Preparing for Eternity

11/7/04

Introduction:
(The idea for this sermon came from the tract: “A Word on Preparedness,” put out by The LeTourneau Evangelistic Center)

I want to talk to you this morning about being prepared. . . . being prepared for eternity.

Are you prepared for eternity?

Cervantes said, “Forewarned, forearmed; to be prepared is half the victory.”

When it comes to eternity. . . being prepared is all the victory.

Many people think they’ll wing it when it comes to eternity:
- they’ll die and see what lies beyond, then make their decisions. . . then deal with whatever comes.

- but they’ll be horrified to discover that by then it will be far too late.

I want to give you three reasons why you need to be prepared to step into eternity at a moment’s notice.

And then in the end, I want to show you how to be prepared.

Pray-
- remind God that He has a heart for people.
- that He came and died for the lost.
- that He calls us to prepare for eternity.
- so bless the preaching of Your Word.
- may the Spirit lead, and each of us follow.

Three reasons to prepare for eternity:

I. God truly does exist.

One of the most common ways that people ignore preparing for eternity is by saying that God doesn’t exist.

If God doesn’t exist, then you won’t have to give an account to Him, and you can live any way that you want.

If there is no God. . . there is no eternity. . . so get the most out of life. . . and don’t worry about the future.
Turn over to Psalm 14.

We’re going to see two kinds of atheists:

Read Psalm 14:1-3

A. The intellectual atheist.

The intellectual atheist says with his mouth, “there is no God.”
- he’s the guy that says, “God didn’t make mankind. . . we just involved. . . there is no God.”

-the intellectual atheist says, “God has no place in our nation. . . there is no God.”

-“God can’t tell me that someone’s lifestyle is wrong, or that committing an abortion is wrong. . . there is no God.”

-“God can’t tell me there’s no hell and punishment for sin, after all, there is no God.”

And the irony of it all is that while man is crying out, “there is no God,” where’s God?
- verse 2- God is looking down from heaven, watching, and listening to the atheist.

-you can’t get away from God!

And what’s more. . . the atheist knows it.

There are a lot of atheists:
- an atheist is someone who says he doesn’t believe in God.

- that’s a lie.

- everyone knows in their heart of hearts that there’s a God.

- Romans 1 tells us that.

There have been a lot of atheists in our world. . . but there has never been an honest atheist!!!

Illustration:
- Years ago there was a pharmacist who denied the existence of God.

- He flat out told a group of Christians that there is no God.

- Some time later, he filled a prescription for a little girl.

- The little girl left the medicine shop with the medicine.
-For some reason the pharmacist took another look at the prescription, and found that he’d made a deadly mistake.

-he knew he’d be responsible for the death of an innocent patient.

-He didn’t know the girl, and didn’t know how to get ahold of her.

-then and there, the man who denied the existence of God, dropped to his knees and called out to God, “God, keep her from taking that medicine!”

-while he was waiting and worrying, the little girl came in crying. She said, “I fell and broke the bottle, and all the medicine ran out, would you please fill it again?”

-imagine the relief of that pharmacist.

-as he filled the prescription, he said, “There is a God.”

Even the most primitive cultures in the world have an innate knowledge that there is a God.

Back in the 1920s there was a famous anthropologist who said that she’d found a culture in the Pacific that had no consciousness of God whatsoever. Her findings were widely used as proof that human beings have no natural concept of God, but that it came as a result of being taught about a God. Years later however, after the anthropologist was dead, evidence surfaced that she’d doctored her reports.

Nelson Price has written a book entitled Emmanuel Factor.

-in that book he tells about a friend of his who runs a good sized trucking company.

-when this company hires new employees, it runs them through a polygraph test.

-One of the questions is, “Do you believe there is a God?”

-The operator of the test has provided a sworn affidavit that in every instance when a professing atheist answered, “no, there is no God,” the test showed the person was lying. (in Standing for Truth and Light, Adrian Rogers, p. 85)

It only proves what Romans 1 says that everyone knows there is a God. . . they just choose to deny it.

And if everyone knows there is a God. . . what does that mean?

-it means there is an eternity. . . and there is a life beyond. . . and we need to prepare for that life.

That’s one kind of atheist. . . and intellectual atheist.

-he says, “there is no God.”
But then there’s the second kind of an atheist:

**B. The lifestyle atheist.**

The intellectual atheist says with his **life**，“there is no God.”

He live as if there is no God.

 Probably none of us this morning are intellectual atheists.

By far, the most common atheist in our day is the lifestyle atheist.

You can read about him in our passage in Psalm 14.

1. He is morally corrupt (vs. 3)

He does what feels good at the moment.

2. He turns away from living like he knows God wants him to live. (vs. 3)

If you are living in a lifestyle of sin, do you realize what you are saying?

-in essence you are saying that there is no God.

-you are saying that you don’t have to answer to Him.

-you can disobey Him, and it really doesn’t matter.

So really we need to ask ourselves, “do I say with my mouth that there is a God, and yet live as if there is no God?”

Live however you please?

*The person who is living however they please, is not ready for eternity... whether they call themselves a Christian or not.*

So why prepare for eternity?

-because there is a God. . . He truly exists.

**II. One day you will meet God.**

Not only is God real, but one day you will have the experience of meeting Him face to face.

-that is where you will give an account for how you lived.

It’s our nature to resist that thought, push it out of our minds. . . . not think about it.

-but it’s true.

Romans 14:10, 12 says that,
“we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God,” and “each one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

One day, both Christians and non-Christians will stand before God.
- this God that we’ve all heard about.
- each of us will see Him. . .and will have a one on one time where He assesses our lives.

To see what that day is going to be like for the non-Christian, turn over to Revelation 20:11-15.

Read Revelation 20:11-15.

B. The setting: Before a great white throne

What you’ve just heard read to you is the final sentencing of those who reject, or neglect to receive Christ as their Savior while in this life.

This is the last courtroom scene to ever take place in world history.
- it’s the last trial to ever be conducted.
  (John MacArthur, Revelation 12-22)

- and it’s the largest, a global scale.

And it’s also the most terrifying.

All of the unsaved, the people who were too busy to receive Christ, having too good of a time, too selfish to give their life to Christ, too proud to receive Christ, too stubborn, all of them will be resurrected from the dead to be sentenced.

- people who died in car accidents, people who died in the ocean, whose bodies are brought up from the depths of the water.

- people who died in explosions, people who died in the flood.

- they’ll be there.

- May it never be that anyone in this room will have rejected Christ, and end up before that white throne.

There will be dead kings of the past, dead world rulers that you’ve read about in the history books, there will be the rich, and the poor.

- there will be people who lived lives of luxury and ease.

- there will also be people who lived lives of sorrow, and tragedy, and suffering.
-all of the unsaved people, of all time will be there. . . even those who are dying today
who reject Jesus as their Savior.

-on that day, there will be murderers, but there will also be people who swear up and
down that they believed in God.

-there will be good people there, so good they never saw that they were bad enough to
need Jesus, just like the rest of humanity.

-there will be people there who think God isn’t fair.

-but everyone of them will be there because of one thing: sin

Some will have sinned in what we’d call big ways:
- Hitler, Stalin

Some will have sinned in what we’d call little ways:
- pettiness, selfishness, spitefulness, unloving, out for pleasure.

But the trial will begin.

B. The sentence

Books will be opened. . . what books? (vs. 12)
-one book will be the book of your deeds.

-you see, the person without Christ continues his life of immorality, his life of dishonesty,
his life of profanity, his life of hidden secret sins, and thinks, “hey, I’m getting by with it,
God doesn’t see. . . and if He does see, He doesn’t care!”

-but before the White Throne, he’ll see that while he was turning from God, all of those
deeds were being silently written one by one in the book of deeds.

-the adultery that no one was supposed to have known about? It’s in there.

-the thoughts of adultery. . . only in the mind. . . there in the book.

-the lie that no one caught onto. . . it’s there. . . black and white.

-the worship of some false religion, or material things. . . the endless pursuit of wealth as
a god. . . it’s there.

-the petty theft. . . even the little things that didn’t really seem to matter. . . pilfering things
from work. . . nobody would miss it. Someone did miss it. . . it’s in the book.

-the cheating. . . it’s all there in vivid memory.
-theirs is nothing that anyone can say in their defense. . .that’s their life, written in that book. . . no denying it.

What does that book say about your life?
-what deeds are recorded there?

Luke 8:17 says:
“For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light.”

God is no fool. . . He’s watching.

The only fool is the one who thinks God isn’t watching.

The reason we don’t receive God’s judgment immediately for what we do is that God is gracious. . . He wants to warn us about our lives, about our sins.

He wants to tell us ahead of time that we need a Savior. . . because our sins are too many to erase on our own.

Some people hate God for warning them. . . some just ignore His warnings. . . and these are the ones who will invariably end up meeting God in front of the White Throne.

That’s a place that I don’t want to be.
-but let me tell you something. . . I’ve got enough of my own sin to put me there!!!

-and so do you!!

That’s the second reason you need to be prepared for eternity:
-not only does God truly exist. . . one day we’ll meet Him.

-will we be prepared?

-that is a question that only we can answer for ourselves.

III. If you’re not prepared to meet Him, you’ll suffer unending loss.

I’m not talking about a loss that is manageable either.

This is complete and total pain and destruction.

Read verse 15.

You know. . . I’m not sure that I started out planning for this sermon to be a grim sermon.
-but the more I researched the more I realized how grim is the eternity of a person who isn’t prepared.

At that White Throne, there is none of the mercy of God.

-if you stand in that final trial. . . you can kiss the mercy of God good-bye.

-you’ve known His mercy in this life. . . but you’ve let Satan twist your thinking to believe there is no God, or that God isn’t fair, or that God has no right to tell you what to do.

It will be His justice. . . the penalty for sin poured out.

Don’t go through life unprepared for eternity!!

The time for preparation is now!!

SO HOW CAN YOU BE PREPARED FOR ETERNITY?

1. Admit that what is written in the book of deeds about you is true, and justly qualifies you for God’s wrath.

I’ve never met anyone who had the audacity to say, “I’ve never sinned.”

But I’ve met a lot of people who thought their sin wasn’t all that bad. . . surely not bad enough to qualify them for God’s wrath.

“That wouldn’t be fair of God. . . after all, I’m just human. . . life is hard. . . surely God can overlook a few mess ups.”

That is Satan’s lie. . . and if you go on believing it, you will stand before God at the White Throne.

Think about your life:
   -what are the secrets?
   
   -what are the sins?
   
   -what is written in black and white. . . saying, “these are the deeds of your life?”

Those are the things that tell you that you need a Savior!!

2. Admit that you are helpless to do anything to avert God’s wrath.
If you accept the first statement, that you qualify for God’s wrath. . . you might think, “well listen, I’ll just be really good from now on. . . I won’t go out with the guys anymore. . . I’ll break up with that guy. . . I’ll never lie again.”

Not good enough!!

“Okay, I’ll pray and read my Bible every day.”

Not good enough.

The Bible says that all of our:

“righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;”

Isa. 64:6

Trying to erase our sins is like taking a muddy old rag and wiping away at something you wrote in permanent marker.

There is only one thing that can remove that sin. . . and that’s the blood of Christ.

Scripture says in 1 John 1:7 that the blood of Christ, “cleanseth us from all unrighteousness.”

You and I are helpless to do anything on our own to avert God’s wrath.

3. **Accept the only way that God has given to be prepared for eternity.**

Do you know what that way is?

- that way is **Jesus**

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, the life, no man comes to the Father, but by Me.” (Jn. 14:6)

-Jesus is the only preparation you have for eternity. . . you need to embrace Him as your Savior.

- some people think you prepare for eternity by strapping on bombs and blowing yourself up on a crowded street corner.

- others think you prepare for eternity by repeating a lot of prayers and living a good clean, committed life.

- a lot of people don’t think you can prepare for eternity.

You know what the Bible says?

- the Bible says that Jesus has already made all the preparations.

- you simply need to trust that what He did on the cross was for you. . . and that you need what He did for you. . . and that what He did for you was enough.
Conclusion:

So may I ask you this morning?

Are you prepared?

Prepared for eternity?

If you’re not . . . Jesus welcomes you to come to Him.
   -His arms are wide open.
   -He’s made all the arrangements to cleanse you of sin.
   -He’s done everything necessary avert God’s wrath.
   -will you come to Jesus . . . will you accept Him as your Savior?

When William Carey was about to die, he ordered to have put on his tombstone these words:-
   “A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
     On Christ’s kind arms I fall,
     He is my strength, my righteousness,
     My Jesus, and my all.”

May those be your words today.

Let’s pray:
   -lead in a prayer if necessary.
   -ask for show of hands.

While heads are bowed and eyes closed:

You say, “well Shawn, this has been a good sermon for unbelievers.” My sins have been washed by Christ’s blood, I am prepared for eternity, what do I take home with me today?

   1. Never forget how guilty you are . . . but how forgiven you are!!

There is nothing like seeing your sin under the blood of Christ!

There is nothing like knowing that if you’re heart stopped pumping in the next second, you’re ready.

Never lose that joy.

   2. Tell everybody about it.
Many of the people you know aren’t prepared.

So you tell them. . . . give them a tract, get to know them, care about them, pray for their salvation, then tell them.

If you feel like you can’t tell them yourself. . . then at least get a copy of this tape and give it to them.

Ask them to listen to it, and then follow up with what they thought.

If you’re prepared for eternity, then you need to be about helping others prepare as well.