

Living Without Regret

Tonight, we are going to talk about the saints ruling in the millennial kingdom: one of the most practical subjects in the Word of God. Believe it or not, the subject of the millennial kingdom, Jesus' earthly reign for a thousand years is one of the most prominent themes in Scriptures. Yet it is often neglected, and most believers are pretty vague about it.

THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM IS ONE OF THE MAJOR REVELATIONS

There is so much detail about it particularly in the Old Testament. It is not just prominent; it is practical. Our lives do not make sense even as believers except that we understand the relationship of our struggle in this age to what we are going to do in the age to come.

Without that piece of information in our understanding, we are significantly lacking in terms of perspective. We are constantly trying to rise up, press in, and hang in there; but we do not quite know why. We know it is for God in a big sort of way, but we cannot relate the struggle, and sacrifices of our lives in this age to the age to come in a practical earthly way. Our life is going to have a practical, earthly expression in the age to come. We will talk about that more in a moment.

Roman numeral I. Introduction to the millennial kingdom. John the apostle said in Revelation 20:4-6: "I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. I saw the souls of those...beheaded for their witness to Jesus...they lived and reigned with Christ for a 1,000 years."

In Revelation 20:4: "I saw thrones"—imagine being John, and he saw thrones. What he is seeing are saints on the earth after the Lord returns in places of government. What an incredible insight. This is a biblical revelation in the Old Testament, so it was not a new idea to John.

DANIEL AND KING DAVID ALSO SAW THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

Daniel also saw this in Daniel 7:27: "The greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the saints." Daniel saw thrones, dominion, and he saw human beings ruling on the earth in the glory of God. King David saw this a number of times. So, this was not a new biblical idea to John, but what a startling revelation. Imagine you are the one, and you are seeing human beings in position of government on the earth in the glory of God. Of course, John is thinking undoubtedly somewhere in this process, "Hey, Lord where am I in this process?" You know he is thinking this because back in Luke 9, it was John who basically asked, "Lord can I be number one man in Your kingdom?" So, we know John has this in his spirit.

When he asked the Lord if he could sit at His right hand, he was asking if, “I can sit at Your hand forever in government Jesus?” Jesus undoubtedly appreciated John’s heart because he really took this stuff seriously. What an excellent candidate for God to reveal His revelation about earthly, human government in the glory of God for individuals living in this age. Not everybody is going to have that. Only those who the Lord has counted as worthy, or He has considered them faithful in a way that God calls faithfulness. Many believers are counted as saved, are in the family of God, and loved. The majority of these ones are not those whom I believe that the Lord will call “faithful” in the way that the Lord means when he says faithful.

He may say “forgiven,” and He may say, “beloved,” but I do not think He is going to say “faithful” to the majority of believers throughout history who have received the grace of God. It is something we want to get a vision for and strive after using the biblical concept in Luke 13:24: “strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.” We are told to “strive to enter the narrow gate”—he actually used the word “strive;” of course, there is a negative connotation to that, but there is a positive one. It is exerting energy and really pressing to go the full measure so that you see to it that the Lord calls you “faithful” in that day.

REVELATION 20:4 “I SAW THRONES”

So John saw “government;” he saw thrones, and they sat upon them. He is talking about her saints. Judgment is the ability to make decisions—the ability to evaluate situations and make decisions that count. They are real. Judgment was committed to them. When the Lord returns, we will be with Him on the earth. We are not going away to heaven; heaven is coming to earth. For those of you who are new, it is a profoundly biblical idea from Genesis to Revelation. Jesus’ most famous prayer, “Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” It is talking about the kingdom on the earth.

For two thousand years from the cross to the second coming, or approximately 2,000 years when we die, our spirit goes away to a temporary holding place. It is for approximately 2,000 years when a believer dies that their spirit goes away to heaven, which is far away, and we live before God. It is glorious; it is not the fullness, but it is glorious.

After 2,000 years or whenever Jesus returns, He brings heaven to the earth. When heaven and earth come together on the planet, this is when the two realms coming together. This is where fullness is. That is the fullness of God’s will: God’s plan and God’s intention.

We have this idea that when we are with the Lord. We think that we are on a cloud floating far away from each other. We hate to admit that, but we imagine that heaven seems a little boring. Maybe for a thousand years, it could be cool playing a harp and floating on a cloud. You see someone on another cloud and say, “Hey, how are you doing over there?”

“Fine! How are you doing?”

“Oh I love God!”

“Me too!”

That is not where we are going. We are going to be on the earth, and we are going to have material, physical bodies like we have now, except there will be a superior model—a superior version of what you have now. You think of computers, the new models, and upgrades. You are going to have a physical body, as physical and material as your body is now, but it is going to be a significant upgrade. It will still be physical. You will grab somebody, hug them, and feel their arms. After He came back in the resurrection in Luke 24, Jesus basically said, “Feel Me! See I have bones.”

He was resurrected. It is as if Jesus said, “I have bones,” as He ate food.

The disciples looked at Jesus and were saying, “Wow! It is really You!”

Those who are alive will receive their new body. They come back to the earth with the Lord at the second coming. The bodies who were buried in the ground are raised from the dead; we get bodies at the second coming because we do not need a body in the 2,000 years that the saints are in heaven. We do not need a body to relate to the environment of heaven. We only need a body to relate to the environment of the physical earth. We will need a body, but they do not need a body. King David is up there in his spirit. He does not need a body yet, but he is going to when he comes down to earth.

He will touch the dirt and say, “Wow! I am back in Jerusalem!”

When it says that judgment was committed to them, it means that real decisions are going to be made by saints who count. These decisions last, matter, and make changes. Some folks have the idea that they will be there, and be hooked up to some kind of automatic Holy Spirit IV. Their personality will go away; they will just say the information that comes to them directly. They will have no personality. There is some truth to that: the Holy Spirit will be in us, on us, and around us. We will never have greater communication with the Holy Spirit than this; however, that will not replace our real human personalities. It says that judgment, decisions, or evaluations were committed to the saints.

In the wisdom of God, the saints will make decisions that reflect their own personality in combination with the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, but your own personality will come forth in it. Judgment will be committed. I am captivated by the sentence, “judgment was committed to them” (Rev. 20:4)

“JUDGMENT WAS COMMITTED TO THEM” (REVELATION 20:4)

Real decision-making is committed, or given to real people on the earth who have resurrected bodies. John looks at a sub-unit of those on the thrones; not another group because the first group he sees is the saints in general. Again, not all saints will be in government; all saints will be

loved by God. All saints will love God, but I believe the majority of saints through history will not be in a position of government. They will love the kingdom, and they have a great time; but I believe that when we stand before the Lord, we will long that we were faithful on the earth, if we were not. Some have the idea that when we meet the Lord, it just will not matter. It will matter. It will matter more than we can imagine.

When we look into the eyes of the ones we love so dearly, and begin to grasp what He gave us and did on our behalf, our hearts will be more alive as to the necessity and reality of our faithfulness, or our lack of it in that hour.

Some one may ask, “Well, what about the verse where all tears are wiped away, and all sorrow is gone?” That is true, but that is a thousand years after the millennial kingdom. I believe there will be regret in believer’s hearts, and they will carry that regret for years in this period of time. He will heal His people from regret, but there are a number of verses that I will not go to right now where the Word of God makes clear like 1 John 2:28, he warned them, “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” Obey the Lord so you do not shrink back in shame when He appears in the sky. It is possible that believers will cry, “Oh no!” That reality exists on the day when the Lord calls them. “Oh no! I am not ready...I do not want to meet the Lord!” It says in 1 John 2:28 that in their spirit they will draw back in shame because of how they squandered their life in the presence of indescribable love—that truth will be before them.

VISITATION IN OCTOBER 1978 STANDING BEFORE THE JUDGEMENT SEAT

I had a very powerful visitation of the Lord when I was twenty-three years old—a long time ago. I am fifty now, and it was Oct. 1978. I lived in St. Louis, and it was a life-changing radical arresting experience—a trance. I was caught up, and I experienced it in the spirit; yet, I was still on the earth. I was kneeling before the Lord, and I did not know what was going on. I did not know where I was, or what was going on, but I was kneeling before the Lord. I went to bed one night, and I woke up in this experience. I am kneeling before the Lord, and I am looking into His eyes.

Jesus is staring at me and says one sentence to me. I see His face just like I see your face in the full sense that this experience was completely natural to me. I am looking at Him, and wondering why He is standing there. I am completely perplexed. I am thinking, “This is Jesus! Where am I? How is this possible?” I am touching myself and saying, “I do not know where I am at. I do not know what is happening!”

Jesus makes this startling statement to me. Jesus shows me what He would say to me at the end of my life, if I did not chose the narrow road. This was an incredible grace of God—the fact that He would give me this feeling at age twenty-three. The power of this experience has molded my thinking and my mind. It is not true to say that I think of this every day, but it come before me many many times every year.

SAVED BUT YOUR LIFE WAS WASTED

The Lord is looking at me eye to eye and says, “Saved, but your life was wasted!”

I am thinking, “What?” I not thinking that in a sarcastic way; I am in pain. I am startled; I am shocked! I cannot fathom that He said this to me. I said in my mind, “This cannot be true. I have loved you!” I was a real devoted believer when I was twenty-three years old. I had been walking with a certain amount of zeal for the Lord since I was sixteen years old. I am twenty-three and I knew I was committed to Him.

I said, “Lord, I love you! I love you!”

He did not say another word. He just continued to look me with those eyes. The idea came to my mind very clear by the Holy Spirit, “It is impossible to manipulate the decision in Jesus’ heart. It is impossible to manipulate Him.”

It is impossible to get Him to move in even 1 percent of what He is thinking when He looks at you on that day. You will not change His evaluation of your life 1 percent on that day when we meet Him face to face, and eye to eye. I was saying, “Lord this can not be! This cannot be!”

He just kept looking at me with seriousness; it was not mean, but He was not smiling either. He was looking at me with weightiness and seriousness on His face. It is that face that I can remember even these twenty-seven years later. I remember this face looking at me. I do not want that to happen in a few minutes when I stand before the Lord.

Beloved we are all going to be there in a minute and a half. It may be a few decades, or it may be fifty, sixty or seventy years for some of you; but I tell you, either way, it is a minute and a half: you are going to be standing there looking into those eyes in just a moment.

I said, “This cannot be!” The idea by the spirit came like an arrow, “It is impossible to manipulate this Man. Impossible to change His evaluation even one percent!” I was in pain, and I said, “Okay!” I settled it because it was so powerful that I could not manipulate Him.

So I asked Him, “Can I have another chance?”

I did not realize that I really was not before Him. I did not fully understand that this was my chance. Just like the Lord on that day will say, “There you have it. I gave you all of these years with this insight.” Anyway I asked for another chance. The word came to me again by the Spirit crystal clear Hebrews 9:27: “It is appointed unto men once to die and then the judgment.”

There is no second chance once one has died and stands before the Lord. I then began to sob and weep because I was so sorry that I did not live in the full energy of what the grace of God made available to me—the grace to be abandoned to God completely. I am on the ground on my knees, and I am sobbing. All of a sudden this thing lifts, and I am right on my knees, my shirt is wet from tears. I am a few feet over from my bed. I went to bed over there, and I am kneeling down

over here. I wondered, “How I got from over there to here?” I had no idea, but I was in the exact same posture of that vision.

LIVING WITH NO REGRETS

I had tears coming down upon my shirt. It was gone, but I sat there absolutely stunned. My spirit was trembling. I asked, “What just happened to me?” I remember feeling the weight and the pain of regret. I had the feeling of regret. What it was was actually the grace of God on my life. He was saying to me in that trance, “I do not want this to happen to you many years from now when we meet.” What struck me was it is possible for this to happen to a person who loves God. There is a place of regret that can come. You know I am just going to put those notes aside.

What is striking my spirit right now is the issue that there is regret because tears are wiped away after the millennial kingdom. There is what I consider well-meaning but sloppy and careless exegesis, or interpretation of the Word of God. Some think that it does not matter how we live as long as blow the kiss to Jesus saying, “I love You. You love me—it does not matter.” That is an absolute lie!

Nowhere is it in the Bible does it say this, but it is presented so powerfully in the Western culture in the Church. It is the idea that as we live in the grace of Go, it is bigger than anything that we do, and so there is never any sense of consequence. There is never any regret; there is no sense of loss because the grace of God is bigger than our regret, or loss. There is truth in that, but it is not exactly an accurate statement.

The grace of God is bigger than any of our sin, whenever we repent—that is absolutely true. The grace of God is so huge that we can sin and come to God with genuine repentance. He will not bring that up to us again, hold it against us, and keep us out of His kingdom. It will not keep us out of His kingdom if we genuinely repent. The grace of God is that big, and that is the glorious truth in the midst of a lot of other confusion.

THE GRACE OF GOD

That is true, but the next part is not true: it is not just that grace of God is big enough to forgive us; the grace of God is so big that our careless living and our life of compromise does not have any consequence, or any regret when we meet the Lord. That is not true; there will be much regret even of born-again people. The grace of God will not remove that regret immediately. I do not know when, if, or how it is removed, and I do not want to go there because there is nothing in the Bible about it. The reality of the regret is clearly there. You cannot spend ten years in the Lord living for yourself, come to your senses ten years later, decide to repent, push the delete button, and somehow make that ten years fruitful. When those ten years are gone, it is gone forever. It will never ever be recovered as fruitful. Never! It is lost forever! People talk about when the Lord will restore all. There are all kinds of confusion on how people present that. It is really popular and cool because people feel guilty. They feel bad, regret, and the preacher says, “Everything will be restored,” and that is not really a true statement—not specifically. It is true that our relationship with God will be restored. Let’s face it: that is the big thing, but you cannot lose ten years of a life of compromise as a believer. It cannot somehow be translated into fruitful.

It cannot somehow disappear, as though it does not matter. It really will matter to you on that day. It will matter to you, and it will matter to me. I do not want to lose ten years; I do not want to lose one year. I do not want to lose one month.

Beloved, I am not trying to be melodramatic, but I do not want to live one day. I purposed in my heart many years ago, and I trust that most of you in this room if not all of you have done the same. I do not want to take a full day and determine I am just going to kind of take my chances out on the edges. I will repent tonight and come back. I trust by the grace of God that I have never done that, and I certainly have purposed in my heart that is not the way that I would live for a week, or for a month.

My point is not that I am cool and I am dedicated; that is not my point. My point is a day, a month, a year, let alone ten years of just throwing it to the wind and saying, “Well, I just want to live on the edges of grace, so whatever that means. So I am going to live in some darkness for a while: I will repent at the end of the week.” You do not want to take even a week of your life and do that. I am sure a week of your life in a forty, sixty, eighty, a hundred years time frame is not the weight of your life. That is for sure. For sure, it is small compared to the whole of your life, if you have those many decades.

LIVING EACH DAY FOR THAT DAY

Beloved, I do not want to look in His eyes and tell Him that I consciously spent a day on purpose walking out there knowing that at the end of the day, or the end of the week, I would repent, and try to make it up later. I assure you the day you meet Him eye to eye, you will wish you had never had one day like that. I have plenty of sins I have committed spontaneously that I did not plan; they just are happening, and I hate them.

I do not want to take a day, a week, a month, or a year, and just kind of camp out for a while, and just have confidence in the grace of God that I can swim back to shore before it is too late. Swim way out there, and tell myself that I can get back to shore in good time. Our goal is not to just make it to heaven; our goal is to be found faithful in His Presence in His sight on that day. Is that not our goal?

THE FIRE WILL TEST EACH ONE’S HEART, WORKS AND LIVES

1 Corinthians 3:11-15: “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

I do not want you to have a wrong response to this where you become paranoid, but I want you to have urgency, called the fear of the Lord. I want you to look at the words “suffer loss,” and I want you to think of two words. “Loss” and the next word—“suffer” because both of those words are biblical.

There will be many people on the last day that will lose. They will have loss; they will stand before the Lord, and decades of their lives will be lost. They will have nothing to show: no fruit. Nothing that lasts from a decade—a couple of decades—a month, or a year. I do not know! Beloved, there is real loss, but that is not the end of it. It is suffering loss. What I mean by suffering loss is there will be a real sting of regret. A real pain of regret; it will not be suffering like the unbelievers in the lake of fire—not that kind of suffering. But the pain of loss, and regret will be real. I remember that experience so well; I was in anguish in my spirit because I was face to face with the man who loved me more than I could imagine, and my answer to Him was, “I did not regard or esteem my commitment to Him as worthy of living differently.”

That was the feeling and when I looked in His eyes, I was ashamed, and I realized there was no condemnation in the sense of we are forgiven; we will stand in His kingdom forgiven. We will be secure in His kingdom, but I was ashamed of how I lived. I felt the feeling and the emotion of it. It is biblical to have regret in the presence of God.

Again, you do not hear this talked about; it is intensely unpopular, but beloved pray the prayer. Shock me now. God do not shock me then. I have prayed that prayer for years. Shock me now! Do not shock me then! I do not want to be there where it is impossible to get another take on life again. It was only a visionary experience, but it was terrifying. This is twenty-seven years later, and I still feel the weight of that experience twenty-seven years later. Beloved, ask Him to shock you now. What does that mean? Ask Him, “What are you thinking about my life? I want to know what you are thinking now. How am I measuring up to what you want?”

I do not mean we earn our salvation; this is about responding in gratitude, and what the Bible calls faithfulness. It is responding in gratitude; I am not talking about measuring up, earning anything, but being grateful. Do you know what the word “faithfulness” means at the end of the day? Faithfulness means “follow through;” that is really what faithfulness means. I have good intentions. I do not always follow through on them, but the intentions are good. It is not considered faithfulness. A substitute for the word faithfulness is the word “follow through.”

1 CORINTHIANS 3:15: “HE WILL RECEIVE A REWARD”

I Corinthians 3:15: “If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” Work does not just mean “their ministry,” some people think, “Well, I do not have a ministry, so there is no work to get burned up!” Your work is your life work, how you spent your time, and money. Your whole life after you met the Lord. After you met the Lord, it is the way you have spent your time and money. There are ways to spend your time and money that are not all preaching or praying. There are other ways to spend your time and money in the grace of God, which are valid, and part of the natural cycles of life. There is recreation; there is entertainment, and there is rest. Those are parts of the cycles of life in the grace of God.

I do not want to get you off the hook. The entire Body of Christ is ready to get you off the hook. You really need somebody who will faithfully get you on the hook because when you stand

before the Lord, He is not going to listen to the preachers of our nation when He talks to you. He is going to listen to Himself.

So actually it would do you better, if I went a little more intense. I want to do preach accurately, not more intense than the Word of God is. The entire spirit of our culture is to get us off the hook as though Jesus is going to be manipulated because there is a momentum in the Western Church that does not like this. We think somehow it is going to go away, if we do not like it.

Beloved, the most and I say this in a holy and sacred way: the most outrageous thing happened. It is beyond even exaggeration. God of Genesis one became human. This is outrageous! God the second person of the Trinity steps into the human race and human experience. When He became human, He became human forever.

It is not like Jesus returned back to the Father, and the Father said, “Boy, that was a tough run! Oh my let’s change. Let’s cash in your humanity. Take off the garments and just be only deity. Beloved, when He fully God became fully Man, He will be fully man forever. A billion times a billion years, he will be fully God, but He will be fully a human being as well. For us being human is cool, but when you are God being human is a serious step down. I like being human because I consider where I came from so being human is cool. Where He came from, being human is a serious step down. This God who became human was crushed by the wrath of God.

God the Father turned His wrath and smashed and crushed Him; Satan did not kill Jesus. God the Father crushed Him, so that your debts and my debts would be paid. People, think you can get to heaven this new way: this religious synchronism where all the Hindu, Buddha, Christianity, Judaism, Islam all come together, and come up with one big world religion. We all get there together. There are a lot of Christians buying into that. Well if we really help the Aids victims, we do a lot of humanitarian aid, and we really love people, somehow God will work it out. That is absolutely not true. That is a lie from hell! God became human! Beloved, this is outrageous! This is beyond comprehension. He became human forever, and He was crushed by the wrath of God. It was not for no affect; it had to happen. It absolutely had to happen for you and me to be saved.

I hang around with some friends in Israel. There is this going on in Israel that says, “Well, if they are really committed to the Old Testament, and they fear God in their own way, and they are offended by Jesus because Church history was so bad.” Throw that away; there is not salvation for Jews in Israel apart from being born again and calling upon the name of Yesuha. There is no other way because times were hard for the Jews for the last thousands of years. It is not because God is unkind, it is because it cost God so much. God did not pay even 1 percent more than He had to in order to get the job done. It was required! It was necessary to get you and me forgiven.

In light of that, the fact that we will stand before God and say, “You know I was mostly a westerner and secondarily a Christian.” We will look into the eyes of Jesus, and we will see divinity, humanity, and the mystery will strike us. We will see His nail-pierced hands, and we will see His longing. We will say, “I hate that I lived that way! What was I doing? Why didn’t somebody help wake me up?”

Of course, we all have the Word of God. We cannot blame it on anybody else. Let's look at this again. 1 Corinthians 3:15: "If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

If their life work is burned up, and I am not talking about ministry, although it is a part of it, but I am talking about the way you spend time and money. The way you spend time and money is the whole of your life—it really is. If you figure out, you can accurately look at your calendar, a day-timer, and you recorded it faithfully. You looked at your checkbook five years from now, and it was accurate so you would be shocked. What we do with time and money is the whole of where our life is going. Everything else falls into that. It says that if a man or woman's life work is burned up, they will suffer. They will have the pain of regret stinging their spirits. It will be lost. It will not be where Jesus waves His hand. There is a full recovery of those ten or twenty years forever. It is really lost. The biblical word is "loss."

Now again, somebody can get out on the edges, recover, and their salvation is intact. Everything being restored, meaning their salvation is solid, and they can surely recovery that, but they cannot make up for those years. It says that this man will be saved, but saved as though through fire, which means the fire revealed the temporary dimension of how he invested his life only in temporal things. He will be saved although there will be a reality that he invested his life mostly in temporal things while on the earth.

KINGDOM PARADIGM: ETERNAL NOT TEMPORAL CIRCUMSTANCES

In 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: "Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

We do not want to look at things, which are seen because they are temporal. We want to invest our life in things that are unseen that you cannot measure. It is not just that we invest our lives in unseen angels, or the unseen kingdom, which is far away. There is an element of truth about that, but the point of it is that it is unseen. I cannot measure my life right now; it is unseen. What I do with my hands I can measure; I can measure how much money I have generated. A person can look at their business, but the things that are unseen such as humility, meekness, the heart of prayer, the abandonment to God, you cannot get a handful of that and measure it; it is unseen. You are always wondering where you are in all this, and it is as if Paul said, "Throw yourself into the immeasurable, unseen realm that is eternal and will last forever." It is not just that the city of God is unseen and far away; that is true too, but the way we spend our life cannot be seen. The way some of you are living in the most positive sense: the guy next to you cannot see it and measure it and say, "Wow!" He will not pat you on the back because that is your secret history in God. It cannot be measured; you cannot get a handful of it, but it is eternal, and it lasts forever.

2 Corinthians 4:18: “While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” Here is what happens: when the fire comes, it reveals that their life was invested mostly in that which was temporary. The guy is saved, but he is saved with the reality and awareness that most of his life has been exposed as being invested in temporal vanity. I want to be saved, but I do not want to be saved as though by fire, but my life has been exposed as being mostly thrown into the temporary realm that does not last. That is the part I do not want.

GOLD, SILVER, PRECIOUS STONES VERSUS WOOD, HAY AND STUBBLE

Let’s look at 1 Corinthians 3:12, “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire.” Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and straw; wood, hay, and straw are not sinful things. That is another category of legitimate things in building, but they are not stable. A lot of people invest their lives in wood, hay and stubble. When they stand before God, it is opposite of humility. I do not mean it is blatant sin, but it just a quality of life that is just not in the Sermon on the Mount. It is not the things that God is going to esteem. When we stand before the Lord, He will look at how well we served, our perseverance of our love, and steadiness towards Him. That will be gold, and that will shock us! God will look at the parts of our life that those around us looked at and considered were an utter waste of time. God will give you gold and silver for it.

You are going to ask, “Are you kidding? I was mumbling and fumbling along in that season. I could hardly figure anything out. I was confused, and it seemed like I was in a fog. I was trying to sort out my life. I was serving people, and I was giving my heart to God.”

GREAT IN THE SIGHT OF GOD IS NOT NECESSARILY GREAT TO MAN

Some of you will be shocked when the Lord hands you a bag of gold for that season of your life. Some of the things we were impressed by that people were patting us on the back for, the Lord will say, “You know it was not wrong in itself, it just is not going to last. I do not esteem it as valuable in the eternal kingdom.”

“But Lord, that was my biggest crowd, and that was the book I got the most applause for.”

The Lord might say, “Well, I appreciate it, but it does not make it to the library of heaven. It is gone!”

“You are kidding! I thought when everybody was so happy about it that it must have been the big one!”

“Well, they were happy about it. They patted you on the back and gave you a paycheck, but it is straw, wood and hay. It means nothing to Me.” There are so many applications for this, but wood, hay and straw is not sin. It is futility and not sin. Sin is overt, and it is specifically disobeying the Holy Spirit in an overt way. It has an element of rebellion to it. This is just living unconcerned with obeying God in a really specific way. I do not want to live my life with lack of

quality. I do not want my life common. I want my life excellent! I do not mean excellent in the sight of men; I want it excellent in the sight of God.

Sometimes what God calls excellent, men call foolishness. Beloved, you can live with an excellent life, and never ever make any fanfare in the eyes of men. You may never be noticed by anybody, but your life will have an excellence in it before God.

1 Corinthians 3:13 says “each mans work will become clear.” It will not only become clear to the people around you it will become clear to you. Our life is not clear to us right now. I look at my life now and I say, “Lord, there are so many voices even in the Church of how to measure what is right.”

Beloved, there are so many voices coming of what real ministry is, what is real, and what is true; what is right, and what is wrong. There are so many voices that most of us are not clear about what our life is about. We kind of live from one season to the next living for the applause of whoever we respect. If they validate us, we feel good, and if they get mad about it, we feel bad about it.

LIVING FOR AN AUDIENCE OF ONE

You know what that is like? That is living tossed to and fro like a ship out at sea. If the most recent, cool group of people is excited, then you are at peace, even if God is not excited. Even if the most recent group of people in your life are mad, then you are depressed, even if God is excited about what you are doing. My point is to so many of us, our life is not clear to us because there is only one standard of clarity, and that is called the Word of God. Nobody can give it to you. I can give you some thoughts to inspire you, but no one can tell you if what you are doing is right or wrong at the end of the day.

The Word of God is the only judge when I stand before God. None of you get to vote about my life. I do not get to vote on your life when you stand before God. I do not get to say, “Lord, IHOP got so big, and we had the biggest conferences. We filled up Arrowhead Stadium.”

The Lord would say, “That does not mean anything to me...I want to talk about you, and how you responded to Me in the secret places of your heart. The crowds are not the point. I am convinced we will be in Arrowhead Stadium in the days ahead, just down the road in the glory of God before the second coming.” But that is not what the Lord is going to talk to you or me about when it happens. He is going to talk about what you and I did on Monday afternoon, Saturday night—not for a year at IHOP-KC, but the whole of your life. Our life will become clear, and it is serious. Our life is not so clear now. Our life is clearer if the Word of God is giving us instruction.

Paul was pretty clear about his life; he made some pretty bold statements towards the end that he was sure that his evaluation was right. I appreciate that boldness in 2 Timothy 4 when Paul talks about his life. Wow! How I would love to be able to say to God those things facing death. He was saying them under the anointing of the Spirit. He really knew that he knew that he got the

highest marks. Wow! What a statement! I can assure you of this: your life will become clear one day, and no one will change what Jesus says about your life. For that day will declare it!

The applause of man is not going to declare the success of your life. They can open all the biggest doors for you, but that is not what is going to declare the truth of your life. Beloved, it works the other way works too. They might all write you off, but that does not declare the quality of your life either.

THE CROSS, JUDGMENT SEAT, AND FIRE OF GOD ARE GREAT EQUALIZERS

Only one man can do that: only one man declares, and it is on that day that the truth of your life is revealed. It will be revealed by fire. Fire is impartial: when it touches hay, it burns it. When fire touches gold, it purifies it. The fire is impartial: the fire does not know a double standard. The judgment seat of Christ is the great equalizer. You, Billy Graham and Paul the apostle, are all the famous and not famous Christians; it is the great equalizer. Everybody is standing on equal base that day. So the fire is the revealer; the temporary is revealed as temporary. It has to be. God's fire cannot lie! You may say, "Wait! Wait! Stop the fire! Let me tell you that I had a tough time when I was on the earth, and they did not really appreciate me so I was. Stop the fire. So I was a little more energetic about promoting myself. No listen! Listen!"

The fire is coming! The fire will not listen to any of that. We can offer our stories and arguments. I remember I knelt and looked at Him and said, "No!"

The voice of the Spirit came and said, "It is impossible to manipulate this Man!"

I cried in pain. He has this holy stubbornness about Him. He has this clarity of truth that cannot bend, and when the fire comes, the temporary becomes evident. The eternal becomes evident as well. I tell you now, and you know it anyway. The eternal are the things of humility, obedience, and pouring ourselves out in the presence of God, serving one another, taking the last place, locking into Him, and finding our approval from Him. The fire will show that forth as eternal. The fire will test what sort of work each man has. Everyone of us will be tested by that fire.

All of 2 Corinthians is about eternity. 2 Corinthians 5:1-8 is about receiving our resurrected body. 2 Corinthians 5:9, Paul says: "Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent"—meaning whether we are alive in our body, or dead, and with the Lord our aim—"to be well pleasing to Him." The "therefore" is referring to the fact that because there is a real resurrection, we make it our ambition, a clear goal, to be pleasing to God. We are not trying to fake God out. We make it our clear goal because that is all that is going to last.

J. Hudson Taylor, the famous missionary to China in the 1850's, was a medical doctor from England and my first hero. When I was seventeen, I read three of his biographies in my high school days. I wanted to be J. Hudson Taylor. His famous quote was, "Only one life will soon be past; only what is done for Christ will last."

“ONLY ONE LIFE WILL SOON BE PAST, ONLY WHAT IS DONE FOR CHRIST”

He led thousands to the Lord, and he lived the most abandoned life of sacrifice serving the peasants of China. He was the first to take on their clothing, lifestyle, and lived in the throngs of poverty with them. He led thousands to the Lord. It was a great missionary move and because he had this great medical career ahead of him in England, they told him he wasted his life, so he ended up with a life motto, “Only one life will soon be past; only what is done for Christ will last.” That is what he told his friends back in England who beckoned him to come back home and seize the opportunity for the great medical career he had when he went back home. He said, “What? In a moment I am going to be dead and only what I invested in that Man—the thing that was in his heart was that is the only thing that will last.”

2 Corinthians 5:9: “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.” Therefore because we really are going to die, there really is a resurrection, it really matters and therefore, let’s make it our ambition to be pleasing to Him—not the Church world, or the ministry opportunities—let’s be pleasing to One Man. What impresses Him is so exciting because what impresses Him does not require that you be famous or have great abilities.

What impresses Him you can read in Matthew 5-7. You can be the most uneducated person in the world with no friends, no special gifting, no money, and you can still do Matthew 5-7—that impresses him. I love that! Everybody can do that!

2 CORINTHIANS 5:10: “WE MUST ALL APPEAR BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT”

2 Corinthians 5:10: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” What? Bad? It cannot be bad because if it is bad then I am not forgiven. I believe there are two applications to the word “bad.” Here they are and it is in the Bible, so you cannot get rid of it. You can get your little razorblade out, but it is not going to do you any good. When you open that page, you are going to have a hole in it, and you will know something is wrong. You cannot get rid of that Word.

By the way, Solomon used that same word in Ecclesiastes 12:14: “For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.” I will give you the verse, if you want to write it down. Whatever you do now, know this: that at the end, fear God because He is going to bring every act into judgment—good and bad. He had this both with good and bad. After I had this experience, I studied this stuff so much in depth, and bought every book I could find on it, which was almost none. There are very few books on the judgment seat of Christ, but I have found more over the years. I have read twenty or thirty of them over the years, and maybe half of them are by people who have experienced it. That is what I wanted to read, so that I could see what they saw. Lots of different things are emphasized, but almost nobody comments on the word “bad.” It lulls us to sleep. I am not saying I have the fullness of the meaning, but I believe I have two biblical, clear insights on the word “bad.”

REPENT WHEN YOU SIN

Number one: if you do a certain act, and you repent of it, it can get erased from the record. We all know that, but here is the problem though. Do you know how many sins, how much speech, how much bitterness, how much money and time we spend that we do not call “wrong” and never repent of it? It is as if the Lord says, “If you have the boldness not to repent of it, you will answer for it on that day. If you have the clarity to repent of it, it will never ever be mentioned to you again.” If you do not have the clarity to repent of it, and as a matter of fact, the nature of our hearts is to justify ourselves all the time.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”

We might say, “That was not wrong. That lady was off, and it was my leadership responsibility to make it clear that she is off.” Sometimes it really is—that is actually a biblical concept, but the Lord says, “OK, you will take this one to the judgment seat, right? You are not going to call it slander right?”

“Nope, I am pretty sure I was right!”

“OK! We will talk about it.”

And you know what it really is biblical is to expose wrong things in wrong people; it really is. So as a leader, this verse, it is called the fear of God, and it troubles me. I see it, and I think, “Is that something I have to repent of?” If you do not repent of it now, you do not lose your salvation, but it goes into the mix of when God evaluates your life?

We get into a way that we spend time, money, energy, and especially our words. We say “no,” and we get defensive. We self justify. The Lord says, “That is OK. Take it with you, and you and I will talk about that.”

“Lord, you know what I think. That was wrong use of my words, my time, my energy, and my passions.”

God answers, “Be clear ,you are almost there.”

We respond, “I was wrong, and I am officially repenting of it.”

God says, “Delete!” Now make it part of the testimony of your heart, meaning that when you do it again, you have to say in your conscience, “I am now doing that—that which I repented of a week ago, or a month ago. Yes, I am doing it again, but somehow it feels more righteous this time. I do not feel quenched; yet in my spirit, so I go a little further out on the ice. I feel pretty

good!” I get back to shore, and think, “You know, it was probably sinful a month ago, but I am not sure. Maybe I can find grace in it this way.”

The Lord says, “You want to take that one with you?”

“I do not know. Maybe, I had better repent of that one too.”

Here is the point: if you have the boldness to justify it, we do. We invest our lives in many things that they will not be happy about when they come back again. Again, it will not lead to the loss of their salvation, but it will be in the mix of how their life is evaluated. When we confess it and are cleansed of it, it marks our spirit even though we confessed it and did it again. You confess it the second, third, fourth, and fifth time; if you are sinning with somebody, you look that person in the eye and you say, “You know what I said just now...it was sinful what I said. I was kind of complaining. It was sinful.” You confess your sins specifically to the people you are sinning with.

“You know when we went out to that situation, we drank that, and we did a little too much, and we said hey the grace of God...I want to say that was sinful.” The guy may think you are being religious, but they can say whatever they want, but you do not want to carry this to the judgment seat of Christ.

CONFESSING SINS TO THE PERSON YOU SINNED WITH

So beloved, the Scripture talks about confessing our sins to one another; it is not just confessing your sin to one another, or to God, or other people out there, but confessing to the person you sinned with: the person you went to the party with, the person you had this slanderous dialogue with, the person you were proud in front of, the person that you sinned sexually with, you look at them, and tell them it was sinful. It was not OK, and you look them in the eye. It will mark your heart to call it “sin” to the person you did the event with. I am not just talking about sex; more than anything it is about our words, our time, and energy. How we spent our life in these last years. I want to give myself to God and I am calling that sinful.

I tell you if you confess your sins to the guy you got proud with, you go tell them you were proud, I do not mean you stand in the congregation and yell, “I was proud.” And everyone says, “Oh you are so humble!”

You go to the guy, you look him in the eye, and say, “In that conversation we had yesterday, I was proud.” It is way more affective than just saying it to God, or just making it a blanket statement. So it is good, or it is bad. What we have done—good or bad—it gets into the mix. Another way it is bad is the feeling of regret about the wasted years.

WASTED YEARS

That is a second application how it can be something that we have done is bad; it is wasted years. I am going to take you to three more verses. Beloved, do not let anyone talk you out of this. Your goal is not to feel comfortable, but to feel right in the presence of God. For some Christians, their

goal in life is just to feel good about today. I do not want to feel like I am doing wrong. Beloved, this is not going to go away. Jesus is really an intense person. It is not going to go away because you feel badly about it. Repent of it; be serious about it, do not cover it up, or candy coat it in your thinking. Be honest with God, and do business with Him for real.

2 JOHN 1:8: “RECEIVE A FULL REWARD”

John 1:8: “Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.” I wish it did not say we, down in the margin it says you, in the NAS, the NIV, the RV, all say “you,” but the NKJ says “we,” but I believe it should be “you.” Almost all translations say “you.” 1 John 1:8: “Look to yourself that you do not lose the things that you worked for,” or “Take stock, look to yourself, take inventory that you do not lose the things you worked for but that you would receive a full reward.”

Beloved, you can be diligent in the Lord for ten years, and then you can live another way the next ten years; the memory of your diligence in days past, you can lose what you have gained in God and not end up with a full reward. This is real. I know more and more people, the older I get because this is how it works: When you get older, the number increases of people who were on fire for God in their twenties and thirties, but they are stalled out in their forties and fifties, and they are losing the full reward of what they would have had previous years before. Their lives get corroded and dull. I want to say this again: look to yourself because you can lose the things you have labored for in earlier days, and it is very possible that you will not receive a full reward unless you look to yourself. I do not want to be more carried along by the sentiment of the Body of Christ of the day and the positive outlook. We are going to stand before God one day.

1 JOHN 2:28: “WHEN HE APPEARS”

1 John 2:28: “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” One translation says so that we do not shrink back at His coming. Look at this it is a stunning statement: “Little children, abide in Him,” in other words, “abide in Him” means living in Him fully given to Him. Why? So that when He appears, in his second coming, you have confidence when He appears, and you are not drawing back in shame. What an interesting statement, and this is the second coming, but it also means the day of a person’s death. How many believers on the day of their death at that final moment say, “Oh, I wish I had lived those last ten years different! Oh no!”

And I tell you it is lost forever—that wasted ten years. People have shame; that does not mean condemnation. It means that they have regret about how they spent the last ten years. It does not mean that in the presence of God, they do not have confidence that they are saved. It means that when they meet face to face, they have a negative feeling about answering for how they spent their time, money, and the whole thing. I do not want to be ashamed. It is not an issue of not being sure of my salvation. That is all some folks can think about. Shame has to do with salvation, or not salvation. There is no condemnation concerning salvation: we are sure we are saved, but an entirely different matter is how we are evaluated in that day.

I want to look Him in the eye, and say with the fullness of my strength, my weakness, and brokenness, “I gave myself to You; not to please this group, that group, or to get a reputation, but because I knew that one day, you and I would talk. That is the logic that you and I want. Now I am very aware tonight that I was specifically directed tonight because of people’s lives. There are a handful of people in this room who are at a crossroad in their lives. You may be only twenty-two years old because what you are going to do in the next two, three, or four months will determine what you are going to do in your thirties and forties. Some of you may be sixty and seventies.

I have preached enough to know that I was clearly redirected for the sake of mercy, for some people here tonight. I am saying to you that if this strikes you, take it seriously because here is the compound interest problem. You hear this: your heart gets stung. You forget it in a day, or two. You meet the Lord one day. He will say, “I even gave a witness to you when you were twenty-two years old in that auditorium I spoke face to face to you through that guy. You said, ‘yes,’ but you threw it off. You cast it off.” Even the witness that you are receiving tonight will part the equation, part of the accountability before the Lord. I am not talking about how much God loves you. We are not talking about how much He cares about you—that is an entirely different subject. I am talking about how we answer to Him on that day.

WHAT DO I STILL LACK?

Matthew 19:20: “The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?” Here is the question of the hour, “What do I still lack?” Here is my point: this is a great question for you to ask a thousand thousand times in your earthly life. It is a question I ask the Lord. I just use the phrase, “What do I lack?” In other words, not to be saved, but what is lacking in my life that You and I are going to talk about on the last day. Tell me now Lord, do not shock me then!”

The Lord speaks to me and says, “The way that you speak; there is too much fleshliness in some of the things you say. Some of the things that you do here and there. If you will deal with it now, we will not talk about them then.” Beloved I encourage you to ask the question in Matthew 19:20, “What do I lack Lord? I want to stand perfect (mature) before you whenever that day comes, I want it to be joyful.” Paul, the apostle, had the assurance that he was complete. It was clear to him that he had done that which was complete.

“PERFECT AND COMPLETE IN ALL THE WILL OF GOD” COLOSSIANS 4:12

Colossians 4:12: “Epaphras . . . always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Paul labors. Why? So you would be perfect and complete in your obedience in the will of God. He is praying, “Oh God, I know that one day, they are going to meet you. I know they have a tendency to get off. Oh, God help them!” He prays that they would stand perfect and complete. That is not just the knowledge of the will of God like go right instead of left. There are elements of what am I supposed to do, but that is not what that verse means mostly. It is not for direction, but completion of the will of God. He says, that he is praying, laboring and contending that for the grace of God you would not lack anything, but would be perfect and complete in our obedience. That is the issue here. That is

what Paul prayed in 2 Thessalonians 1:10-11: “On that day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you. With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.”

“TO BE WORTHY OF HIS CALLING” 2 THESSALONIANS 1:11

Paul prayed that they would be worthy; they would be complete. They would fill up their obedience in the will of God.

Let’s stand.

MINISTRY TIME

Now this is the kind of message where I have to repent. We all have to repent. I mean for real! If you do not have to repent, you are not listening. You think you are in bad shape. I have to go home with me. This is ringing in my spirit right now. I mean for real, it is heavy today. Perhaps the Lord is saying, “Mike, you were one the guys you were preaching to.”

Actually, there is truth to that. “Lord, we want to stand perfectly assured. We want to stand perfect and complete in our obedience in the will of God. We want to obey you even in our weakness. We want the editing process of the grace of God to say, ‘You obeyed me completely!’”

The Lord is kind. He edits with great grace, if we will be honest. Beloved, if we will repent of it, He will drop it. He will be very generous, if we will be very honest. This is only bad news, if we are not honest. But to the honest heart, there is much grace. To the dishonest heart, right in the middle of the Church, they will answer for their dishonesty.

Amen.