

### Real Life is More Than Survival

Over the past few weeks I have been doing a series about things concerning the end of time. I've talked about the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and how that return of Christ is described in the Bible. I have also discussed some of the events that the bible predicts have to happen before the Lord Jesus returns.

The bible is filled with prophecies about the end. And one of the things that has proven the authority of the bible in the minds of many people is the accuracy of the bible's prophecies. There is no prophecy in the bible that is ever proven false. You may know that there were some 300 prophecies regarding the coming of Jesus Christ and they were amazingly precise.

For those of you who struggle whether the bible really is God's Word, you may want to really consider this whole issue of prophecy. As I said, there were several hundred prophecies in the Old Testament written many hundred years before Jesus ever walked around in this world, predicting precisely the City that Messiah would be born in, the exact time in history the Messiah would be born in, His lineage, that is all of His ancestors. There were prophecies concerning the exact day and time that Jesus would be crucified, and there are actual prophecies in the Old Testament that Messiah had to be crucified. There are other prophecies regarding Messiah rising from the dead. There are prophecies about nations, and about certain kings and world leaders.

Everyone of these prophecies has been accurately fulfilled to the letter. Which, for those of you again who wonder about the authenticity, authority of the bible, whether it is just sort of a book of religious sayings and religious inspiration, or whether in fact God has spoken through the bible. One of the great convincing proofs for you may be considering reading some bible prophecies and their fulfillment. And if you are interested in the subject I can point you toward certain books. One great book on the subject is Evidence that Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell. You may be able to obtain a copy of that in our bookstore.

In any case, there are some prophecies that still await fulfillment regarding the second coming of the Lord Jesus, and in those prophecies there are predictions regarding the rise of a world governmental figure who will combine religion and government together in a powerful union to oppose Christians and oppose Jesus. This person's name is anti-Christ. We looked at the rise of anti-Christ and what anti-Christ would do a few weeks ago. We also saw that there is another prediction in the bible, that the gospel has to penetrate every people group, every tribe, and language has to hear about and receive the message of salvation through Christ. And a third prophecy is that the Jewish people as a whole, as a nation, will turn to Jesus in faith before the Lord returns. These are some of the eagerly awaited prophetic words that the bible predicts, and since the bible has never erred before, we are confidently waiting for the fulfillment of these things before Jesus' glorious return.

Now the reason why I started this series, I've said on several occasions, is because I think that many, many people live without hope, a clear sense of the future, and a clear perspective of the future in our culture.

Several years ago Christopher Lash wrote a book called The Minimal Self, in which he suggested that the prospect of living with atomic weapons has shifted our cultures attitude from developing a life and long term thinking to simply surviving through the week. I don't know if that is the case, that because of the prospect of the bomb people got into a mere survival mentality, but I do know that many, many people that I speak to live with the attitude If I could just get through today I will be OK, if I could just survive the week. Very few people, very few businesses engage anymore in long term planning. Management books now suggest that you ought not to plan beyond six months into the future because of the repeated societal changes. Whether it is because things are changing so rapidly or because of the overwhelming fears people have, I see many people being satisfied with mere survival.

As a little fun exercise some time ago I went to the bookstore and looked up the titles of the books that I could find that had the word survive or survival in their titles, to see if we were really addicted to mere survival as Christopher Lash said, and I found that we really are. I found titles like How to Survive a Bad Marriage, Surviving Sexual Abuse. Another was Ten Steps to Parental Survival, what a great way to live with your kids, what a tremendous vision, Ten Steps to Parental Survival. Still another title read How to Survive the Next Stock Market Crash. These are hot sellers.

There are Christian books that are filled with the word survival in their title. Jesus didn't come to merely allow us to survive. One of the most famous verses in the gospels is found in the book of John, in John 10 Jesus said, I came that they may have life and that they may have it abundantly. I came that they might have life and they might have it to the full.

I have come to the conviction that living the abundant life a large part turns on ones ability to grasp the future. Without the future, without something to live for, and something to die for, life boils down to mere survival, just getting through the day, getting through the next hour, this weekend, this week. That is not the good news of Christianity. That is not the good news that Jesus came to announce. So, in continuing this series today's talk is going to be called Real Life is More Than Survival.

PRAY.

As we consider together the idea that real life is more than just surviving, more than just getting by, more than just enduring the moment. As we consider together the idea that real life has something to do with gaining a reason to live and a reason to die that's powerful, motivating and will fuel our passions.

I want to look at an example of a man who discovered real life and the man's name was Abraham. Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 11. We're going to learn a few things about finding real life from father Abraham. Hebrews 11:8 says; By faith Abraham, when he was called obeyed, by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise as in a foreign land dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of

the same promise. For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

I think there are a few things here in the example set by Abraham that teach us about going beyond survival and finding real life. The first lesson that we need to recite to ourself if we are to go beyond mere survival is very simple. It is the lesson that this world is not our home. Verse 9 says, By faith Abraham lived as an alien in the land of promise as in a foreign land dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise. When we read about Abraham in the bible, one of the things that characterized the life of Abraham that he lived in the land of promise as a sojourner, as a stranger, as an alien.

It says in Acts 7 in the speech of Stephen, the martyr, that God gave Abraham no inheritance in the land, not even a foot of ground. He never really had a piece of this earth to call his own. He lived in a tent, not in a permanent house.

See, I am convinced that one of the main lessons that we need to learn, to really find life, is this very simple lesson that this world is not our home and has never intended to be our home.

Part of the great frustration that people continually run into is the attempt to find in this life and in this world real satisfaction and real fulfillment for our deepest hungers and needs. We hunger for life and experience of life and we search for it in our career and we search for it in getting a bigger house, and we search for it in vacations, and in the recognition of our peers and relationships. And the harder we search for it in this world, the more illusive real life becomes. In fact, those who search hardest for real life in this world find themselves most disappointed.

You know, the whole book of Ecclesiastes in the bible was written to simply tell us that ultimate satisfaction and ultimate fulfillment cannot be found in this world.

This world as we look at it from the perspective of the bible is like most of our charge cards. They are charged up to the limit, we want to make another purchase, and we can't, we have reached our credit limits. There is something we want, we long for, we put our card down, but we can't do it because we've simply run out of funds. This world has a limited pool of satisfaction. And once you make the withdrawals that you can make, it is gone. Most of us are charged up to the limit in terms of what we can find in this life.

Then, we reach the point that the author of Ecclesiastes reached, where we say, you know, it seems so empty, so disappointing. I have looked into relationships and sex and many, many people had dozen of sexual experiences and at the end of it they feel so barren and so empty. They have gotten all the stuff and it still hasn't given them real life. They reach a place in their career where they got all of the pomp and all of the position, and it still doesn't fill the thirst in our souls.

And now that you are married you say, is that it? Is that all there is? Because there is a hunger and a thirst for more, and you are not able to pull it out of your marriage.

If only in the 90's we could recover a view that Christians have had for really most of Christian history, a very clear understanding that this world is not our home. That to use the story prodigal son, we are living in the far country away from our fathers home. For those of you who are not familiar with story of the lost son, it was a story that Jesus told.

He told a story about a boy who was kind of a rebel, went to his father for his share of the inheritance now. When his father gave him the inheritance, he took off and went into the far country away from his fathers home, away from the enjoyment of his fathers company and his care, and his fathers protection and love. He went away into what Jesus calls the far country. He spent all of his inheritance and when he spent it he had to sell himself to the local farmers and began living in a pigsty eating the food that was fit for pigs.

The far country is a picture, an image of what life in this world really is like. We are away from the fathers home in heaven. Is it any wonder that living now in the far country, in the pigsty, away from the father, and away from our try homes should result in us being dissatisfied and being disappointed. And feeling like there ought to be more, but we don't quite have it yet, and we don't have it now. Is it at all surprising that we even as believers feels like we tasted a little bit of the fathers home, but we haven't got it to the degree that we want it.

You know, as I see it, there are three options that a person can take to the discovery that they are in the far country, away from the fathers home. Or to put it more simply, there are three options a person can take to the feeling inside that things are not quite right. That I am dissatisfied and somewhat uncomfortable with my life as it is.

The first two options I believe are the options exercised chiefly by people living in the 90's and by most Christians as well living in the 90's.

The first option that we can take is we can try to pretty up the pigsty. To make our environment, this world, feel a lot more like home.

If you have every gone camping. My wife and I do a lot of tent camping. We have done tent camping for the last dozen years or so, all around really the eastern half of the United States. Where ever we go to one of these national parks or state parks, there is always an area of the park where people basically drive up to the park in their houses. You see we have our tent and a little grill and a few other things, a chair and so on. Then there are the people who drive up, you know in there mammoth Winnabegas. I mean these things are longer than Grey Hound buses and cost twice as much. Not only are they consuming massive amounts of full and electricity to run their central air conditioning through the Winnabega all night. If you look into the window they have the little glow on of their VCR, microwave inside, the showers, and the ping pong tables. I mean literally, you see the people and they bring there own turf with them. Have you ever noticed that? Because nature is not accommodating to these folks. They don't want the bugs and all of that, so they roll up a piece of astroturf, this is true. In the front yard of their Winnabega they roll this astroturf out where they can sit on astroturf outside and enjoy the country.

And I think that is a picture of what a lot of us do. We try to sink down roots in this world and make the world a lot more accommodating to our lives. We purchase more things, we search our more relationships, and we deepen our dependence on people. A part of making the far country more amenable to us is the whole move in the 60's of trying to reform the world. That through political involvement alone we are going to change the world and make it a much better place. Well, it can happen to some degree, but there needs to be a recognition that we are still in the far country. Well, that is the first option. We try to pretty up the world around us.

The second option of course is to simply is to say to yourself that maybe the world is functioning OK, but my dissatisfaction means that there is something wrong with me.

You know, in discovering that we are living in an environment in which we don't fit, it is kind of like being in another country. I recently went to Russia and you immediately recognize that as a foreign visitor to a country like Russia that you don't fit. You go out on the street and everybody is talking and yelling in a language that you don't understand, and you can't read the signs. People are pushing you and they are talking to you but you can't understand it. And they are wearing different kind of clothing, and their customs are different, and they are eating different kinds of food. When you are in another country you feel so foreign. And so what you can try to do is, if your forced to live there is accommodate yourself to it. To learn the language, to conform to the customs, to learn to enjoy the food, learn to read and learn the way that things go there. As when in Rome do as the Romans do. When in Russia do as the Russians do. When in Upper Arlington, live they way that everyone else lives in Upper Arlington. There are very few of us that have learned the lesson of Abraham, which is to live in defiance of our surrounding. To live as people who don't have an inheritance in this world. To live as tent dwellers. But that is what most of the New Testament calls us to. If you read in 1 Corinthians 15:19, I am going to cite a few verses for you. 1 Corinthians 15:19; Paul writes; If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to pitied more than all men. We've got to have something beyond this life, how about this. Dear friends, from I Peter 2; Dear friends I urge you as aliens and strangers in the world to abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul. Or how about this, in 1 John 2; Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. Everything in the world, the cravings of the simple man, the lust of his eyes, the boast of what he does comes not from the Father, but from the world. And the world and its desires pass away, but the man or woman who does the will of God lives forever. The implications of simply coming to the perspective on a day by day, moment by moment recognition that this world is not your home, are just staggering.

Let me just suggest a few of the implications for us. But I believe this simple statement "This world is not my home" has implications for everything that we do and think, and all of our attitudes, and the whole way we live. I'll just suggest a few examples though. Psychology Today wrote an article several years ago discovering a new kind of depression, Psychology Today called it The Boomer Blues. It said of the baby boom generation, of which I am a part, it said in the baby boom generation, that post war generation that runs from the end of the II World War until about 1964. It said that about one-third of women in their late 30's will experience significant, serious bouts of depression. One out of three women in their late 30's in this baby boom generation will experience a significant bout of depression. Maybe you are one of the three. It went on to say our grandmothers had only about a three percent chance of experiencing significant depression at the same age. They all this the Boomer Blues. Then the article went on to theorize why there has been such a massive ten to eleven fold increase in just a couple of generations in the raid of depression. I would like to suggest that our grandmothers had far more realistic expectations of what this world could deliver. That we are products of a

generation of an era of such massive expectations regarding what we could have by way of finances and what we could have by way of emotional health, and what we could have by way of relationship, and education and possibilities in this world. We find ourselves repeatedly and sadly disappointed.

That this world is not my home, that I cannot expect to be ultimately filled career wise, relationship wise, emotionally, financially, educationally, in my body and what I look like. What a profound thought for baby boomers. That this world is not my home has profound implications regarding the way we view death and suffering.

We boomers find it increasingly difficult to deal with death, death of a child, the death of our parents are different than the Christians thought 100-200 years ago, 1000 years ago about this world and the next.

I want to read to you an excerpt of a letter by a great Christian man named Jonathan Edwards. He wrote to his son on the occasion of one of his sons friends. And I want to note at the front end that Jonathan Edwards, that his son was only 9 years old. Edwards had sent his 9 year old son out to a frontier village away from him and his wife, so that his 9 year old son could learn an American Indian dialect, this was in 1755. He sent his 9 year old away from home so that his son could learn a Indian dialect in order that later on his son could learn to be a missionary to an Indian tribe. And this is what Edwards writes, he says "Dear child, though you are a great way off from us, yet your are not our of our minds, I am full of concern for you, often think of you and often pray for you.

Though you are at so great a distance from us and from all your relationships, yet this is a comfort to us that the same God that is here is also at Anahawkguaha, the Indian village where he was, and that though you are out of sight and out of our reach, you are always in Gods hands, who is infinitely gracious." Parents listen to this. Though you are out of our sight and out of our reach, you are always in Gods hands who is infinitely gracious, and we can go to Him and commit you to his care and mercy. And here is Edwards counsel to a 9 year old. "Take heed that you don't forget or neglect Him. Always set God before your eyes and live in His fear, and seek Him everyday with all diligence. For He and He only can make you miserable or happy as He pleases, and your life and health and the eternal salvation of your soul, and all in this life and all that is to come depends on His will and good pleasure." Now, listen to the way Edwards reports the death of his sons friends. " This week before last on Thursday, David died, whom you knew and used to play with, and who was your friend and who used to live at our house. His soul has gone into the eternal world. Whether he was prepared for death, we don't know. But we know that this was a loud call of God to you, to prepare you for death. You can see my son that those that are young die, as well as those who are old. Your friend David was not very much older than you. Remember what Christ said, that you must be born again or you can never see the Kingdom of God. Never give yourself any rest until you have good evidence that you are converted and became a new creation. We hope that God will preserve your life and health, and will return you to us again in and in safety. But always remember that life is uncertain, you know not how soon you must die, and therefore, you need to be ready."

And then he goes on with a few remarks. "Your aged grandfather and

grandmother, when I was at Windsor gave their love to you. We all here do the same, I am your tender and affectionate father, Jonathan Edwards."

What a different view of death, recognizing the uncertainty of this life and this world.

You say is that it? Sounds fatalistic, and rather pessimistic. This world is not our home and you just need to come to a recognition of that.

Well, the first part of prescribing a cure for somebody is to allow them to see that they have a sickness. The first part of coming to grips with our dissatisfaction is recognizing we are suppose to be dissatisfied. This world is not suppose to give us ultimate answers and that our desires to reach into each other and to reach into our job and to dig roots in this world will only always be continually frustrating.

Well, lets move and take a look at the second truth for going on beyond surviving. And that is that without a future hope I have no present joy.

Several months ago I shared that truth from Victor Frankels book Man Search for Meaning. I told you the story about Frankel being a psychiatrist in a concentration camp in Germany in the II World War and he noted who it was who was able to live and continue in the camps and who died. He found that if people had nothing to live for, no driving motivation, especially about the future, they had nothing to live for, then the harshness of the conditions that they were presently living with became so overwhelming that they gave up and they died.

Look at father Abraham living in a tent, not pulling along his Winnabega, living in a tent, and look at how he went beyond survival while he lived in a tent Hebrews 11:10 says, here is the key; He was looking for the city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God.

Our present joy depends in large measure in our ability to lay hold of the future, to look forward to something, to live for something. I have personally, regularly experienced the motivational power of being able to look forward to something. In my own life I have discovered that a secret source of joy and a way for me to transcend survival and to really live is to take some time to look forward. Very simply, to take some time to plan. This past week the staff here at the church left the church for a few days, the pastoral staff did. We went off to a hotel room for three days and we just spent time looking at every area of the church's life and praying about it, thinking about it and planning for the future for the next year. And while it is a tiring process, I find emotionally, and spiritually there are a few things which get me up and motivated more than dreaming again about the future.

Part of what gets people into a survival mode is that we simply end up running the machine of life, going through the motions, we don't take time to step away and start asking questions like " What is it that we really want to accomplish here in our family." "What are our family goals." What is it that we want to accomplish with our children or their discipline." "What are our goals for our kids in the next year, what are our goals for their education." "What are our financial goals, or our ministry goals." "What is my goal for this small group that I lead." What is my goal for my own personal spiritual development, where would I like to be in the next six months." "How can I get there."

There is something incredibly motivating about getting away from running the

machinery of life for a little while and taking a larger, longer term perspective.

How do we transcend the experience of the dissatisfaction of life in this world? Well, Abraham looked forward.

You know, this is one of the keys to Jesus' ability to motivate people. He always put His teachings in the context of what was coming down line in the future. He didn't give us just a little snippet of a teaching and say, well, here is the way that you should live, obey it. Jesus was constantly running things out to the very end. Instead of giving us like a quarter mile of road way and saying here is where you live, survive in that little box, learn to be adjusted to life in this world. No, He pops the box, runs the road way out from now to eternity, all the way from here to Heaven, and all the way from here to Hell. Both directions. He has a two lane major super highway in His teachings. He often, almost always ties what He is saying to the far off future. And He uses the far off future as a motivating power for the present.

I discovered this, just this week. As I read through the Sermon on the Mount again, I found that in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount He says virtually nothing without tying it to the prospect of the coming Heaven, or the prospect of going to Hell. Talk about planning. You know, it is impossible to view the Sermon on the Mt. the way that many modern pastors and theologians look at it. This wonderful ethical teaching that you should be able to simply take and apply to your life without the larger questions of Heaven and Hell, the Sermon on the Mt. would make no sense at all and is completely gutted without a view of future Heaven and future Hell. Every single line just about, is about Heaven and about Hell.

Jesus understood the motivating power of promises and threats. He goes through the beatitudes, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted, when, in the future. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are you when man persecutes you and say all kinds of evil things about you. Rejoice and be glad, for great is your reward in heaven. Why should you be glad when you are persecuted, because you are going to get a great reward in Heaven.

Then He goes on and He threatens us, not just with just a little bit of unhappiness now. Jesus threatens us and He says, and watch out that you don't say fool to your brother, because if you hate your brother, you will go to hell. Then He goes on and He talks about lust. And he says, watch out, because if there is something in you that is continually creating sin, cut it off, get rid of it, because it is better to go to Heaven maimed than to end up in hell. Then He teaches about the reason to pray in secret and the reason to fast in secret. Matthew chapter 6 is all about us doing acts of righteousness secretly. Don't give money and let people know about it, Jesus said, because you will get your reward in heaven later if you secretly now. Pray secretly now and God will reward you later in Heaven.

In Matthew chapter 7 continues this theme of stretching out the time line to heaven and hell. Jesus exhorts us not to judge people now, because we will be judged. And if we don't put Jesus' words into practice, we are going to be destroyed, but if we do we will be established.



Jesus understood what many of us have from time to time experienced that there is tremendous motivational power in running out your time line beyond today. But, He does it in an extreme way, as one would expect the Lord to do. He runs it out not only in the time line out to the next six months, a year or five years. He takes us to the logical extreme of our actions, and He runs our time line out all the way to heaven or all the way to hell.

Let me say a few things parenthetically about motivation and threats. You know, part of our difficulty today in living a truly Christian life, in getting beyond the deadening effects of continual sin is that we believers have almost completely cut out from our bible the many, many threats of God. Threats of punishment, and threats of hell.

I recognize that it is not politically correct to think of God in Heaven thundering and sending threats. Threatening us with punishment and consequences. That is suppose to be the old stereo type of the Old Testament God and that God in the 90's is a lot hipper and a lot more user friendly.

It may come as a surprise to many of us, but the person who threatened us the most was Jesus. No one in the bible, not Moses in the Old Testament, not Paul in all of his supposed narrowness in the New Testament. No one in the bible spoke more about Hell than our gentle, Lord Jesus Christ. I wonder if He knows something that we don't know about motivation.

Those of you who have children, especially teenagers, understand that when your teenager has messed up, you often will have a conversation that begins with promises, where you come along side your teen or your middle schoolers and you say to them basically that you want to be on their side. You want to be their friend. You would like to help them and you want them to succeed. And you go through all the promises that could be theirs, if they go in a certain direction. Usually, you begin with the attempt to be the teenagers or middle schoolers friend. And sometimes, you feel like you are not getting through. So sometimes, we end up on the other side with threats. We end up saying, but if you don't listen to me and if you refuse to stop cutting class, or refuse to do this particular chore, or refuse to stop fighting with your brother or sister, or whatever it is, the behavior that we want them to stop. Then, there are going to be these consequences.

Jesus uses the same method. The promise of friendship, the promise of joy, the promise of a full life. BUT--there are those threats of consequences if we don't follow Him.

Do you know what the definition of the non-believer, the mocker, the atheist is in the bible is a person who says God will do nothing, neither good or bad even if I continue to walk and live in sin. It is the mocker in the bible who says, that there will be no bad consequences for my behavior. None.

I don't know about you, but I view it as one of the great mercies of my life when I experience the discipline of God, because of my repeated wrong doing. When I see God step in and intervene and say stop it, enough! And He begins to allow me to experience the consequences of my wrong action, I take that as a sign that God really loves me.

Gods threats have become more and more real to me over the last few years. I recognize that God is to be taken seriously. I have watched pastor after pastor fall into sin.

I have had people sit in my office and talk with me about their repeated defiance to God, and a repeated sense that God would do nothing. And then finally wore out and the damn broke. And I have watched what happens when we walk away from God and we don't do what His will is, the consequences of having to pick up a life.

It is totally appropriate for us to be motivated by threats. And brothers and sisters we need to recover in this church and in the 90's the very real threat of hell for those who persist in disobedience.

I haven't the time to get into a full treatment of hell today. I do know that Hell is real. That just as there are threats that God carries out in this life, the threat of Hell for the next life is a very real threat.

I personally believe along with C.S. Lewis, that in the end there will be only two kinds of people. Those who say to God, Thy will be done and those to whom God says thy will be done. As we persist in demanding our own will, and our own way, God finally says to us, fine. If you don't want to yield your life to the Lordship of Christ. If you don't want to yield your life to Christ's control. If you don't want to give glory to Christ. If you don't want to give up those things which are a part of Hell, then you can have them, and they will drag you down.

I recognize that Hell, eternal punishment, separation from God is not a pleasant doctrine. We want to muddy up the water that Jesus makes quite clear. Jesus says that there is going to be a great separation. Jesus says in the end there are only two kinds of people, there is wheat and there is chaff. There is sheep and there are goats. There are those who walk on the wide way and there are those who walk on the narrow way. There are those who have salvation and there are those who don't.

We want to say that the human race is not divided into two types of people. The human race is divided into three types of people. Those who are Christian, those who are not Christian, and then the good people. Some of our family members who haven't embraced forgiveness of sins through Christ. Some of our co-workers who haven't embraced forgiveness of sin through Christ. But in the end there are only two types of people. Listen, it is entirely appropriate for a person to turn to Jesus simply because they want to avoid going to Hell.

I know that a lot of people think that is a cheap motivation. Ha, look at that person grabbed hold of Jesus and cried out for forgiveness, just because they wanted to avoid Hell. Oh, what a salvation, a form of fire insurance. Many, many people make fun of trying to escape Hell as a reasonable motivation to be saved.

I say, that it is entirely appropriate to want to avoid going to Hell. It is entirely appropriate to want to avoid Gods wrath being poured out on you. It is appropriate to want to avoid eternally being shut out from Jesus and from His presence.

One day, we will get to see Jesus in all of His beauty, in all of His Holiness, in all of His goodness, we'll see His kindness, love, and gentleness. As we approach the throne and see the beauty of Jesus, some of us will be reached out to and embraced by the Lord. And others, are going to look at the face of Jesus, the one they have rejected all of their life. The one that said no, I have something more valuable than this beautiful Savior, as they went about trying to make a little more money, or went about some sexual sin, or

went about cultivating envy, or covetousness, or jealousy, or unforgiveness. No, I don't care about the beauty of Jesus. I am just going to let this thing grow in my life uncontrollably. And those people are going to look at the beautiful face of Christ and they are going to be dragged away from Him. Their last thought is going to be, I could have had that, I could have had Christ, and now the door is slammed in my face forever.

It is entirely appropriate for a person to avoid that kind of fate, and to say no right now, I am going to embrace Christ, and I am going to live for Christ, and get rid from my life everything that inclines me to Hell.

Listen, and then we will move to our last point. Right now, God in His mercy allows us to experience a little bit of a taste of Hell in our souls as we sin. As we sin, whatever we sin, through refusing to forgive somebody who has hurt us, through judging somebody, through gossiping.

However, we personally grieve God's Spirit and bring about His frown on our lives. God allows us to taste a bit of Hell in this life. Because as we sin, we experience in this life a taste of broken communion with God. We experience a little bit of what it feels like to be a part from God and separated from God. We begin to feel like we are walking in the shadows, and not in the light. As we walk that road that Jesus talked about, away from God, we begin to feel guilt and broken relationships from others, an inability to hear God's voice, an inner anxiety and a loss of peace. All of that is part of the mercy of God designed to threaten us and to say don't go in this direction.

To announce to our souls how unpleasant it is to be away from the presence of God, but if we persist in moving down that road eventually what we are tasting now will be experienced in the ultimate degree.

We will entirely lose communion with God. We will entirely lose peace. We have entire, ultimate guilt. We will experience the death of our peace. We will be anxious to the entire degree forever.

I don't know when a soul passes the point of no return. When you say to God, over and over again, no, no, no, no and God finally says to you, no, you will never get it, my patience is worn out.

I do know, that if you are experiencing Hell in your soul today, you don't need to continue that way. The mercy of God is available, if you would only turn.

If you get off the road you're walking that will end in Hell and will certainly end in major consequences in this life, your getting a taste. If you get off that road, if you turn off, if you run back to the Father, He will be merciful toward you and forgive you.

Our joy in the present is wrapped in our ability to grip and lay hold of the future.

Here is the last key, Faith is the key that unlocks eternity. It says in Hebrews 11:1; That faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. It is by faith that a person is able to project forward beyond today and beyond mere survival today toward the future. It is only by faith that we can believe today that what we do puts us on certain roads either toward Heaven or toward Hell.

It is by faith that we begin to believe that God is not a do nothing God. That He will do nothing either good or bad, even though we persist in continuing in sin. It is by faith that we believe the threats of God, and it is by faith that we believe the promises of God.

Let me put it this way, in Galatians chapter 6 Paul writes; Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from his flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit, shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not loose heart in doing good, for in due time, we shall reap if we do not grow weary.

There He is, for those of you who are pragmatic, those of you who are very practical, there is present cash value in regularly thinking about Heaven and regularly thinking about Hell. There is present cash value, present practical benefit in the way you live today.

If by faith, you begin to look down the road a piece, beyond the mile or two mile stretch of road way that you tend to travel on or that your friends tend to travel on, but you look down the road a piece, all they way down the way Jesus teaches us to look down the road, you will have your answer to whatever sin you struggle with.

Faith means the ability to Perceive the invisible future now. And that is the answer to every sin. Whatever you struggle with, think about it. Lets say you struggle with lust and you find yourself constantly turning your head and looking at the opposite sex and you have formulated all kinds of fantasy and your mind runs wild, and you struggle different kinds of sexual sins and different sexual addictions.

Faith is your way out. At any moment when you are being tempted to engage in lust, the choice is between believing that this present body in front of you, this present temptation is going to be more satisfying, more joyful, more life producing than future relationship with Christ.

And by faith I cut through this trinket that Satan is holding in front of my face and say get that away from me, I want the real gold. See, when you can smell the steak sizzling on the grill. When you can look at it and it is sizzling there, browning ever so nicely on the grill, it is easy to turn down the Spam sandwich now.

The way you defeat lust now, is to see that steak on the grill. Communion with Christ, peace, a future end to your inner anxiety, and the ability to hear from God.

How do I deal with me envy? By faith I look down the road. You see somebody getting ahead of you in this life. They have the Mercedes, the money, the job, they are racing down the road and they are so much farther down the road. What road are they on? Where are they headed? What is at the end of the road for them? By faith you project forward and say, what is at the end of the road for me, and Oh God, have pity on them.

As the Psalmist says in Psalm 73; Because I perceive what is at the end of the road for them. Bitterness, because of the way you were ripped off. Oh, I don't want it to grow in my heart Lord. I don't want unforgiveness to grow in my heart.

You see, at every point in choices you are saying, what is currently growing now inside of me, more of Hell or more of Heaven. If you find Hell growing inside, cut it off, Jesus says. Why experience Hell now. Why stand in the middle of the road way and get hit in both directions.

The way to overcome every sin, is by faith to be able to see ahead. That was Moses' secret. In Hebrews 11:24 & 25 it says that By faith Moses when he had grown up

refused to be called the son of pharaoh's daughter. Choosing rather to enjoy ill treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. Considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of Egypt for he was looking to the reward.

He saw that this was the Spam sandwich, not the steak. It was trinkets, not the real jewelry. Whatever was being dangled in front of his face, the adulterous relationship, the compromise of ethics on the job for the sake of a little bit more money and a little more job security, the compromise of the truth for the sake of a little bit of peer recognition, he said no, because he could see ahead.

Seeing ahead is the key to doing ministry now. That was Abraham's ability in verse 8, by faith when he was called, Abraham obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was going. Boy, talk about a risk taker. I believe that is the kind of people God is always looking for. People who will give up the sure thing, out of obedience of faith in order to lay hold of what God is presently saying to them. They give up the sure thing, the sure job, out of obedience to the voice of God. Because they see ahead in faith. They are looking for the reward.

Here is the last point. It is faith that brings home to the far country. I said at the first part of this talk that we are in the far country. We are away from the Father's home. We cannot find satisfaction in this world, because it is the far country. It does not have the resource to fully satisfy us. But in the far country by faith we can experience some of the joys of the Father's home now. That is that is the blessing of the first coming of Christ. That is the blessing of the good news in Jesus' announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven, that future realm, the Father's home has broken in and is not at hand. And He said repent and believe, receive it.

How do I experience home when I am in the far country. Home is where ever the Father is. Psalm 90 is probably the clearest recognition of how this world is not our home, it is all passing away. But Psalm 90 begins with this statement; Lord You have been our home throughout all generations. Home is where the Father is. Home is where Jesus is.

That is why Jesus regularly encouraged us to come to Him. Because when we come to Jesus we experience home however far away this world is from home. When we come to Jesus we experience home.

And all the blessings of home come now. Jesus said, come to Me all you who labor and I will give you rest. Rest is part of our future, Heavenly home. But Jesus said, if you come to Him now, you will get rest. If you come to Him now you will have peace. Cast your cares upon Him and you will experience peace now.

Repent and you will have the blessings of Heaven and forgiveness in your life now. Draw near to Christ and He will draw near to you now.

And I think that if you look at the decades of the 60's and the 70's, this is really the great division. In the decade of the 60's, people said, lets fix up the pigsty, lets change the world around us. They found that they couldn't quite do that, so that in the decade of the 70's, well maybe the problem is not out there, maybe it is in here. So, we went on a binge of pop psychology and psychoanalysis and the journey inward became the "Me"

generation, the culture of narcissism. See, the problem with your dissatisfaction is that you don't have enough coping mechanisms and you are not well adjusted to life in the pigsty.

Let me give you a third option, the biblical option is this; We live in the far country away from the fathers home and we sense the dissatisfaction and alienation and all of that.

Instead of trying to fix up the far country and make the world around us more comfortable, and instead of trying to accommodate ourself to this world and conform to it, how about if we simply came to our senses and said, I don't belong here.

That is what Jesus' story says in Luke 15. He says of the lost son, that he came to himself, he came to his senses, he woke up as if from a dream and came to the realization that he didn't belong there, that he wasn't made for the pigsty.

You see, the whole bible tells us that we were made for another world, for being home with the Father. The bible does not in any way try to muddy over our sense of alienation and discomfort and dissatisfaction with this world. In fact, the bible states that as a reality, saying to us over and over again that this world is not the home of ultimate satisfaction.