

Our Part and God's Part

by Robert B. Thompson

Our destiny depends directly on the diligence with which we grasp Christ, and our behavior affects our destiny.

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Topics: "Healthy Living", "Spiritual Responsibility"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of taking care of our natural lives by eating well, exercising, and resting appropriately. He shares his personal experience of needing to maintain a strict diet and exercise routine to stay healthy. The speaker also discusses the concept of responsibility and how God may send us back to earth in the spirit realm to minister or help our families. He encourages the audience to focus on laying up treasures in heaven rather than pursuing worldly wealth. The sermon concludes with a powerful statement about the significance of watching our lives and doctrine closely, as it can lead to salvation for both ourselves and those who hear us.

Transcript

Lord, as we come unto you this morning, it is with a sense of your presence and of your purpose here today. And we thank you for that, Lord. We know if you're not here, we all might as well go home, Lord, because you're the only one who means anything, does anything of significance.

And so, Lord, we call on you this morning and we ask you to bless the families here. We know you have, over this past week, blessed some and given peace and wisdom. We thank you for that, Lord, and help us all that we can make it as families and be strengthened.

We need your help, Lord. And we pray for the little children and their teachers, Lord, that they'll be blessed indeed and that your presence will be with them. And as we continue, Lord, you know the needs of the heart that are here, and we pray that no one will leave without something from God, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

You may be seated. We'll turn in our Bibles to Ezekiel 44. We're studying Ezekiel about the image of Christ.

Ezekiel 44. Capitolo 44, verses 14 through 16 of Ezekiel. Here we go.

Yet I will put them in charge of the duties of the temple and all the work that is to be done in it. But the priests who are Levites and descendants of Zadok, and who faithfully carried out the duties of my

sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me, are to come near to minister before me. They are to stand before me to offer sacrifices of fat and blood, declares the Sovereign Lord.

They alone are to enter my sanctuary, alone are to come near my table to minister before me and perform my service. Now, call your attention to that the reason Zadok was granted closeness to the Lord, holy service, more so than the rest of the priests, was based on their actions. They faithfully carried out the duties of my sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me.

And what I want to talk to you about this morning, I feel the burden of the Lord, is that there is a reward for serving the Lord. Now, you may say, well of course, everybody knows that and his brother. But because we have had a teaching of grace, and I'm interested if the young people understand me this morning.

Because we have had an imbalance, and grace has been stressed to the point that there really is no reward for serving the Lord. We're saved by grace, by a sovereign action of God. And if you carry that through logically, if you carry that concept through logically, there can be no rewards.

Because if we're saved by a sovereign action of God, independently of our behavior, in other words, it doesn't matter, being in this church many of you all your lives, you wouldn't believe that anybody would teach that. But let me tell you, that is the prevailing doctrine. That's what Shelley is going to be running into all the time, is that we're saved by a sovereign action of God, and even though we should try to do good, the idea is that Jesus was so nice to us, that we ought to be nice.

And that is how behavior is preached. That we kind of owe Jesus a favor by trying to do good, which is certainly a grand thought. The problem is, when you consider the demonic atmosphere in which we live, and our own personality, things get past us, and while we want to do good, we don't always end up doing good.

How many can say amen? But we want to be nice because Jesus has been nice to us, but when we start out, to try to always be friendly, and honest, and moral, and everything else, sometimes life seems to get ahead of us, and we bomb in spite of our desire to reward the Lord with our nice behavior. Is that true? So if you add to that thought, the idea that we're saved by a sovereign action of God, by grace, so it's not critical. We ought to behave right, but it's not a critical aspect of our salvation.

And that is what is preached. And I've mentioned this before, some time back, in the footnotes of my Bible, which at that time was the major evangelical text. Rebecca is keen into this stuff.

The New American Standard, I think was the name of it, and a few years ago, that was the leading evangelical edition, according to my understanding. I don't know, but I'm talking about 10 years ago or so. And in their comment, one of their comments, in there in the footnotes, this is what it says.

It says, We are not, it is not true that he who endures to the end shall be saved, because we are saved by a sovereign action of God. Now, this is in, at that time, the best-selling evangelical text. We're not talking about some remote, cultish version.

We're talking about the mainstream of the blood-washed. And here, God said, he who endures to the end shall be saved. But you see, that indicates works.

It's the work of enduring. It's as though we have something to do with this. And if you take the pure theory of evangelical grace, salvation comes by something that God does sovereignly.

And therefore, the idea of enduring to the end does not fit this model. It wasn't black and white. And, you know, it's something when we get so far off the trail that we're denying what God said.

Because Jesus said, he that endures to the end shall be saved. There is a major evangelical denomination that teaches there are no rewards, because we're saved by grace. And actually, they are more logical and more consistent than other evangelical denominations that preach a sovereign grace.

And yet, they would be willing to say, if we work hard, maybe we'll have a five-story mansion instead of a two-story mansion. I'm not being facetious. This is what is taught.

And that is not consistent. Either our behavior affects our destiny, or it does not. I mean, there's no middle ground.

Either it does or it doesn't. Now, when you read the New Testament, and this is what I want the young people to understand. This is very important.

I feel the importance of it this morning. I don't feel I'm important. I feel that this concept is important.

That salvation works, there's a balance between God's work and our work. There's a balance there. God's work is critical to our salvation.

Our work is critical to our salvation. It isn't that God does it and we ought to try to be nice. That is not true, and it will not work.

We have to realize that there's an abundance of New Testament passages that tell us, if as a Christian we continue in sin, we are courting death. Spiritual death. No question about it.

Abundance of scriptures. But I don't want to confuse you with a plethora of verses here. I just want you to get this simple concept.

That as in the case of Zadok, the priest, it makes a difference on how we respond to God. That it's not that we all come out in the same suit because we're saved by grace. This is not at all true.

The destiny of the saved ranges all the way from going through a fire which completely wipes out your inheritance. All your reward is burned away, 1 Corinthians 3. Ranges all the way from there to sitting in the throne of Christ on the highest throne of the universe. The destiny of the righteous ranges all the way from being saved by fire to sitting on the throne of the universe with Christ.

And this is absolutely scriptural. Now, you say, what makes the difference then between a person who is saved by fire with all of his reward, all of his inheritance burned away, and a person that Christ has found so compatible with his person that he is willing to invite them to be with him in the most reclusive position in the person of God. And let me tell you, I speak by revelation.

I'm not making up something I arrived at by logic. I'm speaking of things that God has shown me. We mentioned Tuesday night in the Song of Solomon.

The Song of Solomon in the middle of the Bible is a very revealing book. It's so couched in imagery that it's very easy to get nothing out of it. Just a lot of Hebrew poetry.

But actually, what the Song of Solomon is, is a description between the adverse relation between Solomon and the daughters of Jerusalem on the one hand, and this holy one of Christ that's described in the sixth chapter of my, there's queens, there's all this, run all over the place, but my bride, my beloved is one, only one of her mother. And the Song of Solomon keeps talking about the difference between Solomon and the daughters of Jerusalem on the one hand, and this one who is so precious to Christ on the other. In fact, I don't want to say hostility, it isn't hostility, because this whole lash up is the family of God.

Daughters of Jerusalem, Solomon, everything, all of this is the family of God. But within the family of God, when God begins to call out her who is so close to him, there occurs an adversarial relationship between the rest of the church and this holy bride. And it's summed up in Song of Solomon, let's see, verse, let's see it off hand, it's chapter 5 I believe, where she says, the watchmen on the wall, or the watchers of the wall, the walls are speaking of denominationalism, the watchers on the wall found me and they beat me.

That's the extent to which the adversarial relationship goes. And it terminates at the end of the 8th chapter, where the spirit says, the shekels are for you Solomon, you get the shekels, but I get the bride. And that's what the Song of Solomon is all about, it's this difference between those who are called to be close to Christ and the rest of the daughters of Jerusalem.

Now they're all the church, but as the Lord was speaking to me and showing me things in my mind, he showed me that if you're going to be called to the throne, you can't have in you the disposition that most church people have. Because in the churches, and these are God's elect, these are the blood washed, I'm talking about, nothing to do with the unsaved, you'll find pride, you'll find a spirit of seeking preeminence, you'll find jealousy. Ambition, things that are not compatible with Christ.

And so as we study Tuesday night in the 14th chapter of Revelation, where it says, speaking of the first fruits, which is the same group, the first fruits of the bride. It says in her mouth was found no guile, or no lie in the NIV, and it says she's undefiled. And that undefilement has nothing to do with human marriage, it's talking about defiled by these spirits.

Like you'll see church people, I've lived long enough to see church people grow old and die, and they never lost their tendency to gossip, to slander, jealousy, put people down, spite, malice. Pentecostal Christians all their life, and yet that was never changed. And so you can see from this, and as the Lord showed me plainly, they will not sit in the throne of me, in other words, I don't want them that close to me.

Because they're just not the kind of people that I like. See this kind of thinking is almost unknown, because of the grace teaching, it's like, oh we're all one happy family, well the Bible doesn't teach that. As I said, it ranges all the way from being saved as by fire, to sitting in the throne with Christ.

And the difference between these extremes depends, all these levels up and down the ladder, depends on our response. See many are called, but few are chosen. And of the chosen you have to be proven faithful.

And I think, and I may be wrong in this, but it seems to me that the Spirit of God cruises constantly through his church, looking for those whose heart is perfect toward him, at their level of development, and then he calls them on a nice camel ride through the desert. So, press close to God, as close as you can get, and expect a camel ride through the desert. But, which ain't much fun.

But for your average Christian, a good person, many of them will give them the shirt off your back. Others are so selfish, they squeeze nickels to wear the Indians riding the buffalo. You get everything, you get all

colors of personalities.

And see, the Lord is out to change that. He's out to make us new creations. New creations.

What we are in essence never changes, because we're a unique flower in God's garden. But all this, turn Audre Lise, the adiaphora, the baggage that we carry around, see, selfishness is not a true thing of what we are, it's just not true. It's baggage that we pick up, or inherited, or seeking preeminence, or meanness, or spite, or jealousy.

These are not genuinely what we are. God will never change what we genuinely are, unless he just has to break the vessel completely, and smash it to pieces, and start all over again, and I think he does this in cases. Well, all I'm saying is really very simple.

Our destiny, as was true of Zadok, depends on how we respond to the sovereign action of God. God instituted salvation sovereignly. Calvary never was dreamt up by man, that was God's idea.

Pouring the Holy Spirit out from heaven was God's idea. There are things that God does sovereignly. Now, you can even get the other extreme, and there are other extremes, where people are trying to do it all themselves, without any reference to God at all.

That won't work. Trying to get God to do the whole thing, that won't work. It's the sword of the Lord, and of Gideon.

And what I want to talk to you about this morning, for a few moments, is some scriptures, so that you will get this idea that your behavior, the diligence, the diligence with which you grasp Christ, and He is what we grasp, and the diligence with which we grasp Christ each day, will determine our future. We are not all saved by, quote, grace in the sense, no matter what we do, it all comes out in the wash, and we all go to our mansion and live happily ever after, and this is not true at all. It's the opposite of the truth.

Our destiny depends directly on the diligence with which we grasp Christ, and I know grasping Christ is difficult because of the many, many distractions, the many, many idols, the many, many pressures, and assaults by Satan, and all the other things that go on that keep us from grasping Christ fully and totally at all times. But what I want to tell you is it's worth it. We find, first of all, in Hebrews 11.6, this is known to all of you, all of us, Hebrews 11.6, it's what faith is, and without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must first believe that he exists.

You know, you say there's one God, you do well, so do the demons. It's the next part that is critical, and this the demons don't have, that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Do you see the balance between trying to say it's all grace and it all comes out in the wash on the one hand, and the scripture that says God rewards those who seek him? How many can see that? See the great difference there? I don't know whether you see it or not.

Let's stop and say Selah. This is an awesomely important concept. It lies, a misunderstanding of it, lies at the root of evangelical preaching, and it's why the churches are drying up.

You don't think they're drying up. You can come and we'll share some of the correspondence with you that we get. People don't know where to go.

There are a few notable even evangelistic works that are very fruitful, and we thank God for them, but I'm talking about the average Christian going to the average church, are beginning to complain. They say there's death here, there's no life, and let's pray for revival. Let's all pray for revival.

Let me tell you something, it's a waste of time, because until the doctrine changes, all God will be doing is blessing something that's unscriptural. If we want revival, the doctrine has got to change. Selah.

I'm not scolding you. I am inviting you to consider something that has an awesome impact on our nation. We are going down a slippery road because the church is not preaching righteousness, but the rapture in heaven, and that will not help our nation.

I don't know how important you think it is we can shut ourselves in our houses and lock the door and put a peephole on it, and hide and watch television, but the nation is, the things that are being sown today in foreign policy and domestic policy are leading to destruction, and the problem is in the church. The problem with the church is this balance between what God does and what we're supposed to do. Enough of that.

All right, now, Revelation 14.4. Most of you have this memorized by heart, I know. I'm sure all the young people do. Revelation 14.4. Now, all I'm talking about is the balance between God's efforts and our efforts, and that makes a difference.

All right. These are those who did not defile themselves with women. Now, that's something that they did.

And as I said, it's not talking about human marriage. It's talking about defiling yourself by getting yourself so involved with a relationship, or with a thing, or with a circumstance, or with money, or whatever, that it defiles your spirit. And when you come to Jesus, you're bringing this stuff with you, and it's a defilement, and He doesn't want it.

Okay? And then we mentioned spirits, like seeking the preeminence, and spite, and slander, and gossip, and all these defile. They defile. And so they're put here in this symbolism of women.

Defile themselves with women. For they kept themselves pure. See, it was something they did.

That's why they're in the firstfruits. It was originally, it was a sovereign choice of God. But they ended up there because they responded to it with total diligence.

They did these things. Therefore, they're in the firstfruits. He is a rewarder, as in the case of Zadok, He's a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

It isn't just going to happen. You have to do it. And He'll help you.

They follow the Lamb wherever He goes. Why? Because they are compatible with His person. He enjoys them, in other words.

Christ loves the daughters of Jerusalem. He loves them. But He does not care to be around those who are gossiping, and slandering, and speaking spitefully, and have a nasty temper, and everything else that's not covered by grace.

How many want to be a person that Jesus would like to have around? Would you like to be a person that Jesus would like to have around Him? Well, then ask Him, What remaineth in your personality to be

changed? And I mean, once you get on the bus, don't get off. People get off the bus too quick. This is too rich for my blood.

Well, what's going on? You're being changed, and we don't like it. We don't like change. We do not like it.

We like to be the same old person that I am. But Jesus doesn't. Well, let me put it this way, since this seems to be highly theoretical.

How many of you have people that you like, there are people that you like to have around you? Is this true? Or are you just like everybody the same way? Don't get religious on me. It's true that there are some people that you would prefer having around you, than you would others. That's not theoretical.

That's plain down on the farm. I think if you'll be honest and shed your religious righteousness for a minute, you will admit there are some people you'd rather have around you than others. Some are considering this deeply.

Well, the same thing is true of Jesus. He doesn't have friends, does he? Abraham was called a friend of God. He didn't call everybody the friend of God.

Boy, I'd love to be called a friend of God, wouldn't you? A friend of God. Whoa. And in another place, God said, I couldn't accept this crowd if Noah, Daniel, and Job were here.

Now, what does that tell you about Noah, Daniel, and Job? They were favorites. Whoa. But that's the Old Testament.

Hasn't changed. You'll find in Revelation, they're standing on the sea of glass. They're singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

It's all one song. I hope nobody's in here chewing tobacco. I see a number chewing, and I hope it isn't tobacco.

When they spit on the floor, and then it's a mess. All right. We're talking plain common sense.

These people learn a new song, and they're permitted to be with Jesus everywhere he goes. They follow him around, just like a little dog. Just follow him right around.

Because he likes them. Well, he doesn't, he likes everybody. Most everybody.

But he likes, really likes these people. Because they're fun to have around. They don't worry they're all the time either going to be robbing out of the common box, or sneaking behind his back, or trying to figure out who's the greatest, or trying to build three tabernacles, when all he wants them to do is enjoy the glory.

What fun is it to be, it's no fun to have somebody around you that's trying to build tabernacles, and here you got this dude trying to build something. That's no fun. So God sent Mary, he didn't send the apostles, why not? Because they wouldn't have been any fun.

Oh, I never thought of that. Well, God has fun. If you don't believe it, look at some of the creatures that he made.

All right. Some of them are smart too. I was reading recently, there's dogs now that can tell if you're going to have a stroke.

People that are subject to seizures, you can get a dog, and the dog will tell you before you're going to get a seizure. That's the truth. Dogs are smart.

I don't know why they're not allowed into the New Jerusalem. I've told our dog, you better behave yourself, because you've got one strike against you. But they come if you're going to have a seizure, they come and knock you down, or do something, look up in your face.

Or if you've got a relative, they train the dog to look hard at the relative, and the relative comes and tells you you're going to have a seizure. So you can go in the house and sit down. Honest, I'm not making it up.

It's the truth. All right. Now, 1 Timothy 3.13. Now, what we're talking about, oh, you've got to tell Shelly about that.

Tell her about this. I said, this month's Reader's Digest, about these dogs that tell you when you're going to have a seizure. Oh, yes.

Oh, yes. Shelly's much into dogs. She'll be interested in that.

1 Timothy 3.13. Now, all I'm talking about is the balance between our efforts and God's efforts. They both are theoretical. Isn't it all God? 1 Timothy 3.13. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife, and must manage his children and his household well.

Those who have served well, those who have served well, gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. Now, if that is faith without works, I can't read. Because that sounds to me like you get stuff depending on your diligence.

He's a rewarder of those. The Bible would be written differently if that weren't true. Same book, 4.16. Now, this is a knockout.

This will absolutely... Martha, make sure you see this one. Jamie, are you seeing this one? Where's your Bible, Jamie? Come on, break it out there. All right, now, because this is important, you'll never hear this preacher in your life.

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them.

I mean, give it your best shot and do it all the time. Don't be, you know, you're fast and you don't last. Get at it and stay at it.

Persevere. Persevere. Ah, wonderful word, persevere.

That means keep at it. Because if you do... And now we come to a gross statement. I mean, this is gross.

Watch it, Joseph, this is gross. You will save both yourself and your hearers. Whoa.

Now, if that isn't a showstopper, I never read one. You will both save yourself, Katie, and those who hear you. You want to save yourself? Well, watch your life and doctrine closely.

Persevere in them. And you'll save yourself. What do you think of that, Chris? Think that'll wash? Selah, what's he going to come up with next? What I'm going to come up with next is the same book, chapter 6, verses 18 and 19.

And all I'm talking about is, if you're going to be saved, there's a balance between what you do and what God does. And if you diminish or remove one or the other, you're not going to get saved. That's what I'm saying.

Well, you're saying I'm saved by works. I'm not saying you're saved by works. See, when you say saved by works, and that's what people accuse us of, of teaching that we're saved by works, what you mean is that you earn salvation by works.

No, you don't earn anything. How shall I, what shall I compare it to? Well, I've compared it often to a piano. Someone can give you a piano.

But the thing is no more than furniture, unless you learn to play it. The piano can be a gift, but nobody can give you the gift of being able to play it. That's up to you.

That's the way salvation is. We don't earn it. You didn't earn the piano by learning to play it.

Somebody gave it to you. Maybe your mother, your grandmother died and left you a grand piano. Steinway Baby Grand, left you a Steinway Baby Grand.

Instead of selling it, you decide to make music out of it. But they can't give you that. They can make it possible for you to learn to play Chopin and Beethoven and Brahms.

They can make it possible for you by giving you a piano. Now, if you learn to play it, you don't play it to earn it. You play it because that's how it works.

Somebody gave it to you and now you did your part. That's the way salvation is. You don't submit yourself to God and do all these things in order to earn salvation.

You do it to make it work. Otherwise it doesn't work. And that's why people are in church for 40 years and never change.

They never change. And yet the power to be saved from gossip and saved from slander and saved from self-pity and saved from seeking the preeminence and saved from having to have your own way. How many know people that have to have their own way? How many know Christians that have to have their own way? That's the surest sign that someone is walking in the soul is when they have to have their own way.

It's a surest sign. That's a symptom of the Adamic nature that will not quit. I've got to have my own way.

Well, there's many Christians like that. How many think Jesus is just dying to have fellowship with people that have to have their own way? Do you see what I'm telling you? The power to deliver you and me from having to have our own way is in this gift of salvation. But if you don't diligently seek God, you're not going to get it.

Well, am I going to go to heaven or not? That's not the issue. The issue is having fellowship with Christ and His kingdom. Oh, that's powerful.

Or maybe confusing. No, we're not talking about earning the grand piano. We're talking about learning to play the thing.

Supposing your grandmother came back from the dead. First thing she wants to know is, what did you do with my piano? Did you learn to play it? And you go over there and you play chopsticks on it. Everybody can play chopsticks.

I never knew of anyone that couldn't play chopsticks. I said, well, I should have given it to my other daughter. She'd have played it, learned to play it.

Now, wouldn't she? And now look, granny would have said, she said, what was the use of my giving you this piano? My husband and I worked hard and we sweat and we saved our money and got this beautiful piano and then we give it to you and you don't care anything about it to learn to play it. Oh, that's exactly what is true of salvation. The gift is there.

You do not earn it. It's given to you. But you have to learn to play it.

And if you don't, you'll be fortunate if you get into the kingdom at all. But you're certainly not going to be up in Christ's bosom talking to Him all day long because your personality is not pleasing to Him. Are you there? Am I making any kind of sense? Well, I hope I am.

All right. Now, because I'm certainly exerting a lot of effort up here. First step of these six, 18 and 19.

But it's all free. All right. Now, command them to do good.

That's what I'm doing you this morning. I'm commanding you to do good. Are you up to that? Can you live with that? I'm commanding you.

What's he doing? I'm commanding you to do good. And I'm telling you there are consequences if you don't. Well, isn't that nice? To be rich in good deeds.

To be generous and willing to share. Are you stingy? Well, ask God and He'll deliver you. There's nothing says you have to be stingy.

Well, I must have got on a topic there. It got quiet in heaven. Wow.

If you are a notably stingy person, ask God to deliver you. God is not stingy. Aren't you ever think of that? How many think God is just lusting to have stingy people with Him? Following around.

How many loaves and fish do you have? And you say, hide them. Say, I don't have any. So you don't get your miracle.

Oh, this is the truth. Several times in the Bible, God talks about being generous. He says, if you're generous, people will give to you.

Press down, shake them together, and run. If you're stingy, you won't get anything. Boy, that was good preaching.

Man, be generous and willing to share. In this way, it doesn't make any difference whether they do or not because they're saved by grace. So it all comes out anyway.

That's exactly what it says here. Oh, Lord. In this way, they will lay up treasure.

Lay up treasure. Jesus says something about laying up treasure. What am I going to lay up? Well, Americans are very interested in laying up dollars.

Well, that's a bondage. That's a national bondage that we have, and very few Americans are free from it. That's just a national curse that's on us, is the cash flow.

Once you die and enter the spirit realm, you won't need it. Leave it to your kids, and you'll spoil their character. Now, give me an example of a treasure.

Well, you lay up, well, how do you get that? Well, that's true. Are you saying that when you die and go into the spirit realm, that people are going to be charitable towards you? Is that what you're saying? See, we're talking about something. We lay it up.

Not what we do to lay it up, but what is the treasure itself? What? Well, you guys are awful theoretical. Give me something concrete. Know me with theology here.

I deserve it. I ask him for it. How would you like this for a treasure? That someone came up to you and said, you know, if it wasn't for you and your diligence in what you did, I wouldn't even be here.

Now, try that one on for size. That sound like any kind of treasure you'd be interested in? How about being specially close to Jesus? That sound like anything you'd be interested in? How about being given some occupation that you love to do above everything else? When Peter Marshall died, his wife later had a dream. He was working on a garden, planting roses.

That was something he enjoyed doing. Relationships, glory, presence of God, access to places. One of my many books that I read about the next world, one of them states that people who are higher up in glory than you can come down to see you, but they have to cover their glory because you couldn't stand it.

But you can't go up to them. That's in Marietta Davis' book, I believe. Access.

How about responsibility? How about God sending you back to earth in the spirit realm? You come in a spiritual form to minister. Or to help your family. In our own family, we have an account where one of the people in our family felt that Audrey's dad had come and laid hands on them.

There are treasures in heaven. Access, relationships, glory. Best of all is closeness to God.

Now, where were we? They will lay up treasures for themselves. Well, are you doing it? Or not? Oh boy, if I could start an internet business and make a million dollars before I was 21. Better to lay up treasures in heaven.

The other stuff has a way of not bringing exactly what you thought you were going to get from it. Get you a headache, a nervous breakdown, and hostility from people, and family troubles, and everything else. You lay it up in heaven and rust can't touch it.

Moths can't touch it. Thieves can't steal it. Much to be desired.

But then notice what he says. As a firm foundation for the coming age. See, Paul never talked about going to live in heaven.

He talked about the world that is to come. The coming age. The world of righteousness.

And you, it says, you lay a firm foundation for that age. In other words, you're preparing yourself to live on the earth in another age in which Christ is king in Jerusalem. Right now, you know, the uproar Stan mentioned.

It's Rosh Hashanah. It's the blowing of trumpets. Yesterday and today is the blowing of trumpets.

That means there's nine more days until Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. And then another few days and we'll begin tabernacles. But it's interesting that this broke out on Rosh Hashanah, on the blowing of trumpets, because symbolically that's what we're in now in the church is the beginning of war.

The king coming with the sound of the trumpet. Interesting, isn't it? A firm foundation. In other words, you're going to have money to spend, so to speak, in the coming age that you will not have if you don't put it up there now.

You'll be broke, broke, and you're going to be disgusted because you wasted your time here and you didn't lay up treasures in the Lord commanded us to lay up treasures in heaven. And we didn't do it. So we get there.

If we get there, if we get an age to come, if we're permitted to enter it, and that's what it means to be saved, is to be permitted to enter the age to come, and we're broke. No relationship. There's nobody coming up and saying, boy, I'm here because of your life.

There's no one that God doesn't give us an assignment to do some things among people or to go on errands for me to be close to Jesus. We're just standing there. Nothing.

We're allowed in. Great. Here we are.

Other people can come down and visit us if they're careful to conceal their glory so as not to kill us, and we can't go up there, and we're an object of what? Now, notice what it says. Are you noticing what it says? Watch it. That they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Now, again, we have a tradition that if you do take the four steps of salvation that you have all there is to eternal life, but the Bible does not teach that. There's one passage in the Gospels that says that there's no man that has forsaken farms and family and this and that, but he'll receive a hundredfold more in the present world and in the world to come eternal life. See, they don't think of eternal life in those terms, but that's what it's saying here.

You have to take hold of life. It isn't a legal state that you live forever by accepting Christ. That's our religious interpretation, but it is not biblical.

Eternal life is a kind of life. Immortality has to do with the body, the body living forever. Immortality has to do with the body living forever, but eternal life is a kind of life.

If it comes into your body, it will cause your body to be immortal, but it is not duration of life. Eternal life is a force. It is the life force and presence and wisdom and love of God.

It is the substance of God. The angels live forever, but they don't have eternal life, and the demons live forever, and they don't have eternal life. Eternal life is not duration of life.

It's a kind of life, and if we sow to it and gain it in this world, then when the Lord comes, our body will be made immortal. But if we do not lay hold on eternal life, even though we have taken the four steps of salvation, when the Lord comes, our body will not be made immortal because we have not laid hold on eternal life. Okay? So it says that they may take hold of the life.

You have to take hold of it. Now, how do you do that? How do we do it in America when we have the media pressing on us and trying to get us interested in whether they're going to build a ballpark, whether who's going to be elected, what's happening to the stock market, and all of this which is wood, hay, and stubble? It is death. It's not life.

So what do you do to get eternal life? You have to take time, and I mean enough time, and I mean serious time each day to seek the face of God. I swear, there's Christians that read the whole newspaper. From the first page to the last, I've got to say that's sinful.

I've got to say it's sinful. What are you reading? All the obituaries, what in the world? The whole stock sheet, all the sport page, all this junk? It's enough to glance at it and find out what's happening in the world, but to read the whole thing, and I've gone on the line for this, it's not redeeming the time. It is not redeeming.

You're not redeeming the time. You're wasting God's time doing this, and it tells me that you're not trying to lay hold on eternal life. You're flopping around.

Maybe you have a prayer time during the day. Well, we need a lot of prayer times during the day. Pray without ceasing, and reading the whole newspaper is not called redeeming the time.

Now, I don't know anybody in here whether you do that or not, but that is not called redeeming the time. I mean, I'm talking practical politics. It takes time and strength to seek the Lord Jesus Christ.

It takes a deliberate turning away from the colorful things of our society and spending time with the Lord. It's something that you have to do, because there are hundreds of things you can do that are more interesting. Hundreds of things that are more interesting, but you've got to set aside time, because our culture, and all that you read in the paper is death.

It's just, well, what do you mean by that? This is what I mean by that. There's two kinds of life. There's animal life that operates when you eat food, and it's digested, and you derive energy from it, and you think, and you act, and you stay warm from the food.

That's life. You have this characteristic. You can move, you can talk, you can think, and do a whole bunch of other stuff.

If you're an Olympic athlete, you can do stuff most of us can't do. At least I can't. Maybe you can, but I can't.

Never could, in fact. All right, but that is, how shall I say it? It's here today and gone tomorrow. It's like grass that grows up beautiful.

Like, they don't have dandelions out here, so I can't use dandelions, but it's a fairly decent looking plant that grows up in your garden, but everybody chops them out because they have a way of dying, and then they look terrible. Absolutely terrible. They ruin your lawn.

Natural life is exactly like that. You can go to church, you can sing songs, you can give in the offering, you can learn the Bible, you can do all these things, and still be living in natural life. And you are living in death.

There's another kind of life. The two are not the same. They don't mix.

They dwell in you. They both dwell in you at the same time. It's life that comes from God.

It is the life of God. It's a substance. It's a force by which you think, and speak, and act, and do other things.

So, during your day, I think most people in here probably a few times a week eat food, right? And you keep your natural life going. You have sleep, you sleep appropriately, you rest appropriately, and hopefully you exercise appropriately, and try to have a decent diet to keep your natural life going. I'm very much into that, because at my age, boy, all you've got to do is not exercise, and eat whatever you feel like, and you don't last.

You don't last. You end up in the hospital. So, I have to have a very strict diet, have to exercise, have to do it, because the body doesn't want to do it.

It says, take me over to Denny's, and get me a Blockbuster breakfast, sausage, pancakes, the works, a lot of syrup, a lot of butter, and everything, which I do dearly love. All I'd have to do that for a while, and that is it. And I know it.

So, I don't do it. But I got something I'm supposed to be doing. So, you have to sow to eternal life each day by making sure that at some point each day, you touch God.

And at different points during the day, that you reach up and touch God. But you don't waste your time and the American stuff, because there's always something new to waste your time on. You have to lay hold on eternal life.

There's something that you do. And if you don't, the future is not enviable, even though you think you're a Christian. You know, I've come to the conclusion, and I'll say this very positive thing in conclusion.

I've come to the conclusion that most Christians are not Christians. That's a hard saying. That's a hard saying.

But you know, in the Bible, the Christians, the disciples were called Christians. Okay? So, the Bible defines what a Christian is. Now, Jesus told us what a disciple has to do.

He has to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow the Lord. Now, how many Christians in America have denied themselves, taken up their cross, and followed the Lord, would you say? I mean, really have denied themselves, really have taken up their cross, and really are following Jesus. I'm not talking about church antics or extroverted church behavior.

I'm talking about really, you know that that person is a cross-carrying servant of Christ, would you say? Now, according to the Bible, those are the only Christians. So, how many are there in America? If you want to be a Christian, don't compare yourself with other people. You've got to follow Jesus every day.

Deny yourself. You can't have everything you want. You've got to set your life aside and do what God tells you.

Then you're a Christian. You can do it. Anybody can do it.

It's a choice we make. Shall we stand? We're going to be taking communion, by the way.

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