

Eternal Things

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

After a preacher died and went to heaven, he noticed that a New York cabdriver had been given a higher place or position than he had. "I don't understand," he complained to St. Peter. "I devoted my entire life to my congregation." "Our policy is to reward results," explained St. Peter. "Now, what happened, Reverend, whenever you gave a sermon?" The minister admitted that some in the congregation fell asleep. "Exactly," said St. Peter. "And when people rode in this man's taxi, they not only stayed awake, they prayed that God would spare their lives!" Well, there is not an ounce of truth to this story but it does remind us about the importance of eternal things!

Adoniram Judson said:

"A life once spent is irrevocable. It will remain to be contemplated through eternity. Each day will not only be a witness of our conduct, but will affect our everlasting destiny. How shall we then wish to see each day marked with usefulness?! It is too late to mend the days that are past. The future is in our power. Let us, then, each morning, resolve to send the day into eternity in such a garb as we shall wish it to wear forever. And at night let us reflect that one more day is irrevocably gone, indelibly marked."

How true this is. When a day has past, it is gone forever! All the marks which we put upon it will be exhibited forever.

Let's start with a definition. What do we mean by eternal things? *Eternal things are the spiritual things that we do in this life which will in the end yield eternal reward.* This is a very practical and devotional study that should challenge us to keep perspective and invest our time and life in those things that will count for eternity. Eternal things are the most important things in life.

There are six key words that will help us to stay focused on eternal things.

1. Fellowship

1 John 1:6-7

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

In verse six the “If we say” person (vs. 6) fools themselves and tries to fellowship with God while continuing to live in sin. The “darkness” is a metaphor for sin and wickedness. This verse teaches us that sin keeps us from fellowshiping with God. The “If we doer” person (vs. 7) is willing to walk in the “light” (a metaphor for God’s holiness). Seeking God’s holiness and living in light of it maintains our fellowship with God. When we sin, we fail to walk in the light and break our fellowship with God.

Here is the point. When we are living in fellowship with God we are staying focused on eternal things! If we walk with God we can expect to be rewarded by God in the future. The Bible says if we want to have fellowship “one with another” (the believer with God) we need to clean up our lives (walk in the light of God’s holiness). Instead of running from the light, we need to run to the light and allow the light of God’s holiness to change our lives and impact us, so we will walk in a holy manner, have fellowship with God, and be rewarded by God when we stand before Him. Remember, there must be cleansing before fellowship can take place.

James 4:8 says:

“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and purify *your* hearts, ye double minded.”

If we are going to draw near to God and fellowship with Him, we must clean up our act – “cleanse your hand ye sinners” (“cleanse ourselves” - 2 Cor. 7:1). Fellowship with God is the foundation of everything that we do. If we stay in fellowship with the Lord, we can expect to serve Him and live for eternal things, instead of fleeting things! When we sin, we need to find cleansing (1 John 1:7) and forgiveness through confession (1 John 1:9). This is because cleansing precedes fellowship with God.

Gordon MacDonald tells the story of a Chinese pastor who was imprisoned for 18 years by the Communists because of his faith. Day after day, year after year he was assigned to work in the prison camp's cesspool. Every morning he had to wade into that stinking hole and spend his day scooping out the human waste. He was given this job as a special punishment because he kept holding tenaciously to his faith. For his part, the pastor was grateful for the assignment because of the solitude he had. The stench was so bad that even the guards stayed far away. So the pastor had the freedom to pray aloud, sing hymns to the Lord, and recite Scripture. The cesspool had become a garden of communion with God.

This context in John's epistle is talking about the believer's fellowship "with him" (God – vs. 6) and unless we are fellowshiping with God on a daily basis, we are going to be drastically defeated and miss out on a life, which will yield eternal dividends. Fellowshiping with God involves communion with God, enjoying His presence through worship, prayer, and praise. It involves a sweet relationship of trust and dependence upon God that produces joy and peace in life. In the end, this will produce eternal reward.

Dr. Charles Weigle composed many lovely hymns and gospel songs, among them the favorite "No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus." Dr. Weigle once remarked: "My prayer is that I may walk so closely with the Lord that the fragrance of His grace will pervade my being. I want them to know by my words, actions, and songs that I have been with Jesus."

Genesis 5:22-24

"And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."

You will notice that the Bible says Enoch began walking with God after the birth of his son. It may be that he walked with God before his son's birth, but perhaps the birth of his son caused him to deepen his relationship with God, as he realized how good God was to him. As we realize how good God has been to us over the years, it should cause us to walk with Him and give our lives to Him. Take note that

this man walked with God for 300 years! That is a consistent walk with God over a long period of time. What does it really mean to walk with God? It means we enjoy His presence and fellowship in our lives as we commune with Him through prayer, meditation on the Scripture, and as we daily worship the Lord in our thinking and living.

Genesis 6:9

“These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.”

Walking with God is the basis or foundation for everything else we do in life and it will have lasting or eternal value. Walking with God (fellowship) is an eternal thing because it will produce eternal dividends. As we walk with God, we will live a spiritual life, do right, and be rewarded in eternity. Walking with God brings true blessing both now and throughout eternity. Living in the presence of God and enjoying His life is an eternal matter that should be integrated into our daily routine of life. If we are not careful, we can easily pass through a day without walking with God or truly fellowshiping with Him. When this occurs we lose focus on what is most important, what is eternal, and what life is all about. What is life all about? Let me tell you what it's all about:

“My God and I go in the field together,
We walk and talk as good friends should and do,
We clasp our hands our voices ring with laughter,
My God and I walk through the meadows hue.”

Are you walking with God these days? Are you spending time with God in devotional prayer and meditation in His Word? Are you talking to him and walking with Him and enjoying His presence? You can't possibly be living for spiritual matters and staying focused on eternal things if you are not walking with God. How often have we been too busy to enjoy His presence – to bask in His love and enjoy His communion? How often we are robbed of our enjoyment of walking with God when sin and Satan get in the way! Dear friend, if we want to stay focused on eternal things that will bring lasting fruit and reward in our lives, we must stay close to God.

It was a tragic story. Two young women lost their lives in a fire that swept through their apartment while they slept. Ironically, the house was equipped with a smoke detector that was in good working order. But it had failed to operate. Why? The fire inspectors concluded that the safety device had been deactivated for a party that was held at the girls' home the night before. Someone had disconnected the unit to keep it from sounding off because of the smoke from cooking or candles. A similar danger exists for any believer who "disconnects" his daily quiet time and personal walk with the Lord. When we disconnect from God, we lose focus on the one thing that matter most in this life and for eternity. When we are living in fellowship with God we are staying focused on eternal things! This is because our fellowship with God will lead to right living that will count for eternity.

When we are fellowshiping with God we are staying focused on eternal things!

2. Faithfulness

1 Corinthians 4:1-2

“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

When we are living faithfully we are staying focused on eternal things! The word “steward” actually speaks of a person who is a manager of all the household affairs. In Bible times there were slaves who served as stewards, which were responsible for many duties around a wealthy man’s home. The steward was like a superintendent who was responsible for keeping the estate running smoothly. They would take care of the money matters, give orders to the slaves, and even teach the young children who were not of adult age. A steward had many responsibilities and tasks to perform. He was to be faithful and perform all the work that his master intended him to do. The same is true for our Christian life. We are to be a steward of God. Jesus Christ is our Master (1 Cor. 7:22) and our Lord expects us to be faithful with the things he has entrusted to each one of us.

We are to be a steward of our time, talents, treasures, a steward of our family, fortune, and future, a steward of our devotions, decisions,

and dress, a steward of our separation, service, and His sanctuary (faithfulness to God's church). Remaining faithful in our stewardship responsibilities means that we are occupying our time and revolving our life around eternal things! When we use what God has given to us, we are living with eternity's values in view. We are living today for tomorrow! We stay committed to what God has told to do and how He has told us to live, realizing that there is coming a day, when we will be rewarded for our faithfulness.

Stewardship focuses on the things the Lord has given to God's people and how Christians should faithfully use these things for God's glory. In the context, our stewardship focuses on maintaining the truth of God's word. We are to be faithful to the Scriptures ("mysteries of God"), which refer to New Testament truths (sacred secrets) that were unknown in Old Testament revelation but were now revealed in the New Testament. God wants us to be a good steward of His truth. We are to fight for the truth and uphold God's Word at all costs and make no apology for the truth.

Jude 1:3

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

As a faithful steward, we are responsible to teach truth, share the truth, maintain the truth, and fight for the truth without apology and compromise.

2 Corinthians 13:8 says,

"For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth."

May this be our desire and driving determination as well!

Abraham Lincoln once said:

"My great concern is not whether God is on our side; my great concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right."

Have we been faithfully upholding and applying the truth of God's Word to our lives? Have we been obeying what we know is right to do

(James 1:22), or have we been trying to bypass something that God has specifically commanded us to do? Have you been living in defiance? Have you been a faithful steward in upholding God's Word uncompromisingly and proclaiming God's truth to your children? Faithfulness to God's Word and all that He has entrusted to us to do is an eternal issue because how we treat and obey the Scriptures will affect our living, worldview, and eternal reward. A man's faithfulness to God's Word will last for eternity!

2 Timothy 4:7-8

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Eternity will reveal a lot of surprises. But one thing is sure; we will be rewarded for our stewardship or faithfulness to the Lord. There will be no surprise when it comes to faithfulness.

Charles Wesley said:

"All my requests are lost in one, "Father, thy will be done!"

When we are living faithfully we are staying focused on eternal things!

3. Fruitfulness

John 15:1-6

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

When we are living fruitfully we are staying focused on eternal things!

This passage of Scripture can be divided in a simple way.

a. The fruits (vv. 2a, 6)

Jesus taught that “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away” and He concludes by saying, “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

Many years ago Dr. Andrew Telford and I were sitting in his cottage at the Central Manor Campground where preachers would take their turn preaching in the evening services. The next speaker was about to start his message and he said, “Let’s get out of this cottage. I want to hear what his interpretation of John 15:1-6.”

Over the years some interpreters have seen the person who bears no fruit as a Christian who loses his salvation and in the end is judged by God. But this is not a Biblical conclusion. Do you know why? It’s because all Christians bear some fruit! There is no such thing as a fruitless Christian. This is clearly brought out in John 15 for it speaks about “fruit” (vs. 2), “more fruit” (vs. 2) and “much fruit” (vs. 5, 8). Christians are fruit bearers – not dead branches that fail to produce true and lasting fruit. The dead branch that is unproductive in this parable evidently is an allusion to those who bear no fruit and by their fruitless example prove that they have no life – they are not rightly attached to the vine (Jesus Christ). Judas would be a prime example of a person who did not bear true and lasting fruit.

In John 6:64, Jesus said, “But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.” No doubt Jesus was drawing an analogy to this man when speaking of someone who does not bear true and lasting fruit. Judas was with Jesus; he seemed like a “branch.” However, he did not have God’s life in him; therefore he departed and his destiny was like that of a dead branch.

Jesus is saying that every branch who professes to be linked to Me but fails to produce fruit I will cut down. The phrase “in me” (vss. 2, 6) does not mean the same thing as Paul’s words “in Christ.” Here it is

part of the metaphor of the vine and branches and suggests that this is a person who never abides or fellowships with Christ. As a result, this person never produces any true and lasting fruitful living. A branch that bears no fruit is obviously dead and the same is true of those who are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:2). Therefore, the branch, like Judas, it is cut off and sent to judgment.

The background to Christ's teaching can be understood in relationship to the custom of that day. Every year in Palestine gardeners would prune their vines. They cut off the dead wood, which has no life in it and trim the living branches, so that their yield will be greater. They would take the dead branches and put them on a pile and burn them. So it will be in the end for those who profess to abide in Christ but bear no fruit.

b. The fruitful (vv. 2b, 3-5)

Jesus goes on to say that "every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (vs. 2) and concludes that all Christians will bear fruit in their lives, since they are connected the vine. First, we see the importance of the *pruning process* (2b-3). When genuine Christians are pruned and cleansed by God's Word they produce fruit within their Christian lives. Second, we see the *productive purpose* of bringing forth fruitfulness or transformation of living (vv. 4, 5, 7).

The key word is "abide" in these verses. We produce fruit in our lives, when we remain in fellowship with Christ and depend upon Him for power and strength, so we can live for Him. This reminds us that fruitful living will result in eternal things. Fruit bearing (producing fruit, more fruit, and much fruit in our Christian life - vv. 2, 5, 8) is an eternal issue for fruitfulness will result in reward when we stand before God (2 Cor. 5:10). For this reason we should be bringing "forth much fruit" (John 15:16).

There are various types of fruit that we can produce in our Christian living. There is the fruit of righteous behavior (Phil. 1:11 – "filled with the fruits of righteousness"), the fruit of holiness (Rom. 6:22 – "fruit unto holiness"), the fruit of soul winning (Rom. 1:13 – "fruit among you" – see also 11:13-16) and the fruit of praise to God (Heb. 13:15 –

“fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name”) and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23 - “But the fruit of the Spirit is ...”). The context of John fifteen seems to be pointing to the fruit of obedience (vs. 10), joy (vs. 11) and love (vs. 12). In general, it is the fruit of Christian living, which is a transformation of living that manifests itself in our daily conduct and character of life.

Fruitfulness is the result of the Son’s life being reproduced in our lives (John 15:5 – “for without me ye can do nothing”). In fact, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to produce Christ’s life in ours and conform us to His image (2 Cor. 3:18). However, if we are not in tune to His indwelling life we will not produce fruit that will last for eternity! We will not be good fruit bearers. Every Christian produces fruit but the fruit varies among those who are believers. It depends how much and how long they are abiding in Christ (fellowshipping with Christ – John 15:4) and allowing God’s Word to clean up their lives (John 15:3).

What kind of fruit are you bearing? What about love, joy, peace, gentleness, longsuffering, goodness, meekness, holiness, praise to God, and reaching out to others who are in need? You might be successful in business from a world’s perspective and be good in sports but how much fruit do you have growing on your branch? What kind of fruit are you producing for the Lord?

A key part of the fruitfulness that pertains to eternity is also the fruit of saved souls (salvation of souls). This fruit is worthy of special mention for it has a direct bearing on eternal things.

Romans 1:13

“Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.”

Those who we win to Christ will experience a glorious future with the Lord. We can’t take our possessions to Heaven but we can take people to Heaven that we have won to Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:19 asks:

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”

How thrilling and exciting to realize that someday we will meet people in Heaven whom we have led to Jesus Christ. This reminds us how the souls of men are seen as eternal fruit and how they are related to eternal things.

When we are living fruitfully we are staying focused on eternal things!

4. Family

Ephesians 6:4

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Parents are given the mandate to invest time with their children and families. As we do this we can give them spiritual direction and be an example before them. When we are investing in our families we are staying focused on eternal things! Why? It's because we are building up their spiritual lives for eternity!! How can this be? For the simple reason that when we raise our children to love God, do His will, and serve Him, we will be giving them the greatest blessing they could ever have – a servant's heart. And when they have a servant's heart and are willing to live for God they will be rewarded throughout eternity! When we invest in the lives of our children and families, directing them to serve the Lord, this will result in God blessing their personal lives on earth and giving them eternal reward.

First, the one thing we should never do is turn our children away by provoking them or stirring them up to anger (“provoke not your children to wrath”). We do this when we favor one child over another, withdraw our love from them, call them stupid or dumb, and never spend time with them as a dad. Second, what we should do is teach them. “The word for “nurture” means tutorage or education. The word “admonition” (“to call to ones attention”) means that the father is to give proper instruction to the children, which revolves around truth, right and wrong, and loving God and living according to God's standards).

This admonition involves rebuke, warning, discipline, and encouragement to live for God and do what is morally right and proper in God's eyes. A father is to call to their attention the things

they do wrong and the things they do right! Balance is very important! As parents, we should not allow our son or daughter to dress like the world and look like the world. We should tutor and train them to live a life of excellence, godliness, and modesty before the world. We should also train them in the Scriptures, which will both warn them and encourage them to live according to God's holy design and pattern for their lives. We need to teach our children to refuse conformity to the world's standards (Rom. 12:2) and trying to be popular with the world.

Proverbs 4:14-15 says:

“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it (the path and way), pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.”

Too many children are bossing their dad's around instead of the dad's instructing the children to live godly lives, right lives, clean lives, holy lives, and dedicated lives for God. As parents, we can't afford to sit back on our easy chair and think everything will be all right with your children. It won't be all right! In fact, we will be sorry if we don't invest in their training! If we don't train them the world values and vices will overtake them. But if we, as parents, invest in their lives, we will be investing in eternal things! Why? It's because our children will grow up to love God and serve Him and be given eternal recognition and reward in Heaven.

Parents, let me ask you an important question. What are your children doing for Jesus? Have you been teaching them about faithfulness, holiness, righteousness, the world system that is against God, the devil, corrupt music, dancing, sex, and what matters most in life? Wake up!! We must invest in their lives and in so doing we will be investing in eternal things.

As the male spiritual leader (“fathers” – vs. 4) of the home we are responsible to stop the devil's music and Satan's TV programs in our home! We must stop trash from coming into our house. We should refuse to attend those places that are dens of iniquity. We need to start setting a pattern for a devotional life and teach our children the importance of serving others as Christ taught (John 13), serving in the context of local church ministry, praying, and being concerned

about soul winning. There is always time to serve Jesus!! If we crowd-out our service to Christ we have missed what the true meaning of life is all about and we have lost sight of eternal things!

One preacher related this story. "When I was a small boy growing up in Pennsylvania we would often visit my grandparents who lived nine miles away. One night a thick fog settled over the hilly countryside before we started home. I remember being terrified, and asking if we shouldn't be going even slower than we were. Mother said gently, 'Don't worry. Your father knows the way.' You see, dad had walked that road when there was no gasoline during the war. He had ridden that blacktop on his bicycle to court Mother. And for years he had made those weekly trips back to visit his own parents. He knew every inch of the road." The preacher went on to say, "How often when I can't see the road of life, and have felt that familiar panic rising in my heart, I have heard the echo of my mother's voice: 'Don't worry. Your Father knows the way.'"

As a dad, father, man of the house, and leader, we are to be demonstrating the way that God wants our families to walk and live. As we do this our families will follow our godly pattern and example and their lives will count for eternity. When we stay focused on training our families to serve the Lord first and foremost in life, we will invest in eternal things, since our families will serve the Lord and live for God and gain great reward.

In addition, as a father, you must teach your children about eternal things! You must teach them how to live a righteous and respectable life before God. You must teach them to make wise decisions for their lives. You must teach them that eternal things should come before sports, vacation, jobs, and home improvements. You must teach them the importance of visiting the lost, sharing Christ with others, visiting the shut-ins, widows, and keeping themselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27). You must teach them a right priorities and value systems so they will serve Christ.

Matthew 6:33

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

First things first! The Lord's service should not be ignored or swept under the carpet or replaced by other things! Don't replace eternal things with temporal things (2 Cor. 4:18). This is what we should be teaching our children. *We should teach them that the Lord's work is most important and that serving the Lord will produce eternal dividends.* If we train our children in this way, we will be investing in eternal things. We will be teaching them how to live for God and future reward.

Someone asked John Wanamaker: "How do you get time to run a Sunday School for four thousand scholars, in addition to the business of your stores, your work as Postmaster-General, and other obligations?" Instantly Mr. Wanamaker replied: "Why, the Sunday School is my business! All other things are just things."

When we are investing in our families and teaching them how to serve the Lord we are staying focused on eternal things! Our families will seek to live for God, do what is right, and be rewarded for their own faithful living and service.

5. Fundamentalism

When we embrace fundamentalism, we are staying focused on eternal things! This is because holding to Fundamental truth and practicing fundamental, separated, and holy living will bring reward when Jesus returns (Rev. 22:12). Today, the word fundamentalist has been confused and abused. It is used to promote religious extremist groups who go around murdering people in the name of their religion and blowing up buildings. There are groups today which are labeled as "Islamic Fundamentalists" or "Jewish Fundamentalists." The word fundamentalist in relationship to modern usage has come to mean some kind of person who is a mindless obscurantist (one who is opposed to learning and devoid of understanding) and someone who is extreme and dangerous in their belief system. Because of the shift in the meaning of this word, some old-time fundamentalists no longer want to use the term "fundamental" in relationship to their beliefs and lifestyle. They would rather call themselves preservationists! This is like replacing "Merry Christmas" with "Happy Holiday."

Friend, let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater! The term fundamentalism means foundational or basic. It refers to something essential and becomes an underlying basis for any belief system. We are Christian fundamentalists who stand for the Bible – not Islamic fundamentalists who stand for the Koran.

Believers who hold to the absolute truth of God's Word are fundamental Christians and they remain fundamental in regards to the truth and holiness. Of course, it is just a term; therefore, I wouldn't die for it, for others may misunderstand the term. I would die for the name of Jesus! However, I still use the term "fundamentalism" without apology! We can be fundamental in truth without falling into the category of being dangerous and devoid of human sympathy and understanding for people. Holding fast to truth without apology and living a holy life until the coming of Jesus Christ are the hallmarks and history of fundamentalism.

Revelation 2:25

"But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come."

The expression "hold fast" (Gk. - krateo) means we must "seize" or "retain" the truth and do what is right until Jesus comes. We are to hold on to what we have until Christ comes back for His Church! And beloved, in the day in which we live, we had better hold on for dear life! We must retain fundamentalism and not abandon its foundational beliefs! We can't abandon absolute truth for postmodernism, relativism, or New Evangelicalism. Many fundamentalists are caving to the culture and the recent fads of the emerging church, which has departed from God's absolute truth and holiness. We must hold on! It will be worth it all when we see Jesus!

Revelation 3:3

"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent ..."

The expression "hold fast" (Gk. - tereo) means "to guard from loss or injury." Beloved, we must guard the sacred deposit of truth - the Scriptures. We must stick to what the Bible says in the midst of a changing church and culture which is attacking the Bible and the very foundation upon which we stand. In the midst of atheism, secularism,

and postmodernism, we must stay fundamental! There is no time or room for compromise.

Revelation 3:11

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

We must hold fast to what is good and what we know is right and Biblically correct. When we begin to waiver, we will lose our grip and no longer hold on. We will also lose our crown or reward, which we otherwise could have had, if we remained true to the Scriptures and how God wanted us to live.

2 John 1:8

“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”

Staying fundamental is an eternal matter for it will result in eternal reward!

2 Timothy 3:14 gives us good advice:

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*.”

Have you been holding fast? Maybe you are you barely holding on! Perhaps you are losing your grip? Are you sticking to absolute truth or watering it down? Are you continuing in the right path or have you veered off the beaten path into the new rock sound, the ecumenical movement, and the unholy worship of the modern church era? Are you staying pure in your thought life and keeping your standards high? Are you running away from the light of God’s holiness or are you seeking to walk in the light? We must stay fundamental in the midst of a flawed culture and world.

Jeremiah 6:16

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.”

Sadly, many today are departing from fundamentalism and a fundamentalist, separated stance by saying “We will not walk *therein*” (Jer. 6:16b).

The actual term Fundamentalist came into use in 1920 as a description of the position of the anti-modernist party in the Northern Baptist Convention. These people were considered to be anti-modernist and were identified as those within the denominations who militantly stood for the historic doctrines of the faith, such as the inerrancy of the Bible, deity of Christ, the substitutionary death and bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead, the Second Coming of Christ, and salvation from hell through the blood of Christ. They were people who also stressed both personal and ecclesiastical (church) purity in light of the ever-growing apostasy. The fundamentalist movement from early New Testament Christianity, to the fundamentalist movement in the 1920's, to the Christian fundamentalist movement of today has always been connected to Christian people, who were determined to live a holy life, through absolute obedience to Scripture.

The present fundamentalists of today are really the legitimate heirs of historical New Testament Christianity. Past fundamentalists were those saints who historically held the line in mainline denominations, even when they were going sour. American Modernism had its origins in the mixture of poisonous teachings, which came from Europe prior to the turn of the 20th century. The leavening process of the denominations began in the 1870's and gained a giant foothold by 1900. By 1930, the whole was leavened (Matthew 13:33). In time, with the denominations crumbling doctrinally, the first wave of Fundamental believers were the ones who broke away from the denominations to form independent churches that still exist today. The second wave of Fundamentalist believers separated from the denominations as they were being overtaken by the inroads of apostasy or modernism.

It's interesting to note that the apostles and then the churches, which followed their example in the centuries to come, always held uncompromisingly to “the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1 Tim. 6:3). The history of Fundamentalism from the apostolic days to

the present has always held tenaciously (firmly) to the doctrine of God's holiness. In short, they held to the doctrine of Bible separation (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

2 Timothy 4:7-8 once again gives the testimony of Paul's fundamental life: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Paul reminds us that we must *fight* ("fought a good fight"), *finish* ("I have finished my course") and remain *fundamental* ("kept the faith") in relationship to our doctrinal position and holy living. When we embrace fundamentalism, we are staying focused on eternal things! This is because God will reward us for standing up for the truth, which includes the doctrine of separation or holiness.

6. Future

Matthew 6:19-24

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

When we live for the future we are staying focused on eternal things! The logical reason is because God will reward us in the future for accumulating righteous deeds that are worthy of reward. Jesus emphasizes this teaching in our present passage. The "treasures upon earth" (vs. 19) refer to living only for earthly pursuits and accumulation. We need to remind ourselves of the temporal value of this kind of earthly living ("where moth and rust doth corrupt, and

where thieves break through and steal”). Most things that we do don’t have any eternal reward attached to them.

The “treasures in heaven” (vs. 20) refer to heavenly reward and the accumulation of future riches. Heavenly riches or deposits have eternal value (“where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt and where thieves do not break through nor steal”). The point is this; God’s people are to live for heavenly things – not earthly things. They are to live for eternal things – not worldly things. They are to live for the world of tomorrow instead of the world of today. When we pour all of our energies and time into the earthly things of life, we will not gain the eternal things that will last forever.

Where have you been funneling all of your energies? What is taking up most, if not all of your time? What kind of time are we giving to eternal things? Are we taking time for those things that will matter for eternity?

Jesus cuts through everything when He states in Matthew 6:21:
“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

If your heart and longing is only geared around the pursuits of this life, then your heart will be drawn to only earthly things. Furthermore, all of your earthly pursuits will take up your time and steal away your heart from the eternal riches! When we live for the future, our character and conduct will be Christlike, our giving will be generous, and we will be faithful in our church attendance, service, and ministry to the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:58:

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

We must live for eternity! We must live for the eternal things! Christians sometimes say, “I don’t have time to visit the shut-ins or I’m too tired to do this or that for the Lord? I can’t fit serving the Lord into my schedule?” Think of what you are saying? You don’t have time for eternal things? Are you are too tired to do something that will

count for eternity? What a tragedy when we live for the now and forget the later!

Jesus also said in this text that we cannot live for two masters at the same time.

Matthew 6:24:

“No man can serve two masters.”

To live for different masters would mean to possess two conflicting commands and schedules. It would be like trying to take orders from two army sergeants at the same time! The point is this; if the world is our master then we will ultimately find ourselves obeying it, but if Jesus is truly our Master, then we will have to obey His will and prioritize our time in accordance with His will and serve Him.

Jesus then said:

“Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Serving God stands for investing our lives in heavenly pursuits and is opposite of serving “mammon” (money or earthy pursuits). In other words, you cannot serve two worlds at the same time – the sacred and the secular. You cannot funnel all of your energies in the world of today and expect to live for the world of tomorrow.

A. W. Tozer once said:

“Every man must choose his world.”

Although we live in the secular world, the present world should not overtake our lives and keep us from accumulating the heavenly riches that will count for eternity (1 John 2:15-17). Many Christians try to live for the secular and the sacred world at the same time. They attempt to live for the world today and the world to come but find that it is impossible to do so. When all your ambitions are tied up in earthly treasures (vs. 19), then you cannot involve your life in heavenly treasures or investments (vs. 20). So the bottom line is this; where your treasure is located (earthly goals or heavenly investments) will verify what your heart or deepest longing and desire resides (vs. 21). When Jesus concludes by saying that we cannot serve God and

mammon, He is telling us that we cannot serve the economy and eternity at the same time. And time is of the essence.

“Just a tiny little minute
Only sixty seconds in it.
Forced upon me
Can’t refuse it
Didn’t seek it
Didn’t choose it.
But it’s up to me to use it
Give account if I abuse it.
Just a tiny little minute
But eternity is in it!”

We must make our decisions, schedule our time, and live in the world that we choose – the world of today or the world of tomorrow. But one thing is certain; we cannot live in two worlds at the same time. This is why we need to consider the time that God has given to us and make proper priorities today and make sure that we are actively serving God and giving Him first place in our lives.

Douglas McLachlan said:

“Between two vast eternities, we have our little moment of time, our little vapor of life.”

Let us use it wisely.

James 4:14

“Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

“With eternity’s values in view, Lord,
With eternities values in view,
May I do each day’s work for Jesus
With eternity’s values in view.”

Are you living for the future or for the present? Where are your priorities? What kind of importance and time do you place on eternal things? Where is your heart? Is your heart only geared around your

home, your sports, your motorcycle, hobbies, work? What kind of value system do you have? Where are your energies being funneled? What is the focus of your life? What is the most important things in your life? What investments have you made this week or this month in the bank of Heaven? When we live for the future we are staying focused on eternal things!

1 John 2:17

“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

We must recognize that there is no eternal value in earthly things! The world system with its values, vices, and vanity is passing away. It has no eternal value attached to it. What a tragedy to invest our resources in what will not last. In fact, as you read this study the world is passing out of existence. The Greek construction of the present tense means that this is a process that is already occurring or taking place right now. This means that the world is passing away much like a passing parade. God is causing the world to come to its end. God is causing the world to come to its end right now and at this very moment. It is continually passing away due to its transitory nature.

What a tragedy to invest our resources in what is fleeting away even as we live today. When a bank is going broke or belly up, smart people do not deposit in it. When the foundation is breaking, intelligent builders do not proceed to build upon it. Concentrating on this world is like rearranging the deck chairs on a ship that is sinking. Wise people do not live for a world that is passing away.

Dr. McGee once said:

“When I look back to when I was a young man, I wish that somehow I could reach back there and reclaim some of those days and some of the strength which I had then. I wish I could use for God what I squandered when I was young. The world is passing away.”

The Bible says, “He who doeth the will of God (the opposite of what is in the world) abides forever.” This was the life verse of D. L. Moody, the great evangelist, and is inscribed on his tombstone. The will of God! Why don't you work at something which is permanent,

something which has stability, and something which is going to last for eternity? God's will pertains to everything we do in life, whether it's related to materialism, music, ministry, or manners (conduct in the Christian life). In John's epistle, doing the will of God proves that a person has the possession of eternal life, which means that a person will abide forever with God in Heaven (1 John 2:3, 18-19; 3:14; 5:18). However, those who invest their time in doing God's will, will not only abide or remain forever in God's presence, they will also experience the blessing associated with eternal reward, honor, and recognition because of their fruitful living and accomplishments, which they have done for the Lord, while living here on earth (Rev. 14:13).

When we live for the future we are staying focused on eternal things! I have a saying on my desk that I look at everyday of my life. It says, "Everything I do today matters forever!"

May God deliver us from the temptation of passing things! God wants us to live for eternal things instead of fleeting things.

Only One Life

"Two little lines I heard one day,
Traveling along life's busy way;
Bringing conviction to my heart,
And from my mind would not depart;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,
And stand before His Judgment seat;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, the still small voice,
Gently pleads for a better choice
Bidding me selfish aims to leave,
And to God's holy will to cleave;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, a few brief years,
Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;
Each with its clays I must fulfill,
Living for self or in His will;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

When this bright world would tempt me sore,
When Satan would a victory score;
When self would seek to have its way,
Then help me Lord with joy to say;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Give me Father, a purpose deep,
In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;
Faithful and true what e'er the strife,
Pleasing Thee in my daily life;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Oh let my love with fervor burn,
And from the world now let me turn;
Living for Thee, and Thee alone,
Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Now let me say, "Thy will be done";
And when at last I'll hear the call,
I know I'll say "'twas worth it all";
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last."