

Scriptural Truths

E-Mail Meditations

The Lord May Come . . . Perhaps Today . . . Behold, I Come Quickly . . . Rev. 22:7

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What Is Life's Purpose?

The Startling Reality

The annual reoccurrence of February is very sobering for me, for it is my birth month, and with each succeeding year I am reminded of my own mortality. When I was a little child, Dad was big, and Grandpa Jennings was an old man. Now I am 69 years of age, but now I am the old man, the grandpa with the grey hair and weakening body. To my grandchildren I am what my grandfather was to me.

Looking back over life I am beginning to realize that: "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle" (Job 7:6). With that comes two other scriptures: "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (Jam. 4:14); and "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mk. 8:36). In the book of James it is the duration of life in view. Mark's comments have been given an evangelistic turn so that it is interpreted as having to do with salvation. I do not see how the context can allow that, rather it is an encouragement to the individual to fulfill the purpose for which God created them. Thus with the passing of years I ask:

What is life?
What is eternal life and am I laying hold on it?
(1 Tim. 6:19)

What Is Life?

On the first level, what is life in duration?

As I look back, and at times reminisce about happenings that seem like yesterday, there are those occasions when I suddenly realize that the event was over 50 years ago, and I wonder where have those 18,627 days gone? This mortal body is slowing down, almost imperceptibly crumbling away molecule by molecule and is decaying. The hearing is going, the voice is not as strong as it once was, and I sing to myself the little tune my sister sang:

Swiftly the moments fly, swiftly the days go by
Days turn to years, and all too soon nothing is left but to die
But if God gave you the power, to live your life over again
To relive each wasted hour, would you live it again in vain?

Again, what is life in its very heart?

The question could be paraphrased: “What is living?” I hear of the “jet set”, etc., and this was presented as real living, but is it? Sadly, in this materialistic age many determine real life by the opulence in which one lives; the high positioning of ones associations; and the affluence one has because of positions, prestige, power, and secular goods.

But is this really life?

I have often walked round the graves, tombs, and crypts of the rich and famous and ask: What is life? Is it an accumulation of deteriorating “stuff” that is only for the present without any thought of life beyond the last breath? Wither one is entombed in Forest Lawn Cemetery in Hollywood or in a paupers grave, how glamorous the life was, or what one had, is of no consequence. It is over.

It has been said that Egypt is a type of the world, and this is true. Egypt was a rich and wonderful place. It had its great library at Alexandria, its magnificent obelisks and pyramids, but nothing of its learning and skills could save or satisfy. It also was a world of idolatry. The mindset of Egypt was hemmed in by the four sided box of touch, hear, smell, and sight. There was the belief that there was an afterlife, but knowing virtually nothing about it resulted in the mummification of bodies for the other world. The ancient Egyptians, and later Nebuchadnezzar, would have the children of Israel believe there is no God who can deliver (Dan. 3:29), no promised land, real life consisted of the repetitiousness of work, sleep, eat, born a slave, live as a slave, and die as one. Living in such a godless materialistic environment definitely had an effect on the children of Israel, and consequently, even when they were in Egypt crying to God, they were idolaters (Ezek. 20:5-8).

On this I must question myself: “Is it possible that I have been influenced by the world’s culture and aspirations that I also could be an idolater? Could I, though praying at meetings, taking part in gospel meetings, Bible readings, etc., can be an idolater? Clearly the Holy Spirit knew we could be idolaters as Israel was, but how? Can an individual be a spiritual schizophrenic, live as a christian, and be an idolater? Sadly, such can be the case for the scriptures teach about those who were redeemed:

- a) “Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry” (1 Cor. 10:14)
- b) “Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them” (1 Cor. 10:7)
- c) “Mortify therefore your members . . . covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5)
- d) “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 Jn. 5:21)

Such statements would not be necessary if such a situation were not possible. The passing of years does not always mean spiritual development, for we can have an Egyptian mindset.

We can have such on two levels:

- a) We can have the same mindset as the unsaved in that, they work for the dollar when work has no higher purpose than to get paid to acquire things or please ourselves. Christians can live so much within the box that life is lived as if there is no heaven or hell, no coming of the Lord, and so get what you can, use all you can get as if it was mine, and take Heaven when it comes. Slaves to the unsatisfiable wantings of life, ever striving to get, get, and get more.
- b) But the other is a more subtle, but devilish form of idolatry. It is to take the beautiful things of life and misuse them. I would be the first not to have beautiful things. God is the God of beauty and gives us the lovely things in life to enjoy. There is nothing wrong with having beautiful things, but the idolater’s mindset comes when the lovely things are misused for the very purpose God gave them. For instance, God gave Nebuchadnezzar beautiful things. He had a brilliant mind and architectural skills but the amoral became more important than the moral. God said to him through Daniel: “Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor” (Dan. 4:27), but what was his response? “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?” (Dan. 4:30). This man looked on the lovely things which God had given to him as the results of his doings, and used the material blessings of God for his own ego and glorification! That is the Egyptian mindset. He was an idolater. Again, Judas showed the Egyptian mindset. The idolaters mindset in another level. He took the gift of friendship, the sop (Jn. 13:26-27) but rejected the giver. The decision the believer must face is: In the past year, God has given me beautiful things, my car, home, tools, Biblical books, computer, etc., have I used them for His glory or my ego and glorification? Indeed, the very work an individual does can become an idol! I know of one preacher who, when he took sick, was unable to finish the meetings. Another brother finished them and a number of people were saved. Instead of rejoicing in that which God had done the preacher said: “You took my glory”!

How easy to glory in the blessings and gifts of God, and look upon them as that which they have gained by their ability. Well did the Holy Spirit write: “What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hast not receive it?” (1 Cor. 4:7).

- c) Perhaps life would be different if we understood that everything of life has a spiritual eternal dimension. We are told: “Wither therefore ye eat, or drink or whosoever ye do, do all for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:26). This involves every aspect of life such as what we have, and what we think we need but really want. All must be critiqued by the question: “Is this for the glory of God?” Surely the Lord was correct when he said: “Man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Lk. 12:15).
- d) Then what is life? Life is living the “eternal life”.

What Is Eternal Life?

When christians are asked “Do you have eternal life?” The answer is an affirmative. The next questions are: “What is eternal life?”; “How is it manifested in your daily living?” The answer to the first is usually: “I am saved, I accepted Christ as my Saviour”. Good, but the question was not: “Are you saved?” but “As one who professes to have eternal life, what is eternal life and how does it effect my daily life?”

Our Lord gave the divine definition of eternal life: “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (Jn. 17:3). Eternal life is more than living forever. Even the unsaved will live forever but they will not have eternal life, for eternal life is knowing God and Christ! Eternal life is not knowing about God and Christ, it is not an intellectual knowledge but an increasing knowledge of Divine Persons by the experiences of life. This “knowing God and Christ” can only be gotten as we live “outside the box”, and as the years pass we move into deeper fellowship with God. It means we are not like Jonah who ran away from the presence of the Lord (Jon. 1:3, 10). To possess the inheritance of eternal life is not getting it at salvation but “laying hold” on it. This requires that in the passing of years there is a deeper development in spiritual progress because having recognized the spiritual dimension in each aspect of life, one “grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18).

As we ponder the passing of life and what life is, may the Lord be gracious and help us live “life” and in a deeper way, to “lay hold on eternal life” that this life may have a supernatural explanation for the greater glory of God.

. . . . Rowan Jennings

Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth, Colossians 3:2

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