texts. And he titled his chapters that totaled the book, "A Bunch of Everlastings: Great Texts." And one of those texts had to do with eternity. And that's what we have here with eternal punishment.

Now we are going to look at these three proclamations that the angels make for they, I think, effectively divide up the second vision. And the first of them are found in verse 6 and verse 7 in which we have a proclamation to the effect that those who hear the angels voice are to worship the Creator. Notice how John puts it, he says, "I saw another angel arrived flying in mid heaven, having an eternal gospel," not "thee" eternal gospel, but "an" eternal gospel, "to preach to those that live on the earth, and to every nation, and tribe and tongue and people."

Now when we see that an "angel is in mid heaven" we're probably allowed to make an application from that. And it seems quite plain that the reason John sees the angel flying in mid heaven is that this is a message that is to be seen and heard by all, not just some, but by all. It illustrates the fact, of course, that even the antichrist with all the power that is given him by the dragon, is unable to prevent the preaching of the word of God. And even in those days in which there is a world-wide empire with a dragon and the two beasts, the infernal triumvirate or trinity in control of things, still the word of God will be proclaimed. One sees this illustrated in the Bible so frequently and if you'll look at Christians and their testimonies to their salvation you will see this truth reflected in experience over and over again. Individuals and organization who seek to restrain the preaching the word of God seek to keep it from going forth, and if you will observe carefully over periods of time you'll find that God works marvelous miracle and brings the word of God into the hands of those whom others are seeking to restrain from the word.

Probably as a Christian you know experiences such as that or you have heard the testimonies of some that have grown up in such a way that you might think they would have never heard the word of God but in the strangest ways they do hear that word.

When the Lord Jesus made His last entry into Jerusalem in that city which was so in the hands of the Sadducees and the Pharisees, when He made His last entry into Jerusalem and fault was found with a loud proclamations that were ringing to His praise as the Messiah King, He answered, "If these, the children and the people, Hosanna to the King in the Highest, if these would hold their message, the stones would immediately cry out." If it were possible for everyone to be totally restrained from saying a word, Jesus said the stones would cry out the message. The truth of God and His claims must be spoken. Never forget that. If men are solid, other things will become vocal to testify to the glory of the triune God.

So the angels have mid heaven in the days of the antichrist when if you don't worship the beast, it means your death. The angels have mid heaven as their pulpit and all the nations, tribes, tongues, and people are to be their congregation. It is John's way, our Lord's way, of saying the word of God will go forth.

But now what is preached? An eternal gospel, not thee, as I mentioned, but an eternal gospel. The context as well as the construction "an" instead of "thee", if it said "thee" eternal gospel we wouldn't have any question about it, it would have to do with our Lord's death, burial, and resurrection, surely. But since he says "an" and since the context has a strong stress on judgment, it's not surprising that some have suggested that the eternal gospel mentioned here is a gospel of judgment. For the angel said, "Fear God, give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come and worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and springs of waters."

So there is a strong note of judgment in this gospel. But let me also remind you of the fact that in the gospel that we know as the Gospel there is a strong element of judgment also. For accompanying that proclamation of the death, burial and resurrection

of our Lord, is always the appeal that if we do not respond then we do face eternal judgment. As, for example, the Apostle John says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides upon him."

So I would think that it would be difficult to exclude the gospel or redemptive grace from this eternal gospel that he evangelizes the people with. Now, in fact, in that expression, "to preach," is not simply to proclaim but the term that is used is to preach good news. So this is good news. So therefore, I tend to think that while judgment is strongly to be emphasized in this eternal gospel that we are nevertheless not to exclude redemptive grace. Particularly in the light to what we have read in chapter five in which we have had strong stress on redemptive grace when the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb and that great vision and sang the new song which had to do with the fact that He was slain, He purchased for God men from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. And made them a kingdom of priests to our God and said that they would reign upon the earth.

So I would suggest then that this eternal gospel does have a strong stress on judgment because of the situation in the last days but it is grounded in redemptive grace as well. Just as when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians and the first chapter of his first epistle to them, he expressed to them the message that he had heard that others were telling him that he had preached to them. He was trying to say how the word had spread. He preached in Thessalonica and he said now I am finding that because you have responded so well that people are coming to me and telling me of what I preached when I was with you. Amazing, isn't it? But anyway, he sums up his own message by saying, "You turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, to wait for His Son from heaven whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come." No message of blood and atonement there. But we know Paul well enough to know that what he preached was grounded in redemptive grace.



So "an eternal gospel" is a reference, I think, to both the grace and the judgment that are attached to the gospel of Christ. It is also important, I think, to notice what the angel said. He said "Fear God and give Him glory." In other words, this is kind of the last call for repentance. And the language is the language of what we would call natural theology. That is God is the Creator and the things we can learn from a creator God. But he also points out that we are to give glory to Him. That is to God. Not to anything else. We're not to give glory to the images. The image, particularly of the beast, that the false prophet is set on, and also we are not to give glory to the church, but we are to give glory to God for even the great things that happen through the preaching of the word of God through the church, we are thankful to God for them.

Now the second proclamation, I perhaps ought to say one thing here about Martin Luther. Luther once said that he did not like the Book of Revelation. He didn't like the apocalypse. He said because the spirit of the apocalypse did not agree with his spirit. Now he was right as far as the facts are concerned. The spirit of the apocalypse is not as Luther's spirit centered all together on the doctrine of justification by faith and the reconciliation of man to God by Christ's work on the cross. But Luther's gospel was a bit truncated in that way. And while he said he didn't like this book because its spirit does not agree with his feelings, does not necessarily mean it is not true to the word of God; the kind of spirit that one has in the Book of Revelation. We know something of that because there are many Christians that are disturbed by the imprecatory Psalms. And they hear the Psalmist's saying, asking God to curse individuals and to destroy them and even destroy their children. That has proved troubling to many Christians. It is one of the illustrations of the fact that we don't always have the same spirit that God has and we need to learn and grow, so that our spirit becomes more identifiable with His Spirit.

So its true Luther said what he said but nevertheless, wrath and judgment are part of the gospel. They are part of the message of God. And we are not preaching the true

gospel unless we preach it in the form in which it is given in the word of God. And judgment forms one of its strong strengths of an eternal gospel.

Now he talks about the fall of Babylon or the second angel. We read in the 8th verse "And another angel, a second one followed saying, Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the Great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality." The destroyers, the citizens of Babylon, the followers of Babylon, and the religion that characterized Babylon are removed that God's purposes may stand firm.

So while drunk with the wine of Babylon's seduction men and women are not free to respond to the gospel. And it is necessary for God to do away with Babylon. We have a very interesting passage in one of your favorite books. I know that this is probably the passage you meditated on this past week, Jeremiah chapter 51 verse 6 through verse 10. For those of you who may not have done that and may have to turn to it, well, it's alright. Turn to it. Those of you who are not turning to it in your Bible, I know you reflected on it this past week. But anyway, I'll have a brief intermission while you find Jeremiah. Still chapter 51 verse 6 through verse 10, listen to what the prophet says in this message. It concerns Babylon. Interesting while you are finding Babylon, I mean while you are finding Jeremiah, I can't wait for you to catch a plane to Iraq. One of the interesting things about this is that if you read if the prophecies concerning Babylon in the Old Testament and the destruction of that city, you will find that it is destroyed in a great battle. But in Babylon's history, it was not destroyed, that is up to this point, with a battle or in a battle. In one recently scholarly commentary this point was brought out.

So it is possible that what we do have is, a Babylon has a future, but listen to the words beginning in verse 6 of Jeremiah 51,

"Flee from the midst of Babylon, and each of you save his life; do not be destroyed in her punishment; for this is the Lord's time of vengeance; He is going to render recompense to her. Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the Lord,

intoxicating all the earth: the nations have drunk of her wine; therefore the nations are going mad." (You'll recognize that the apocalypse builds a good bit upon the language of this passage.) "Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been broken: wail over her; bring balm for her pain, perhaps she may be healed. We applied healing to Babylon, but she was not healed: forsake her, and let us each go to his own country: for her judgment has reached to heaven, and towers" (Now remember Babylon is Babel. And remember characteristic of Babylon is the Tower of Babel. And you can see the language builds upon that.) "And towers up to the very skies. The Lord has brought about our vindication: come, and let us recount in Zion the work of the Lord our God."

Now whether that has a future reference or not, we'll reserve for the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of the Book of Revelation. But I think you can see that this looms large in the deliverance of the people of God: the destruction of Babylon. Babylon the Great, the early church thought it was Rome. At least we can say this, Babylon in Scripture is at the least assemble of end time apostate, political, religious capitol of the world empire of the antichrist. It's possible that we do have the ancient Mesopotamian city renowned for luxury and corruption, the great enemy of God's city and God's people, rebuilt. But as I say, we'll leave that. The reformers often took Babylon in Scripture as in this place, of papal Rome, not pagan Rome. And they of course in their day because of the fact that they were separating from papal Rome, they tended to look upon the papacy as the great enemy of the truth of God.

Now we read also in this verse that Babylon has made "all the nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her immorality," the seduction practices that lead to divine wrath and one final irrevocable judgment for all set forth in connection with Babylon.

But let's go now to the third message. In verse 9,

"And another angel, a third one followed them, saying with a loud voice, If anyone worship the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead, or upon his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb."

Now the false prophets in verse 15 of chapter 13, it is said, commanded that as many as do not worship the image of the beast are to be killed. Well that demand is countered here in the word of God by the statement that if one does worship the beast then he must drink the wine of the wrath of God which is mixed undiluted in its powerful strength in the cup of His anger and the result will be that he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the angels and the Lamb for ever and ever. So if one drinks Babylon's cup, one must also drink the Lord's cup. But to drink the Lord's cup means eternal punishment. In other words, to put it very simply, God's wine is strong stuff. It is not ten percent, eleven percent, twelve percent in alcoholic content. It is fatal; eternally fatal, God's wine.

I think it is rather interesting that we have this expression labeled "be tormented in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb." The individuals that refused the mark of the beast are individuals who, therefore, have been slain publicly, executed, and so what happens is that if we do partake then the result is that an individual must experience the shame of a public derision, but it's a public derision before a much more robust gathering than the public execution of those who refused the mark of the beast because of their faith in Christ.

So to tell you the truth, I think I would rather lose my life in the presence of a Hitler and his minions if such a thing were necessary, the antichrist and the false prophet, than have to be committed to eternal punishment in the presence of the angels and of the

Lamb of God. I think you can see that if you have the idea that God is simply a God of sentimental love then you are not talking about the God of holy Scripture at all.

Now in the 11th verse we read, "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever." That's forever and ever. That's eternal. That's as long as the city council discusses central expressways. But it is forever and ever. Eternal punishment is the end of the terrifying reality of divine wrath. It's very interesting to see what evangelicals or men who have some sense of appreciation of the word of God say about this in our day. One of the men, I think is a Christian man, has spoken of this as the "second death" which means extinction and total oblivion. And then we had the most interesting instance in recent months of John R. W. Stott, an evangelical, a fine evangelical man, whose books have been of help to me through the years. I have read many of them and he has written many, probably about twenty; and many very helpful things. And then Philip Hughes, also professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, but who will be leaving there after this year. Stott, Philip Hughes, John Windham, another well known evangelical Britisher, and others have begun to publish their views on conditional immortality. In other words, Mr. Stott, Prof. Hughes, Mr. Windham, highly regarded evangelicals, highly regarded, are taking the position that there is no such thing as the eternal punishment of the lost and that we are rather to follow the doctrine of conditional immortality. John Stott's words are essentially this; he finds the doctrine of the eternal conscience torment of the lost "intolerable". I respect Mr. Stott. He is thoughtful man and a good student of the word of God, but in this instance I can certainly not follow him.

Conditional immortality teaches this, let me set it forth for you so that you understand what I am speaking about. Conditional immortality teaches that man is not inherited immortal; that is the soul is not immortal. Only God possesses immortality. Man only becomes immortal through faith in Christ. It teaches also that unbelievers will bear just punishment after death. They are not simply annihilationist. In other words, they do not teach that when a man dies, he's annihilated immediately. But rather, for a

time he bears punishment dependent upon the kind of life he's lived. In other words, if he has lived a wretched life, so called, a simple illustration, he may have to bear a considerable amount and time of punishment. But if he has not, he may have a limited time of punishment. Much more limited. And then ultimately those individuals will suffer destruction.

It is their contention that the Greek word, *apollumi*, or *apoleia*, or *olethros*; those words have to do with destruction and so men are destroyed. They cease to exist as men. And that includes women too. In other words, men and women will cease to exist after they have suffered for their sins. If they believe in Christ they are given the gift of eternal life and immortality. The question of whether the Bible teaches eternal conscience torment, of course, is not something we can handle in three minutes. And so I don't make any attempt to do that. I did give a lecture on the subject here, in Believers Chapel, when Dr. Daniel was absent on his trip to Great Britain this summer or this spring. I have forgotten the exact time. If you are interested you can read a bit more about it.

Let me just simply say this, it is the contingent of these men that the eternity of eternal punishment is a reference to its finality and not its duration. But the Christian church has taught otherwise for nineteen centuries, generally. Now there have been a few men who have had similar views, all the way back to Origen. Nevertheless, the general view of Christianity has been this, and the view taken in the Confessions of Faith has been of eternal conscience torment. We could say that the Jews did not accept that doctrine and our Lord made no effort to distinguish His view from theirs. That would suggest that He had the same view as they had. Christian churches were almost universally believers in eternal conscience torment.

And Charles Hodge says that that's an almost invincible presumption that the Bible teaches it, if the Holy Spirit has taught the church for these centuries has taught this view and this is the view that the church holds, then if we abandon what the church holds, we

maybe lodging objections against the authority, and power, and person of the Holy Spirit who has taught us. Our Lord should have denounced it if it's wrong. One theologian has said, "The extinction of conscientious is not of the nature of punishment, the essence of punishment is suffering. And suffering involves conscientious." We don't suffer if we do not exist. Spiritually dead are described in Scripture as conscience. But spiritual death is the same as the second death and in this Book of Revelation, the second death is said to hurt.

I think one of the last things I would say now than to deal with the subject in detail, is just to cite a statement of one of the theologians that I respect, he said, "Nor does the quibble avail that the phrase, "everlasting destruction," or such like, implies annihilation. If this consisted in reducing the sinner forever to nothing it would be instant destruction not everlasting destruction. How can punishment continue when the subject of it has ceased to exist?"

So then we couldn't talk of eternal punishment. We could talk of sudden destruction, instant destruction, but no eternal punishment. Our Lord, of course, is the one who talks about hell in the New Testament. All of the references except one to hell as Gehenna are on the lips of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is He who says, "If your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out. It is better for you to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes to be cast into Gehenna where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." So it's our Lord who talks about eternal conscience punishment.

John then finishes with a note of his own. He says here, "then is the perseverance of the saints who keeps ...and their faith in Jesus." A kind of call to endurance in the faith; a crucial test of one's loyalty, the punch line that follows the warning of verse 11.

Well, let me sum up since our time is about up. What we have here then is one of the most solemn warnings in the whole of the Bible. It's the confirmation of judgment. It's the confirmation of eternal punishment. It's the confirmation of the ultimate

destruction of all that Babylon signifies. When John says in chapter 3 verse 36, "All who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life;" he talks about eternal judgment. And when he adds, "But the wrath of God abides on them," he in effect is saying that annihilation is not the teaching of the word of God for the wrath of God continues to abide upon them. Many mock as we said earlier and make caricatures of preachers of hell, fire, and damnation. I would say that it is better to believe those who, well, I'll ask a question and put it this way. Is it better to believe the mockers than the angels preaching good news from mid heaven?

This past week I read an account of a significant word in the biblical experience, and it is the great word, eternity. Steven Grellet was a Quaker missionary and had a remarkable career. He lived in the eighteen and nineteen centuries. He traveled to over the world preaching the gospel. He actually learned many, many languages in order to preach the gospel. He said that he yearned to live as long as Methuselah. But then he discovered that he could live longer than Methuselah through his conversion. His conversion took place as he described it while he was walking in an American forest. "And in the midst of the solitude of that vast American forest," he said, "it seemed to become vocal with wondrous speech. The winds and the rustling leaves were all whispering, and caroling, and shouting, and echoing the same wonderful word."

And then Mr. Grellet says, "I was arrested by what seemed to be an awful voice proclaiming the word, eternity. Eternity. Eternity. It reached my soul. My whole man shook. It brought me like Saul to the ground. The great depravity and sinfulness of my heart was settling before me. After this I spent most of the time in retirement. I began to read the Bible." Good sign of a man who has found life in Christ. He began to read the Bible. "Oh what sweetness did I then feel," he said. "It was indeed a memorable day. I was like one introduced me to a new world. The creation and all things around me bore a different aspect. My heart glowed with love to all. The awfulness of that visitation can never cease to be remembered with particular interest and gratitude as long as I have the



use of my mental faculties. I have been, as one plucked from a burning house, rescued from the brink of a horrible pit. How can I set forth the fullness of heavenly joy that filled me? I saw that there was One who was able to save me. I saw Him to be the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. I felt faith in His atoning blood. Floods of tears of joy and gratitude gave vent to the fullness of my heart and all through one word, a word that reached my very soul, shook my whole man brought me to the ground, that word, eternity."

Something for us to think about too. A man who wrote this went on to tell of Thomas Chalmers, the great Scot. Mr. Chalmers was pastoring the church in Cal Monty, and he made an interesting observation. He said that he had proved that it was possible for a minister to spend two days of the week working and five days doing anything he wanted to do. Well, that's an interesting observation. It is not five, Mr. Chalmers, it's four. But anyway, he said he proved that five days were free and he did in the five days what he wanted to do. He prepared himself to become professor of mathematics at Edinburgh University and succeed Professor Playfair there. And so far as I know, he was a man of the kind of intelligence that he would have received that appointment.

But he wrote a pamphlet in those days, in which was not a very good pamphlet and later on when he was involved in some of the troubles of the Church of Scotland, in the course of an historic ministry, there a debate for the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, one of the others there called attention to the early pamphlet that he had written and he was stung to the quick by the fact that something before his conversion was to be used against him. So he rose and made one of his very greatest speeches. And in closing he said, "Yes, sir. I penned it, strangely blinded that I was. I aspired in those days to be a professor of mathematics, but what serves the object of mathematics solves magnitude and the proportion of magnitude. But in those days, sir, I had forgotten two magnitudes. I thought not of the littleness of time and I recklessly thought not of the greatness of eternity. Eternity unto the ages of the ages. Eternity."

There is a passage in one of the great works of American Literature in which Uncle Tom uttered that same word with wonderful effects and in the course of it, you may remember the account, Tom is suffering from his master and in the course of his torment from Legree, he reaches a place where he hears Legree say to him, "How would you like to be tied to a tree and have a slow fire lit up around ye? Wouldn't that be pleasant, hey Tom?" "Master," says Tom, "I know ye can do dreadful things, but," he stretched himself up and clasped his hands, "But after ye killed the body there ain't no more you can do. And though there is all eternity to come after that."

Ebenezer Erskine, I cited him before but Ebenezer when he talks about how he came to understand the truths of the word of God, he said, "That night I got my head out of the time and into eternity." And then it is said that R. Duncan, who was Professor of Old Testament at the University of Edinburgh, just about this time of the year when he was bidding his students goodbye, the fall term was over, he dismissed them at the end of the work with, "Many will be wishing you a Happy New Year, your old tutor wishes you a Happy Eternity." That is what we'd like to wish you too, a happy eternity. A happy eternity only comes through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who gave Himself for sinners. And we're sinners. You and I are sinners. We need deliverance. We need the significant experiences of Erskine's and the Chalmer's, and the Grellet's, and the thousands and millions who before us have entered the presence of the Lord. But let me say to you, my friend in this audience, eternity is real. You face it. I face it. Eternity unto the ages of the ages. The time for decision is now. Today is the day of salvation. It is the accepted time. So I invite you as the apostles did, as our Lord did, "Come unto Me all ye who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Trust the promise of our Lord. Come to Him. Rest upon the blood that was shed and know the happiness and joy of sins forgiven. May God in His grace make that your experience for Jesus' sake.

Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] We thank Thee Lord for the Word of God and we thank Thee for the great passages in which the love of God is set forth and His atoning work, but Lord we also thank Thee for the warnings and admonitions designed also to bring us to the knowledge of Him whom to know is life eternal. Lord, touch hearts in our meeting and others, in the hearts of others who hear this message over the radio.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.