

Rightly Evaluating

by R. Edward Miller

The sermon emphasizes the importance of evaluating one's life and spiritual journey across four levels of existence and prayer, striving for future rewards and deeper commitment to God.

Duration: 1:16:54

Scripture: Exodus 26:33

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of getting acquainted with God and knowing Him on a deeper level. He emphasizes the need for genuine connection and communication with God, comparing it to getting to know someone personally. The speaker also mentions the four major levels in human life on earth: below poverty level, poverty level, middle class, and rich folk. He acknowledges that different people value future rewards differently, but ultimately, knowing God and having a relationship with Him is the key to eternal life. The sermon references various scriptures, including Revelation 4:8 and John 17:3, to support the message.

Transcript

I want to speak on four levels, four levels. Several times mentioned in scripture. We'll go into them.

We'll have several scriptures this morning. There are four major levels in human life on earth. There's what we call below poverty level.

Then there's poverty level. Then there's middle class. Then there's rich folk.

I don't know which level I should address you in but I can guess. Some people, some people such as lawyers, doctors, professional men, accountants, all kinds of people like that, they value future rewards. They say it's worth all the sweat, all the study, all the grind.

All the struggle now to have a whole lifetime of rewards. Personally, in most cases, I do not grudge a doctor his charges, his honorariums. He spent almost ten years getting to a place he could do that.

Instead of grudging him, you could have done it yourself. I have another question about hospitals and some other things. But nevertheless, and I will do my best not to pay them anything by staying home.

But I do not grudge them because they earned it, didn't they? They took the hard, long years of work to get there. And many of them don't get very high even after all that work. But they have fought for it.

They have struggled for it. They have striven for it. They have pressed onward overcoming discouragement and overcoming difficulties of all kinds to get to that place.

They value future rewards. Then there's other people that don't. And they're the ones that get jealous and envious and angry at those that do.

Why should they be so rich? Why should they be so high paid? We don't get anything. Well, you don't deserve it either. They have earned it.

Because when they were young people, instead of dropping out or playing around or fooling around or half studying and getting out of school as quick as they could because they wanted to quick get a job and quick get a car and quick do this and quick do that and quick get married and quick get in trouble, they threw out any value of future rewards. There are those that didn't do that. They worked hard.

They got to that place. But there are those that do do that. Therefore, there is an evaluation that we have to take place.

Am I going to be one of those that in time to come in my life, I will not be in those that are in poverty level or below poverty level at least as far as I can have any control over. I mean no one can control everything. There's sicknesses that come in.

There's accidents. All kinds of things can happen. But as far as we know and as far as we're able to, we evaluate the future.

That's one thing Jesus taught very much. He said don't lay up treasures for yourself here. Lay up treasures for yourself in heaven, didn't he? He so much valued the future and the rewards of the future.

So much so he disdained, he discounted everything in this life as any particular value. He said the value, the valuable things are things to come. That's where we need to do the striving, the working to get to that place.

And it's true in heaven everybody's going to be happy. Regardless of where your stage is, where your accomplishments are, everyone's going to be happy. But that doesn't say too much.

You can have a lovely Christmas feast and everything's there. You can have your plum pudding. You in South Africa and we'll have our mince pie or whatever happens to be up here.

And I don't know what you folks in China, do you have some kind of a Christmas feast? Or just to have a regular everyday banquet? But while you're eating that lovely feast, you can have a little baby just as happy as can be with a bottle. And doesn't envy your feast at all. Is that right? Everybody's happy.

But there's a lot of difference, isn't there? Everybody's happy, but there's a lot of difference. Paul in Philippians 3, 13 said, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do. For getting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards a mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I'm not going into what the high calling of God in Christ Jesus is. In fact, I'm writing a book on it right now. But the thing is, that's not what Richard is at this moment.

But it was a fact that he had set himself to evaluate and consider that is what's important. That's what's ahead. He says, I count what's behind as done.

It is so unimportant. It is all I have known. I count it all nothing that I might know Christ and be found in Him.

And then he says he's an apostle now. He's already reached apostleship. But he says, that's not the high calling.

We think apostleship, ooh, that's high calling. No, he says, that isn't the high calling. I haven't attained it yet.

He says, I'm pressing towards a mark. He was making the effort, even at that stage in his life, having attained apostleship, having attained a ministry, having attained power, having attained the realm of moving into the prophets, prophetics, and the spirituals. He said, I haven't attained yet.

That isn't where I want to go. That isn't what I hold as value. I want to have the high calling, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

In other words, there's something far beyond. And Paul was able to see it, and understand it, and evaluate it, and say, it's worth it. I'm not stopping here.

I read about Jesus when He came to pass, when He was to be offered up, received up in Luke 9.51. He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem. Why? To the cross. Why the cross? Well, I read something else in Hebrews, in chapter 12.

For the joy that was set before Him. Isn't that right? For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross, despised the shame, because there was something set before Him. He said, it was worth it.

He set His face to go to Jerusalem. He says, nothing's going to stop me, not even the sufferings of the cross, because there's a prize I want to attain. Those are wise people.

Remember, the first night of this conference, Robert spoke on the wise men. The wise men are those that can evaluate the future, and say, that which went to the head is worth going through what I have to go through to get there. The others say, it isn't worth it.

Why should I slave in a school? Why should I slave in a university? Why should I slave and hardly have enough to eat? Why should I go without sleep for days without end, trying to learn to be a doctor? It's not worth it. So they don't. Then when they get sick, they say, why do I have to pay a doctor so much? There has to be the evaluation.

If we're wise, we will evaluate things correctly, and we'll realize there is something, there is a prize that's worth attaining. Now, I mentioned the fact, and this is a message on four levels. First, we'll go to the levels of Christian life.

You'll find those in the Old Testament, in the book of Exodus. I'm not giving any scriptures on that portion, because there's so many scriptures. But I think your memory will help you enough to take us there.

If you remember, there were four levels. There was the camp, there was the court, there was the holy place, and the most holy place. They were all separated.

You could not walk from one to another. There were barriers. Barriers that could be crossed, but only under certain conditions could they be crossed.

Otherwise, they were not crossable. The first level was in the camp. There they had mutual fellowship.

That's what's remembered of a good Christian church. They had fellowship. They had the people around them.

They had their friends. They were in the camp. And that was their place.

Then the next step was the court. Now, the camp, in the days of Moses, there were probably close to two million people. But the court was the next step.

It was the next level. And they had to go through some things to get there. There were some consecrations, and there were some rituals they had to pass through.

And they had to be belonging to a certain family. In other words, they had to be born in, which includes regeneration. And in the court was a labor.

And we'll just give that a little label and call it sanctification. Now, they've moved beyond life in the camp. They've moved beyond life as a general, ordinary church member, a Christian, a believer.

They've gone on into another level. Now they're getting closer into the tabernacle. However, it was only one family.

Instead of the 11 families out there, 11 clans, 11 tribes, there was only one tribe in here, the Levites. They could come in here. And not all of them at a time.

They just came by turns because there wouldn't be room for them. It was so much smaller. The camp was spread out over how many acres? I have no idea.

But the court, that was much, much smaller. And there, they couldn't get in, first, without being born in, without regeneration. Second, without coming into the court, without coming through the surrenders that a Levite had to make.

He could never have any land possession. He had land, but it wasn't his. He could never own land, different things.

They had to make certain surrenders to be able to come in there. Then, there was the third position, the third level, which was the holy place. That's inside the tabernacle.

Now, it was more than just being born into a family. They had to come in through certain consecrations. They had to come in to a deeper level of consecration.

That was a priestly ministry and a priestly consecration. In fact, that is why when Uzzah moved in, he was a king, and he moved into that holy place to offer up some sacrifices of incense. He was cursed with leprosy.

And the priest, the high priest said, what are you doing in there? Get out. You do not have the consecrations of the priesthood. Don't get in here.

And he did, and he was stricken with leprosy. And he stayed in that place until the end of his life. There are restrictions.

There are limitations. There are requirements. There are prerequisites.

You can't just walk in. God has to bring you in. And those ritualistic consecrations, every one of you studied them, are very significant because they speak of spiritual operations and spiritual works in the human life as we go on in Christ.

But there is another level. There is a third level. But there's one more level.

It's the most holy place. That's the highest consecration. And there they ministered unto God.

Not only ministering unto the tabernacle, they ministered unto God. There. They had to have some very special consecrations, ritualistic, though very significant and very real in the human life.

And that was they had to have blood upon their hands, feet, and ears. That's the entrance to the mind. That's the work.

And that's their walk. It had to be cleansed. Furthermore, they had to have the holy anointing oil put upon their foot and on their hand and on their ear, which meant that the anointing, now they could hear from God through the anointing.

That means they would have anointed works, and that means they would have the anointed walk and the abiding of the anointing. Now, these were necessary to get to the highest level. There are four levels.

And each one of us is in one of those levels, like it or not. Well, there was one more level we could mention, but we won't consider that one here. And that is outside the camp.

The lepers had to go outside the camp, didn't they? Leprosy, of course, speaks of sin. But there was the camp, the court, the holy place, and the most holy place. Four levels.

And those levels represent every person that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. You are in one of those. You can't just walk between one and the other.

There were barriers. True, there were only skin barriers, tent barriers, but nevertheless, they were very strictly kept. You could only go through the gate.

You could only go through the door. You could only go through when it was proper for you to go through. And otherwise, no.

They were sealed off. Now there's another area of levels of existence, and that is in Ezekiel 47. Four levels of prayer.

Four levels of prayer. Do you want to read those scriptures to refresh your mind? He brought me out of the way to the gate northward, 47 to, led me about the way without unto the other gate by the way that looketh eastward, and behold, there ran out waters out of the right side. When the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits and brought me through the waters.

The waters were to the ankles. Again, he measured a thousand and brought me through the waters. The waters were to the knees.

Again, he measured a thousand and brought me through. The waters were to the loins. Afterwards, he measured a thousand, and it was a river that could not pass over, for the waters were risen.

Waters to swim in. A river that could not be passed over. The first level is the ankles.

That is where in our Christian life, our beginning Christian life, we are discovering prayer. It's just ankle deep, like a little one that first goes to the ocean. Oh, he gets his feet wet and it tickles him to death, but when those waves start coming in, he runs away.

He won't get much in above the ankles, and that is a great tickling. Oh, he's just thrilled with it and dances and shouts with glee, but it's just to the ankles. It's a discovery of prayer, that it is there, it is real, that it's something that we can have and something we can use and something that works.

In fact, I've had more than one pastor tell me, when he wants to get a prayer answered, he'll ask a new Christian to pray it, because at first, God will answer some prayers to let you know that it does work and is real, but then begins to apply other requirements a little bit later as the child grows up. But at first, it's just wonderful. Prayer really works.

I remember, Robert was just a little fellow, I think he was maybe nine or ten, and he wanted a horse. Well, I want to tell you something. I wasn't about to get a horse, but he wanted a horse, and we had no place to keep it, and we had no use for it and no desire for it, but he did.

He said, well, if you want a horse, you go pray for it. That gets him off my back. So he went and prayed for it, and about a week, a horse shows up, wanders in.

It's kind of a half-country place, so it had all kinds of pastures on the sides of the road and little empty lots around. So he grabbed that horse. He had it, I don't know, for how many months, three or four months, perhaps, until one day the owner came looking for it.

But by then, he was fully satisfied. God answered his prayer. I was downtown in Mar del Plata one day, and I did something so foolish, and even when I did it, I knew it was foolish.

Some man was hawking some jewelry on the side of the street, and he had a nice-looking watch, and I never do anything like that, never. I know it's all fake. So I said, well, there's a knife.

I'll get that one for Robert. He was wanting a watch. So I got it.

It wasn't very expensive, but as I left the place, I took a good look at it, and it was just the outside had stamped on it the right names and everything, and I realized the whole thing was just nothing, but I didn't pay any too much for it by a long way. And we got home, and I said, well, what a foolish thing I've done. I said, I don't know why I did it.

Look, I bought this crazy thing. He said, well, I know why you did it. I said, why? He said, Robert's been praying for one.

I think it's dangerous. Discovering prayer. How wonderful and glorious it is.

Then it goes up to needy. The man carried me through, and the water was up to my knees. Now it becomes a way of life, not something that you realize is not only real, but something you're going to have to move on into.

You're on your way. You've moved on in your Christian life and experience, and you realize that prayer has to be more than just something to play around in and tickle your ankles, but you've got to move on into it. Then it moves up to the loins at the third level.

The loins speak of fruitfulness. Now you begin to bring forth fruit in prayer. Now it becomes useful to the kingdom.

Now it's not something you're playing with, something you're working out some nice little things for yourself, something you're not using to get a horse in your backyard, but it's something that you're going to bring fruit unto God. You're going to join Him in His prayers. It's going to be fruitful.

It's going to be something that's useful. It's wonderful when a person begins to get into that level of prayer, and their prayers become meaningful. They pray with intelligence.

They pray with an intimacy, with a love of their heart for God. It's a very beautiful place. Good to God that more people entered into it and realized that prayer is not just to get things to tickle my fancy.

Prayer is not just to discover that there's some things we do as we're Christians, but it's something that we use for God to bring forth fruit into the kingdom. Then there's a fourth level, and that is swimming. That's moving on into a new level in prayer, and I want you to notice something.

When you're swimming, you do not have ground control. Your feet are not on the ground. You are completely buoyed up into the water.

When you're on the ground, you have control. You can direct yourself. You can turn easy.

You can stop. You can move. You can back up, but when your feet are off, then you have to swim around, don't you? It's a whole different ballgame.

In other words, when we move into that level, we become born by the spirit. These are prayers in the spirit, as Paul says, praying in the spirit. Then we're not in control.

Then it's not the earth that's controlling. It's the waters that are controlling. They are the ones now lifting you up.

They are the ones controlling you. You are the ones that you are, in swimming, you have to cooperate and use the waters and use them wisely, or it will be too sad. We've moved into another level.

Move into a level of intercession where the spirit prays through you with groaning which cannot be uttered. You're not praying to him now. He's praying through you.

It's a different level. It's very, very effective. In fact, true intercession, you might say this, every prayer is answered.

John 3.22, John says, everything we ask of God, we receive. But because you're not in control, it's not ground control, it's water control, therefore, they're not your prayers. You know what I mean? They're

prayers that he prays through you.

When you move into that level, it's a whole different level. I remember when I first moved into that place and God was showing me that I couldn't bring my prayer to that place. It had to be his prayers.

If he prayed it and he wanted me to join in his prayer for that, it was wonderful and it was very effective. I've seen so many prayers answered but I couldn't be the one that initiated it. I couldn't be the one that says, oh, I'm going to intercede for this.

Fortunately, that's true. I'll say fortunately because I know a certain pastor in New York. He visits in Argentina and he was in such intercessory prayer.

He rolled on the floor and groaned and cried and wepted hours at a time and this went on for several months, perhaps 18 months more or less. And I was in his home in New York and I discovered what this tremendous intercession was for so his wife could die and he could marry another woman. Well, his wife, she lived a long time.

God didn't answer that prayer. He tried to take it in there but I tell you, if you're still on the ground, you're not in swimming water. If you're still in control, that's not the place.

It's when he gets in control, then things change. I remember when I was first being moved into this and I didn't have any other wisdom but I think I got a little bit later, quite a bit later. We had a conference in Buenos Aires, it was just outside of Buenos Aires in a city called City Bell and to speak at our conference, we had a missionary and his wife from Chile.

They were lovely people and they stayed in our home and that morning, she had a little upset, physical upset and she asked me to pray for her and very truly but very unwisely, I said, well, I'd be glad to if the Lord gives that to me to pray for that. Whoa, what a reaction. What do you mean if God gives you to pray for her? I said, well, if he gives that prayer, I'll pray it.

Of course, I knew it would be answered and she said, you mean you can't pray for me without some special word from God? I said, that's about right. Oh, she was so angry, she left her breakfast and stormed off to her room and her husband, trying to make peace, tried to get me to back up but I'd already spoken a true word and I couldn't back down on it and I tried to smooth it over but it was a pretty rough deal. It was time to go to morning service.

I wasn't sure she would go. She was pretty angry but at the last minute, she hadn't even combed her hair, she had on a lot of curlers and had a bandana tied around it and she went to the service. Well, God moved in a glorious way in that service and there was about seven hours or nine hours, I guess it was and the Spirit of God moved in so tremendously in that conference that people stood in line waiting to take the microphone and confess their sins and the Holy Spirit did a work of real cleansing that day and I looked up and she was in that line, curlers and all and then she gave her confession, mentioned her prides and so on and so forth but that night, the Lord called for healing and she was not in the line.

So after a while, I went to her, I said, why aren't you in the line? You wanted healing this morning. She says, I'm not worthy. I'm not worthy.

I said, well, God's going to heal you anyway and he did. We're never worthy but there was a truth. I just didn't get it out the right way.

That's all because we can pray for one another. It's the fact we can't take on a prayer and get it through and get it answered. You know what I mean? There is a difference but we can pray for everybody and pray for anybody because those are petitionary prayers.

That isn't talking about carrying prayer into that depth but there is that level where we're no longer it's our prayer but His. Then I want to go on. There are four levels of relationship.

You'll find this in the Songs of Solomon. Chapter 6, verse 8 and 9. There are three score queens, four score concubines, virgins without number. My dove, my undefiled is but one.

She is the only one of her mother. She is the choice one of her that bear her. The daughter saw her and blessed her.

Yes, the queens and the concubines and they praised her. Then it goes on to say a little bit about her. Verse 10, Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners? That's quite a bride.

Beautiful and terrible. At least you're fair-worn. Damsels without number, maidens without number, they got into the palace but they were not pleasing enough.

They had no rights. They were just stuck there in the harem with a lot of other ones. They had no place in the scheme of things.

They had no hierarchy at all. They were just servant girls in the harem. That's all they had.

They had no rights, no conjugal rights. They had no place at all. They had no place with the king.

But there were a lot of them. There were very many without number, just a number list, a great number of them. We'll go into that a little bit later but I want you to notice something as we go on through these that the lower levels are much larger, much more numerous and the higher the levels go, the less the people are.

That's true even in Israel. We mentioned the human life. There's a lot more people that are servants than there are that are doctors and there are professional men.

Those are much fewer in number. The poverty level people or below, they are a great number, aren't they? Because there are not those that will evaluate the future and plan for it and work for it. Then there were 70 concubines.

They were pleasing but their rights, their conjugal rights were very temporary and they were lucky if they had any at all. These concubines were alliances usually, local alliances in which the tribes, I mean the leaders of the tribe or the higher families, they had one of their daughters in the king and that means they had a way to get a word to the king. They had a way to make an appeal to the king and so it was a nice place but it was still a very low place.

They had no rights. Then the next step, the next level, the fourth and third level was the queens. They were alliances made with other nations.

They had an important place. They did have conjugal rights. They did have rights in the palace.

They did have entrance to the king and through them they were like ambassadors. They were relating always to their own country and bring it back and forth. In fact, Solomon, if you remember, built several temples for the different queens he had in his term.

But then there's a fourth level. There's one, just one, the bride, the dove, the undefiled, the only one and she is blessed and praised and with full right to come in any time like Esther. She could come in and she did come in even when she wasn't invited in.

She took the risk but he received her graciously. Those are levels of relationship. There are, if you remember, Jesus told a story of the five wise and foolish virgins.

Behold, the bridegroom cometh. Now, they were not the bride. The bride waited in her home.

They were waiting as a procession with the bridegroom and his friends passed by, picked up these friends of the bride, took them all in to the wedding supper. They were not the bride. The bride was the only one.

She was the one. Rebecca, if you remember, when she went up with Eliezer on the camels to Isaac, she took her nurses, she took her maids. They all went up there together but when they got there, they didn't go to the tent with Isaac, just Rebecca.

There is that relationship, that bridal relationship, that relationship with Christ. We are married to Christ that we might bring forth fruit unto God. We read in Romans 7. He calls himself the bridegroom.

There is that intimate, wonderful, lovely, love relationship with Jesus Christ. There is that relationship. God has, he himself has chosen his bride out from the church.

She will have with her her friends. She will have with her her maid servants and so on. But they are not the bride.

The church itself, the entire church is not the bride of Christ. But the bride of Christ is in the church. But they are those who have that relationship.

They are those that love his appearing. They are those that have built and taken time to build that relationship because it takes time to build any relationship. In Argentina, when a young man and a young woman begin to, to courting days, we call it their talking time.

We say, *Están hablando*, they are talking. And there is that talking time. What is that talking time? Why is it that she and he can talk and talk and talk and talk for an hour or two or three and it just like it slips by so quickly.

What in the world they are talking about? Maybe if you asked them they wouldn't know. What is it? It's getting acquainted, isn't it? It's getting acquainted no more than once in college and between classes or after classes before we had to leave or earlier in the morning and we'd get there a little bit early and we'd stand out there and we'd stand on one foot and talk and on the other foot and talk and on the other foot and talk. I don't remember what we were talking about but it was a lot of fun talking.

But what you're really doing is getting to know a person. Jesus said, this is life eternal that you know God, that you know Jesus Christ, His Son. It takes time and it takes talking time.

It takes opening up your heart. What they will do when they're in that talking time, they'll bring out some secrets, something no one else knows and they'll just kind of timidly present it and watch to see how it is received. If a person laughs or makes fun or is angry, close up.

No more said. Too much of that and the talking time ends and nothing more. But if it's well received, then you bring out another little secret and then another little secret and then another little exposition of yourself.

Getting acquainted. Finding out who this person is beyond what our eyes can see. Finding out what's inside.

Who this person really is. Is the person that I feel I'm truly matched with. I can truly live with this one and enjoy it.

I can look at this person over the breakfast table every morning and not get so weary I want to kick it out. One man had to make a choice. There were two young ladies.

They were very lovely young ladies but one of them wasn't very pretty but she had a beautiful voice. Oh, she had a voice like an angel. The other one's very beautiful but she couldn't sing.

So he chose the voice. He thought that voice is so beautiful. And they got married.

And the next morning he woke up and looked at her and he said, Honey, please wake up and sing. There is the bridal relationship but it takes time. It takes time and much talking time.

It means you not only talk but you listen. You know, I've been many places. I've even talked with pastors that had never once read the Bible through once from cover to cover.

They'd never done any listening to any account. They just hung up sermons and a few things like that and a few well-known passages and things they had learned by repetition and that's all. We have to sit and listen.

We have to take time to listen. This is his letter to us. My daughter, many of you know, and her husband never met until 10 days before they were married.

But they had a lot of letters. They had a lot of letters. And at first, those letters were lovely letters and my daughter read them to us.

Then after a while she stopped reading them. But I'll tell you one thing, she read them all and did something else more than once. This is God's letter to us.

This is God's love letter to us. This is God showing us himself. Do we listen? Do we take time to hear what he's saying? Are we one of those that says this is the man I want, this is the love I want, this is the love of my heart, I want to be one of his.

I want to have that intimate relationship. I want to be able to hear when he speaks. Well, try listening because it's something we develop.

It's something we have to develop. I think I've read this book, oh, I think more than 50 times. It's a wonderful book.

It always has new things in it. You read it over and over and over. Listen.

Don't you do all the talking. But you do your talking too. David said quite a few things to God.

Some of them weren't all that polite. But he was being honest and being himself. And God has said to us, he said I want you to speak truth to me.

He loves truth. Even if it's not very nice sounding, that's all, he knows it. I mean not bringing any surprises on God.

But he wants to hear truth. And he wants to hear us say it to him. To have that confidence that he'll love me enough.

That he'll know all about me and still go on loving me. And that's what a real friend is, isn't it? A friend can really know you and not hate you. A friend can really know you and not get absolutely sick and tired of you because, oh, I didn't know they were that way.

Oh, I didn't know they were that way. Well, that's not much of a friend. A friend will know you and still like you.

Still be a friend. And God says, I don't want to call you disciples, servants. I want to call you friends.

I want us to begin a friendship. Friendship is a basis, a good basis for courtship. I want to be a friend.

I want to get to know you. I want to come into that relationship where we can begin to love one another. I've had so many Christians tell me, well, I try to love God, but I can't love God.

I can't generate any love for God. Of course not. Love has to be built.

Love has to grow. Love has to be developed. It just doesn't happen.

An attraction, a chemical attraction can happen. We call it chemistry. But that's all.

Love doesn't. In fact, there is a saying that you don't love your husband or your wife until after you've been married two years. It's something that develops.

The more you know that person, you say, yes, this person really attracts me. This person is one that is a blessing. It's a help to my life.

That's why we're called helpmates. This one lifts me up instead of puts me down. I used to tell young people when we were in Bible school days, make fun of me about their boyfriends or their girlfriends.

I said, well, there's one thing you can go by. Does this relationship increase your relationship with God, or does it hinder it and your relationship with God degenerates? If it degenerates, you know that's not the person for you. If it helps it, increases it, then that's the person for you.

You can go on with that one. That's a real good sign. And I'd watch, and I'd see that if I saw a degeneration appear, then I'd try to discourage them.

Or just the opposite. Because, you see, we are to help one another. And this person, that's a help to me.

Their faith helps my faith. Their understanding helps my understanding. Their encouragement helps me, encourages me.

Hopefully it's just reversed. And we develop that relationship. Relationships are developed.

They don't just happen. They have to develop as we go on. And so there's this relationship.

Now, there's another four levels. There's four levels in the resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 39.

All flesh is not the same flesh. There is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. Men, beasts, fish, and birds.

There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars. For one star differs from another star in glory. Verse 42.

So also is the resurrection. Did you see that? So also is the resurrection of the dead. Born in corruption, raised in incorruption.

Men, beasts, fish, and birds. What a difference there is between one and the other. What a difference.

Four levels. There is that fish level. Now, a fish is happy if it doesn't have any enemies around.

It just likes to stay in that water and just happy as can be. Never looks for anything more, never asks for anything more, never seeks anything more. Stay there the rest of its life.

There is the fish level. You'll find them in any church. They sit there happy to be a Christian, happy to be a member of the church, and there they are from one day to the next, from one week to the next, one month to the next, one year to the next.

So also is the resurrection. Wait a minute. We're talking about heaven.

We're talking about over there also, aren't we? Those that never progressed, never sought anything, never wanted anything, just happy to stay alive. Paul calls it, he says there, save those by fire. When you come to a fire, all you've got is the clothes on you if you're lucky, and everything else is burned out.

They're saved, but that's all. Nothing built, nothing prepared, nothing done. That's all they have.

And then there's the, then there's the, well, the birds. You've heard about bird brains, haven't you? They're a more glorious creature, some of them very beautiful, but they certainly aren't very intelligent. Don't try to train birds very much, do you? They're very limited creatures.

And there are those, never progressed. They're lovely, they're lovely people, but they don't seem to have much interest in things of God. They don't seem to have much ability to even understand or receive the things of God.

A bird is untrainable. You just can't get them beyond a certain point, and they can have lovely lives, and that's it. This is the resurrection.

Where they are, that's going to be what they are. There's such a difference. In heaven, there's going to be tremendous differences.

And then there's the animals. They're trainable, and there are different levels of animals, of course. And they develop, and some of them be pretty smart.

And then there's the man. And what a vast difference between a man and a fish. What a vast difference.

So also is the resurrection. No wonder Paul said, I press towards the mark. I'm not staying here.

I'm not staying here. I'm not staying at this poverty level. As I travel to churches after churches after churches, one thing has struck me, one thing I've wept over, and anything else, is the poverty.

The absolute poverty that I see as I step into churches. The poverty of their faith. The poverty of their experience.

The poverty of their understanding. The poverty of their love. And all you can do, as Paul said, I thought I could give you meat, but I find you're so kind, I can only give you milk.

You're just babies. They've not developed. They've not grown on.

They have not increased. They just sat there and sat there. Well, babies will be happy in heaven.

But I don't want, I want more than a bottle in heaven, when all the riches of Christ are for us. Though we might know the riches of his inheritance, that the spirit of wisdom and revelation, Paul cried out for the Christian church, that they might know through revelation the riches of his inheritance in the saints. So also is the resurrection.

Such a difference. Such a difference. And yet, they'll be happy.

There'll be no unhappy people in heaven. But we're called. We're called.

We have some songs we sing. Lord, lift me up to higher ground. We have another one we sing.

Zion is calling to a higher place of praise. Let's don't stay here. Let's move on.

There are four levels of glory. Revelation 7, 9. Who are they? These are those who've washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. These will be a great, great number.

A number that no man could count. No man could number. It was numberless.

Those were all there singing the songs of God. Dressed in white robes, palms on their hands. There they were before the Lord.

They had got there. They'd arrived. They'd held their faith.

And I tell you, it's something just to arise. It's something just to arise, to hold faith in spite of all the devil control at you. That's the one thing, the fight of faith, the battle of faith.

Just hold fast that confidence firm until the end, Paul said, because there is everything the enemy will try to do to get that faith away from you. Paul said at the end of his life, I have kept the faith. He didn't say I won a great victory.

He didn't say I saved so many souls. I started so many churches. I planted churches in so many countries.

He said, I kept the faith. And these there had kept the faith. Whatever else they didn't have, they did have that.

And that's a biggie, because the smallest person in heaven is 10,000 times times 10,000 greater and more wonderful than the highest, most accomplished man in heaven. Isn't that right? They've kept the faith. Oh, it isn't just a nothing, because the enemy has fought every one of you.

He fights every one of us. He fights us physically with sicknesses, and sometimes sicknesses he'll never get over. He'll fight with disease.

He'll fight with accidents. He'll fight with troubles of all kinds, with neighbor troubles, with family problems, every way he can to get that faith away from you. But these were there.

They had arrived. Their battles were over. They'd gone through that pearly gates and heard it close behind them, and the devil was shut out forever.

Hallelujah. Oh, it's true, they weren't the higher levels, but I tell you, the low level up there is wonderful. And if I don't get any more, I'll be glad to get that one.

How about it? I'm looking for more. I'm going to keep trying for more. I don't know how much I've attained.

There's a lot I haven't attained. But one thing I know, I'll be sure glad to get there. I'll be glad to hear that quick as the gate closes behind me.

Will you? Yeah, that will be wonderful. These are they that have voiced the robes in the blood of the land. These are the redeemed.

These are those that can sing the songs of Zion, sing the songs of God. They are wonderful. And the very fact that they were all there, and there was a big number, big number, that no man could number.

No man could number. That's a big number, isn't it? You know, I've been to many churches in many countries, many cities, and you know, I know just a little bit that it's a big number. But that doesn't count all the other people that have gone on before, and that doesn't count all the children and the babies that have died and gone on, does it? That doesn't count a lot of things.

When we get there, we're going to be amazed. We're going to be amazed at the number of the redeemed of the Lord. And let me suggest something before we go any further.

Yes, they're in the first level, but remember, there's growth in heaven. We don't have to stay where we are. We move on.

We move on. He's going to bring everyone up higher and higher and higher. And I just mentioned four levels, but I tell you there's a lot of levels in the heavenly kingdom.

There's a lot of them, and we'll be going from one to another. But this is the starting level. Then we go to the next level, 144,000.

And incidentally, let me just stop here to mention something, and that is the numbers in the book of Revelations are not literal. They are not literal numbers. They are representative numbers.

For instance, when the 24 elders and the four living ones fell before the throne and sang a song, we'll read it after a while, they said, Thou hast redeemed us unto our God from every tribe and nation and kindred and people. Is that right? Isn't that more than 24? Isn't that more than four? There's a lot of tribes and tongues, aren't there? So they're just representative numbers. The 144,000, verse 1 of chapter 14.

And I looked, and lo, a lamb stood on Mount Sinai, and with him 144,000, having his father's name written in their forehead. And he sung, as it were, a new song before the throne and before the four beasts and the elders. And no man could learn that song but the 144,000 which redeemed from the earth.

These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were the redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.

Not defiled is an interesting statement there. Not defiled with women. Remember, women speak of the church, doesn't it, in Scripture.

In other words, they weren't mixed up with a half a dozen churches. They weren't fouled up with trying to mix their religions. A lot of people do that, believe it or not.

They try to mix their religion and bring two of them together or three of them together. In fact, the Catholic Church does much of that. I've seen it in South America.

They'll adopt the religion of the place, wherever they are, and take their gods and their goddesses and things right into the church. These are they that are not defiled with women. But this is 144,000.

And the thing that I want to most emphasize, these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. They have moved into a level of surrender. They have moved into a level of where their lives are given over to God and they've surrendered their life to Him.

They've surrendered their will. They follow Him. And as Ruth said, Where thou goest, I will go.

Where you live, I'll live. These are those that have made that determination. Now, 144,000 is a lot less than numbers that no man can count, isn't it? I want you to notice how it reduces, always reduces.

As the requirements rise, the numbers fall off. That is always true. Sorry? But it seems like so many of God's people are not able to rightly evaluate the things of God.

It isn't long before they become, as we would say in human terms, in human life, dropouts. They say it's not worth all the effort. It's not worth all the struggle.

It's not worth the surrender of my life. What will God ask me to do? I know many people that have refused to go on with God because they were afraid that God would ask them to do something. They were afraid that God would ask them to leave their jobs and go into ministry or that they would not be able to fulfill their plans that they had in life or they couldn't marry this person or that person or they couldn't have this kind of career or that kind of career.

And God hadn't even told them yet. They were just afraid He might. And so they refused.

They will not. They'll go on being a Christian, but they will not enter their 144,000. They will not be one of those that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes.

Fears overcome them. I know a man and his wife. They were my pastors when I was a teenager.

Lovely, lovely people. And God had called them the Africa's missionaries. But no go.

Why not? Because the wife was deathly afraid of snakes. And she read there were lots of snakes in Africa. And no way was she going to go to Africa.

I think there are a few there, aren't there? The calling kind or two-legged kind? Both. This went on for years. And then during the latter day revival, they both had a real touch with God.

And they began to reevaluate their lives. In fact, both of them spent 40 days in fasting and prayer. And God met them in a beautiful way.

It was a time when God was meeting them. And you know, it wasn't too long after that, they both went to Africa and stayed there several years and gave their lives there, both of them. Way along in years.

They did get there. But it took them a long time to do it. They were afraid.

Afraid. And many times the fear alone will keep us from joining, moving up into the next level of relationship with God, those that you can count on, those that follow Him, those whose lives are surrendered, those who have yielded their will, those who let God take over their lives, and they are those that follow the Lamb with us wherever we go. There is enough faith to believe Him, to take care of everything involved, whatever it costs, and they are not going to lose out that relationship with Him just because of this fear or that problem or what it costs.

Then we go on. Chapter 4, verse 4 of Revelation. The third level of glory.

These are after we get there, and this is just a little tiny picture, a little glimpse. Around about the throne were four and twenty seats, and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold. Twenty-four.

These speak of the twelve apostles. These speak of the twelve prophets. These speak of those ministries that God has developed into that state, first apostles, thirdly prophets, second prophets.

These are those whose ministries have been developed. They sit on thrones. They have come into a place where they rule with Christ, where they reign with Christ.

They have crowns of gold upon their heads. Gold speaks of the nature of Christ. Now they don't use those crowns to crown somebody with.

They use those crowns to throw at his feet and worship. That's what they seem to be mostly used for. But these are those who've not only moved into a place where they are following him, but they moved into a place where they are useful to him.

Now remember, we're only twenty-four here, but there's a lot more than twenty-four. There's many, many, many lines who have come in and developed in those ministries. Whether it's a ministry of authority, they moved in that place where God has crowned them with that authority of life.

Paul speaks of several crowns. And these are those that have moved into that place. They're the prophets.

They're the apostles. They're those that have moved into that authority. After you receive the Holy Spirit, Jesus said in Acts 2.8, he said, Ye shall be endued with power.

And that word power means, it has three meanings actually, origin and energy and authority. And there is that place where that soul is brought into a place of authority in the invisible. Reese Howells, I believe, states it this way.

As we follow on, as we seek God, and as we battle through to challenges that God has put before us, we come to a position. And that position, now you have that position. You have the authority of that position.

You don't have to battle for it anymore. You just take it. It belongs to you.

It's yours. All you have to do is lift up your faith and step into it. And there it is.

But before that, you have to battle for it. You have to fight for it. It's not given to you yet.

It's something we develop. It's something we move into until those authorities are given to you. And then they will work.

But until that time, you can say the same thing like Robert said the other day. You can take the same songs and do everything you want to with it, but it just won't work. There's not that authority.

Because we stand in the, especially in church or service or anything like that, whether it's worship or praise or anything like that involved, we take a stand on the borders of the invisible. And they watch and they say, Remember the sons of Saba? Jesus we know. Paul we know.

Who are you? Those are positions. Those have to be gained. Those have to be fought for.

And sometimes the battle could be quite severe. You shall receive power after that. And only God knows how long after that.

It depends somewhat on how much you press on to know the Lord. One thing I will tell you for sure, that the Baptist Holy Spirit is not that empowering. And I'll tell you why.

Because you wouldn't give the key to your car to a six-year-old child, I don't care if he fasted and prayed and kicked his heels and stamped and anything else and throw a tantrum, you still wouldn't give it to him. He wouldn't know how to use the booty. There has to be a development.

There has to be a raising up. There has to be a coming into that place of authority. These were on thrones.

Round about the thrones. These were on thrones. They had come into a place of authority.

They had come into a place, their relationship with God, where God could trust them and put them in situations. And they would hold truth. And they would hold faith.

And they would press through and win the battle. And that is an onward developing thing. That grows from stage to stage.

You see people that will stand in a place and see God work, but you stand in that place and God wouldn't work. God has favors? No. They've been in a university for ten years.

They've been fighting and working for it because they evaluated the life in Christ and the life in that relationship with Christ because it's not only an empowering, it's so much more than that. It's a relationship with him. He said, you rule with me.

You'll reign with me. They're on thrones. Round about his thrones.

It's a relationship. It's not only an authority. The authority is second place.

They took their crowns and threw them at his feet. But they didn't lose their thrones, did they? They didn't lose their place. No, they had that place.

And that was what God is trying to bring before us, that let's press on. Paul said, I haven't attained yet. And he was already an apostle.

He said, but there's still something higher. Let's press on. Let's go on.

Let's keep going. And there is a level higher. You'll see in a minute that there's a level beyond.

That's only the third level. There's still a fourth level. There's still something else.

But these were those that had come into that authority with Christ. And they had come to that authority in the church. And all through history, there are men, and the names of them stand out throughout the history.

And other names, they don't stand in history because they've been forgotten. But they were just as great in their day and in their time and in their place. These are they.

And they sang a song. And they said, thou hast redeemed us unto our God out of every tribe. You hear that? Every nation.

There's a lot of tribes in Africa, aren't there? Every tribe. There's going to be some. There's going to be one, if nothing more, out of every tribe, every nation, every tongue, every kindred.

There's a lot of people. They're hidden. We don't know them.

William Booth had a vision that impacted him very much for his whole life. He was a younger man when he had it. And in this vision, he was taken to heaven, and an angel came and showed him the different palaces, the different mansions.

And he said, they were so beautiful. They were so gorgeous. They were so extensive.

They were just beyond description. And he asked the name of this person, the first mansion. And the angel told him who it was.

It didn't mean anything to him. He never heard it before. This whole long avenue was a beautiful mansion.

And he asked the name of everyone, and not one name did he know. They got to the end of this avenue, and then they turned down a side street, and there were just little bungalows, just nice little bungalows, lovely little gardens. That's all.

And he asked, well, who lives here? Oh, that's Bishop so-and-so. And the next one, oh, that's Reverend so-and-so. He knew every one of them, of the owners of this long street.

But all were just little places. And then they turned again. And he came to this beautiful mansion.

He took up a whole block of it. It was gorgeous. He said, whose is this one? And the angel said, oh, that belongs to the woman that gave two mice.

And he came back. He said, everything is different. Everything is different up there.

It's not who we think it is. It's whom God knows it is. Oh, there'll be people sitting on those thrones.

Don't think there won't be. There'll be a lot of them. Oh, not the 144,000.

It's a lot less than that. But there'll be a lot of them sitting on thrones, crowned in the presence of God. They will stay there forever in that presence.

Then there's one more level. Verse 6, chapter 4. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like on the crystal. And in the midst of the throne and round about the throne were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

And the first beast was like a lion. The second beast like a calf. The third beast had the face of a man.

And the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him. And they were full of eyes within.

And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is and is to come. When those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne and liveth forever and ever. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne and worship him that liveth forever and ever.

And saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power. For Thou hast created all things. And for Thy pleasure they are and were created.

Then we go to 5.9. Speaking of these same elders and these same living ones, same beasts. And they sung a new song saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for Thou hast redeemed us unto God by Thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. And hath made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.

He held and heard the voice of many angels on and about the throne. And the beasts and the elders, the number of them was 10,000 times 10,000 and thousands of thousands. It was a big number.

Now, the scripture calls them beasts because they had a face of a lion and a face of... But the other versions do not give that. And that is not the original Greek, incidentally. Living beings is the word that's used in Greek.

Living beings. These are the living ones. They had that divine life, zoe.

These were the living beings. But who were they? Those were the sons, the mature sons made into his image. You see, each one had one of the images of Christ because Christ was a lion.

Is that right? He's the ox. He's a man. He's the eagle.

Each one had one of those... In other words, one of those natures. They had been made into the image of God. They were sons.

Only sons bear the image. A wife does not bear the image of her husband. Her son does.

The wife does not come into the image. The son comes into the image. That's why sonship is higher than brideship.

That's getting pretty deep for you. I'll just leave it there. Let's throw it out.

But there is that deep relationship, that bone of my bone, that blood of my blood, that relationship that's deeper even than a bridal relationship. The sonship. These are the sons.

They bear the image. These are in the midst of the throne. These have eyes within and without.

These are creatures that are beyond all the other creatures completely beyond them. And these also, as tremendous as they are, with six wings, which shows how they... See, wings are the instruments to move in the air. And the wings in the spirituals, in the angels and so on, are the ways of moving in the spirit.

How we move in the spirit, how we operate in the spirit. And then there's six wings. The first six is the number of men.

And they were men because it said, Thou has redeemed us unto our God. But they were such glorified beings. And they were so completely at home in the spirit.

They could move in any way at any time in the spirit because they were spirit beings. They were living ones. They were high.

They were in the midst of the throne. They were closer in to God than even the elders around about the throne. They were the sons for level.

And you know, down here in this life, we are setting a goal. Do we evaluate the future? Is it worth fighting for? Paul said he was an apostle. He already was able to sit on one of those thrones, if I put it that way.

But he said, I haven't attained yet. There's a high calling. There's a calling to be made in His likeness.

There's a calling to be coming in His image. There's a calling to be one with Him. He said, I can't stop here.

I press towards the mark of the prize of the high calling. I'm not stopping here. I'm going on.

Are you stopping here? Are you considering dropping out? Are you saying, Well, what's the use? Are you saying, Well, I fight so hard the devil just won't leave me alone? Look, the higher you've got your goal set, the less he will leave you alone. You think he wants to attain that? I understand he's a thief. He'll steal anything he can from you.

If he can't steal your eternal life, he'll steal all the benefits of it he can. If he can't steal your house, he'll steal your TV. If he can't steal your house, he'll steal your automobile.

He'll steal anything he can. Of course he's out to get you, to hinder you, to discourage you, to cut your faith down, to do anything he can to keep you from reaching the high calling. Don't be a dropout.

Don't be one of those that, Well, it's not worth who I am. Why should I have to struggle? Why should I have to fight too? Why should I have to overcome all the time? Nobody else has to. Well, the dropouts don't have to.

Join them if you want to. But I don't want to. No way.

There's a high calling. And it goes, it goes ever, ever higher. It goes ever, ever higher.

Jesus just glimpses. Jesus himself tried to tell us that, Don't gather things if this is not where it is. The earth is an important section on things above.

Reach out, reach out. Remember, realize where we're going. Not what we're going through to get there.

It's where we're going. Who wants to be a saint? Who wants to spend their whole eternity just having a good time? Well, honey, if you want, you're welcome to. But there's something more.

There's something more. There's something higher. Lord, take me up and let me stand by faith on heaven's table land.

A higher place than I have found. Lord, lift me up to higher ground. Take me to a higher place.

Give me an understanding of what this is all about. Let me realize I'm not just saved to get to heaven. I'm saved to be an instrument of God.

I'm saved to be a son of God. I'm saved to be one of those who He will use throughout the ages to rule and reign with Him. Being saved is just the beginning.

That's just babyhood. That's just infancy. Let's go on.

Let's go up. Let's set our eyes on things above. Let's look something else.

Let's realize this is not the end. This is the beginning. Yes, it is a struggle.

Ask any doctor if he got there easily. Yes, it is a struggle. It is a strife.

Paul himself said, I press towards the mark. I'm still making that effort. I'm still struggling with it.

I'm still fighting with it. I'm not stopping because the prize is so great. The prize is so wonderful.

Let's go on. Lord Jesus Christ said, Let the spirit of wisdom and revelation come upon your people and open the eyes of their understanding. They might know the riches of your inheritance in this day.

Lord, I've tried. I failed. But you don't.

Open eyes. Open understanding. Cause to realize it's worth it all.

It's worth everything and anything. My whole life is a small prize. Every pain and suffering I ever go through is small compared when I see his face.

One glimpse of his dear face all sorrows will erase. But I see Jesus.

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