**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**This Life Is Preparation For Eternity**

If I drew a line on a piece of paper to illustrate our life here on earth I would draw it for a short distance and then stop because our life here will come to an end. But if I drew a line to illustrate eternity I would draw a line for as long as my paper would allow me and then put an arrow at the end of the line to indicate that this line is ongoing. And that is true of eternity. It is ongoing, never ending. All of us are headed into eternity. How we live here in this life will determine our eternal destiny. After presenting the judgment scene Jesus said in Matthew 25:46, *“And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.”* Notice, there are only two destinies, eternal punishment and eternal life. And also notice that the punishment for the wicked is just as long as the life for the righteous – “eternal.” Whether it is eternal happiness or eternal misery, that line just keeps on going.

This morning I want to emphasize that our life here on earth is preparation time for eternity. The decisions we make now will effect where we will be in eternity, either eternal punishment or eternal life.

First of all, the Bible teaches that life is brief, and we need to use it well. James says in James 4:14, *“…For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then* *vanishes away.”*  We all have seen vapor rising from boiling water - the vapor is there for a moment and then it is gone. This is the illustration that James uses to describe our life here. We are here just for a moment and then we are gone. For those of you who are older, you can verify the truthfulness of that statement. You look back on your life and you wonder where all the years have gone. Life is brief.

We need to use it wisely. God didn’t put us here to see how much money we could accumulate, or how much fun we could have, or how big a name we could make for ourselves. God put us here to glorify Him and prepare ourselves to live with Him for an eternity in heaven. And so, as we live our lives here, the overriding questions in regards to any major decision we make should be, “will this bring glory to God and will it help me to go to heaven?” Success or failure in life must be defined as to how well we are preparing for heaven.

Some have made unwise decisions. In Matthew 19:16-22 we read of a rich, young man coming to Jesus and asking him what good thing he should do that he might have eternal life. Jesus told him to keep the commandments. The young man asked, “which ones?” Jesus told him, and he said he had done those, and then he asked, “What do I still lack?” Jesus said there was one thing he lacked. He said, *“If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’”* The next verse says, *“But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”* He decided that enjoying his possessions here was more important than eternal life. What a terrible decision. He forfeited his life in eternity for momentary pleasure here.

In Acts 24 we read of Paul talking with Felix, a Roman ruler. It says in verse 25 that Paul *“reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come,”* Paul, no doubt, talked with Felix about eternity and what he needed to do to have eternal life. It says that *“Felix was afraid and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.”* (Acts 24:25) Felix was not willing to give up momentary pleasure for eternity. What a terrible decision.

In contrast we read of Moses who *“refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer* *affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin,”* (Heb. 11:24). Moses had riches and power available to him in Egypt. But he understood that all that was just for a time, and that eternity was of far greater value. Life is brief. Let us use it wisely.

Secondly, we need to understand that life here is unfair, utopia is yet ahead. When you look at life under the sun you witness inequities and injustices. The writer of Ecclesiastes acknowledges this when he said, *“There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.”* (Eccl. 8:14) The wicked man meets with outward prosperity and the righteous man suffers loss. You think to yourself, “that’s not fair.” You walk down the street and someone mugs you and robs you. You think, “this is not fair.” Innocent little children get diseases and die. We think this doesn’t seem fair. We conclude that life is unfair. We live in a world that is filled with sadness. Utopia is not here. It is yet ahead.

The reason utopia is not here is because of sin. We must understand that all suffering, all injustices are the result of sin and Satan. Death and suffering came into the world because of the sin of Adam. Read 1 Cor. 15:21-22. There was utopia once on the earth. It was in the Garden of Eden before sin entered the world. But Adam and Eve sinned, and we all have followed in their footsteps and have sinned (Rom 3:23). All the suffering in this world is the result of sin. Now, my suffering is not necessarily as a direct result of my personal sin, but it is the result of sin in the world. Satan is behind it all. Paul called his *“thorn in the flesh” “a messenger of Satan.”* (2 Cor. 12:7). Jesus said of the woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, *“whom Satan has bound.”* (Luke 13:16). Job’s infirmities were caused by Satan. Read **Job** chapters one and two. God allows bad things to happen for a specific purpose, but Satan is behind the suffering of this life.

And sometimes God allows us to go through suffering to bring us to marvelous blessings. Joseph was hated by his brothers, sold into Egypt as a slave, separated from his father who loved him, served as a slave in the house of Potiphar, is lied about and put in prison, forgotten by one whom he had helped, BUT later he was exalted, became a ruler in Egypt to save his family from death (Read Gen. 45:5,7-8) God allowed him to go through the suffering to save his family. Romans 5:3-4 says *“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character, and character, hope.”* Suffering can be for our good. Before we begin complaining about the bad things that have happened in our lives, we need to wake up to the fact that God may be bringing us through deep valleys in order to exalt us to a mountain. Have you ever heard the statement “the night is always darkest just before the dawn?”

Was it fair for Jesus to die for our sins? No, it was not fair. But did some good come out of what He did? Yes, indeed! We would have no hope of eternal life if it had not been for the suffering of our Lord.

It is true, life here is unfair. Utopia is not here, but it is yet to come if we will be faithful to the Lord. Jesus said to persecuted Christians in Smyrna, *“behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.”* (Rev. 2:10)

Thirdly, we need to understand that life here on this earth is a pilgrimage. Heaven is our home. Peter says in 1 Peter 2:11, *“Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war*

*against the soul,”* A sojourner and pilgrim is one who lives as a foreigner in a strange land. His home is in another land. He is residing temporarily in the foreign land, but can’t wait to get home. We as Christians are just passing through this life. Our real and permanent home is somewhere else – heaven. That is where our citizenship is. Phil. 3:20 says, *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus* *Christ…”* Oh, how we need to learn this lesson. We need to understand that we are just sojourners and pilgrims on this earth. This is not our home. We are here in this foreign land temporarily to prepare ourselves for our real home – heaven. You see, when we view this world as our home, when we drive our stakes down here, we will then begin to lay up for ourselves treasures here. Since our treasures are here, this is where we will want to stay. Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21, *“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

We are going to leave this earthly life one way or another. We are not going to live here forever. We will either go into eternal life in heaven, or we will go into eternal punishment. The only way we will get to heaven is to understand that this earth is a pilgrimage and heaven is our home.

Fourthly, we need to understand that life can be deceitful. The end may be nearer than we think. I know we don’t like to think about our mortality, but we must if we are going to properly prepare for eternity. When you are cruising along in life and things are going well, you are in good health, have all you need, your ambitions are at your grasp, it seems almost impossible that God would allow us to be cut down and we lose it all. But it can happen. I worked with a church in Alabama several years ago. Over a period of about 8 years there were about five young people who attended Bible classes there that did not see their 30th birthday. Think of people you know who have died recently. How many of those seemed to be in good health about a year ago? We don’t like to think about that. But it is reality. Circumstances in life make us think we will live for many years to come, but the fact is we can die any moment. Life can be deceitful. We assume that we will live through 2015. But it is a good possibility some of us won’t.

This is why we need to stay prepared. I ask you, “Are you happy with your preparation to meet God?”

And then fifthly, we need to understand that death is the end of this life, but it is the beginning of eternity.

What do we call graduation from high school? We call it “commencement.” Commencement means beginning. While we are graduating from school we also recognize that it is thecommencement of something new.That is what takes place at death. It is graduation from this life of preparation, but it iscommencement of eternity. In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man was unrighteous and Lazarus was righteous. They both died. Lazarus was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom, a place of peach and comfort. The rich man went to a place of torment. The Lord also indicates in this story that the unrighteous one who goes to torment cannot pass to the place of the righteous, nor vice versa. In other words, at death preparation time is over. Their destiny has been set for all eternity. Death is the end of this life, but it is the beginning of eternity.

 It is time to get serious about your life, because you are preparing now for eternity. This is the only life in which we can prepare for eternity. There will not be another. If we fail to prepare properly now, we will miss heaven.

Our time is gone for today. Thank you for listening.

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