

Are You Living For This World, Or For The World To Come?

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Now before we pray and ask the blessing of God upon the ministry of the Word, there are two portions of the Scripture that I wish to read in your hearing, and by which to frame our corporate prayer. The first is found in the book of Hebrews chapter 4 and verse 12 and 13:

"For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and the intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest, that is fully known in His sight, but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Now in the light of the two great truths of those two verses, that the Word of God is the instrument by which God lays bare the deepest true condition of the soul, and in the light of the fact that God perfectly knows the true condition of the soul, and then I trust each of you will pray earnestly in the language of the second portion, Psalm 139, verses 23 and 24. The Word of God is the instrument to lay bare the soul. The living God fully knows the state of the soul. Therefore we can pray, verse 23 of Psalm 139, "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." In the light of the fact of who God is, what the Word of God does, surely this prayer can be answered, and answered in this place tonight. And as will be evident when I introduce my subject in a most unusual way, anything short of accurate self-knowledge and everything I've preached is in vain tonight. So will you plead with me in the language of the psalm that God would search you and help you to know of yourself what He knows, and if there is the discovery of wickedness, that you may be led from that wickedness that will damn you into the way of everlasting life and blessedness. Let us pray together.

Our Father, we are thankful for the truths affirmed in these portions of Your Word that have been read in our hearing. And we would acknowledge that even in this moment of quietness, while we shut our eyes to shut out all other thoughts but those that are fixed upon Yourself. And while we bow our heads in humility before you, we do acknowledge that every single one of us, to the youngest to the oldest, is naked and laid bare before you. You know the deepest, the most secret, the most fleeting thoughts of our hearts. And we thank You that You've given us a Word that is living and active and able to lay bare to our sight that which You see. And we therefore

plead that You will search us, that You will try us, that You will enable us to see and to know what You see and what You know about us.

And, O God, all that is contrary to your will and to our highest interest, give us grace to abandon it, that we may be led, every one of us, into the way everlasting. Lord, we are conscious that whenever we come to such concentrated concern with the human heart, that arch-deceiver, that enemy of our souls, the wicked one, the devil, would seek to bring confusion to our minds, would seek to inject lies into our own spirits. And we pray that you would conquer that foul fiend of hell, and cause us this night to see ourselves as you see us, and to have heart dealings with you. We ask these mercies in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now the message that is upon my heart tonight comes couched to you in the framework of a very simple and a very direct question. And I would like you to picture yourself in the situation in which you would feel most comfortable being alone in a room with me whether in your living room, sitting in your favorite chair, and I sitting in the couch, some three or four feet away. Some of you might feel equally as comfortable, perhaps in the intimacy of my study or our family room. Some of you I know wouldn't feel comfortable alone with me under any circumstances. But, assuming that such a condition were possible, Will you please picture yourself in the most relaxed and yet legitimately intimate context in which there was just you and me and I were to look you straight in the eyeballs back to your retinas and ask you this very simple and direct question: are you living for this present world or for that which is to come?

And that's the question I'd like, as it were, to come into your den, into your living room, around your kitchen table, and eyeball to eyeball, heart to heart, mind to mind, spirit to spirit, with the shadow of the day of judgment cast over that kitchen table, that den chair, that living room furniture, that we might discuss together this very personal and direct question that I am asking, not of the congregation in general, but of each one of you, individually and personally. Are you, not your mother, not your father, not your brother, not your sister, living for this present world or for that which is to come?

Now, I'm not asking you, are you living in this present world? That's quite obvious. I'm looking at you, and in the situation that we've projected in our minds, that den, that kitchen table, that living room, my study, would be set in the context of this present world. So I'm not asking you, are you living in this present world, and living in the light of all of the responsibilities and problems that arise from living in this present world? And God knows that there are many concerns, many demands made upon us, many problems that arise from the very fact that we are living in this present world. And I am not concerned with the question of whether you are living in this present world. That's obvious. Nor with the problems and necessities and pressures that arise from living responsibly in this present world. My question is a different one. The question is this: are you living for this present world or for that which is to come.

Now you say, "Pastor Martin, why is the question so vital? The one chance you have to get me alone four feet away, eyeball to eyeball, why that question? Well, for this simple reason. The only men, the only women, the only boys, the only girls that are going to heaven when they die are those whose hearts have been taken to heaven while they live. Now that's why the question is so important. No one goes to heaven when he dies unless his heart and his affections and his highest interest have been taken to heaven while he lives. No one goes to heaven when he dies unless his heart has been taken to heaven by grace while he lives. So that's why the question is so important.

Now, having raised the question, having underscored the importance of the question, I would hope what you would say to me across the kitchen table, over the space of the four feet separating your chair from my chair in the den, in the living room, in my study, would be "All right, Pastor. I see the importance of the question. I understand the basic thrust of the question. But can you help me to truly know the answer with an accuracy that will not leave me shortchanged in the day of judgment?" And that's exactly what I'm going to attempt to do. I'm going to attempt to help you to answer that question in such a way that you will not be shortchanged in the day of judgment.

How can I know if I am living for this present world or for that which is to come? Well, let me begin, first of all, by setting out what I am calling the major marks of one who is living for this present world. And I want you to ask yourself, is the description of these marks, is the delineation of these marks, a picture of your life? If it is, then you are indeed living for this present world. And my friend, unless there's a radical change, you will not be taken to heaven when you die, but you will sink into hell forever and forever. And I want to give you four major marks of one who is living for this world.

Number one, his heart, her heart, is fixed in loving the things of this world. Turn, please, to the familiar words of the Apostle John in his first epistle, 1 John, chapter 2 and verse 15. John writes, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory or vain pretensions of life is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away and the lust thereof. But he who does the will of God abides forever."

Now notice from this text, on its very surface, that John asserts that one who loves the world will always show it by loving the things of the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." And the mark of a man, a woman, a boy or girl whose heart is fixed in loving the world is this: they will always love the things of this world, that is, the world's treasures, the world's pleasures, the world's honor, its power, its wisdom, its wealth, its praise. Anything this world has or contains, insofar as it opposes God, opposes Christ, opposes His kingdom, and the claims of God over us, those are the things of this world. The things of this world may be things that are God's gifts in and of themselves, but anything in God's world which rivals Christ,

His kingdom, and God's claims over us is indeed that which comes under the description, "the things of this world."

And then John gets specific: "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pretensions regarding this life." You see, the things of this world are in great measure comprised of the lusts of the flesh, natural God-given appetites which have been perverted through the intrusion of sin and are now regulated by one thing, desire and personal pleasure and fulfillment. If God's law must be defied, if the principles of decency and restraint and moderation must be defied, it matters not. My lust, my appetites must be satisfied. The lust of the eyes, no matter how much the flesh feeds upon the carrying of its forbidden objects, it's never satisfied. The eye is always looking out and saying to the soul, more, more, more, more, and more. And then that last thing translated, "the vainglory or the pride of life", Lenski in his commentary, I think convincingly demonstrates, perhaps gives a wrong perspective on the meaning of John's words, and so he translates it, "the vainglorious pretense of life" and says, "John has in mind that hollow arrogance which presumes that it can decide and direct the course of life without God, determine what it will do, gain, achieve, and enjoy in total indifference to the revelation of God's will in the Scriptures."

Now you see the first mark of someone who's living for this world is that his heart is fixed in loving the things of this world. His heart is fixed in that loving attachment to the things of this world, its treasures, pleasures, honors, power, wisdom, praise. And in specific ways, the heart is fixed upon gratifying its own appetites, and in ever reaching out with the soul through the eye gate for more, and living in the spirit that this is my life; I can do with it what I choose.

Then there's a second major mark of one who lives for this world, and it is this: his energies are spent in pursuing the things of this world. Not only is his heart fixed in loving the things of this world, his energies are spent in pursuing the things of this world. You see, whatever has your heart has you, and what has you will have your energies. Proverbs 4.23: "Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The energies of the soul, the energies of the mind, the energies of the body, thought and plans and money and effort and time are all spent in pursuit of the things of this world. Because the heart is fixed upon them, the heart draws the energies into its train, and all of the energies are funneled along the channels cut by the heart that is fixed upon this present world.

The idea of energy spent in seeking God is totally foreign to the one who lives for this present world. The idea of spending energy in seeking Christ, seeking holiness, seeking usefulness in the kingdom of Christ, seeking selfless service to others in the name of Christ, utterly foreign to the person who is living for this present world. Because his heart is fixed upon the things of this world, his energies are spent exclusively in the pursuit of the things of this world.

The classic example in a concrete description is given by our Lord in the twelfth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. Here was a man, no indication that he was a thief, no indication that he was a lecher, a womanizer. No indication that he blew his wealth snorting cocaine up his nose through rolled up dollar bills. No indication that he was one of these who caused disruption in society by being a revolutionary who countenanced the violent overthrow of the government. No, none of those things. But he was a man who was living for this present world. Listen to the language of his soul. Luke chapter 12, and we read in verse 16, speaking of our Lord,

"He spoke a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he reasoned within himself, saying...[Our Lord takes us into the chamber where thoughts are conceived and register upon the brain of a man. And our Lord, as it were, allows those thoughts now to be echoed out into the ears of all who ever receive His written revelation. And this is what we would hear were we to put our ear to the thought chamber of this man's heart. This is what he said:]

"He reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do? Because I have not where to bestow my fruits. And he said, This will I do. I will pull down my barns and build greater. There will I bestow all my grain and my goods, and I will say to my soul, soul, you have much goods laid up for many years. [Now, after a life of success and business concerns behind you, prepare to meet your God.]"

Oh no, God is not in all of his thoughts. The notion that when things get less pressured and things get easier, then you'll think of God is the devil's lie. This man didn't. He said,

"I'll bestow my grain and my goods and I'll say to my soul, soul, you have much goods laid up for many years. Take your ease, eat, drink, be merry, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes. The vain glory of life, that I'll live my life as though I'm going to have my retirement years forever.] But God said unto him, you fool, this night your soul will be required of you."

And his soul went to the place where his heart was. Didn't go to heaven, because his heart never went to heaven. He didn't go there when he died. That's the picture, you see, of a man who's living for this world. Because his heart is fixed in loving the things of this world, his energies are spent in pursuing the things upon which his heart is set.

The third mark of someone living for this world is this: his greatest anxieties are experienced in connection with this present world. Oh yes, he may have an occasional anxious thought about God. He has to go to funerals to be socially acceptable. And if it's a young man or woman, there's a little twinge when grandma dies and grandpa dies, and they go to the funeral and see them laid out and say, at least for a moment, "Where will I be when my time comes?" But there's no great anxiety about the soul, about God, about heaven, about hell. But the real anxieties are in the language of Matthew 6, where Jesus said, "What shall we eat? What shall

we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" You see, the greatest anxieties of the person living for this present world are found in conjunction with food and drink and shelter and clothing.

And hear me further, the greatest concern of the young man is not, "How shall I find a savior for my soul to stand on my behalf in the day of judgment?" But his greatest anxiety is, "How shall I find a wife who will be the fulfillment of my dream, who'll be put together like a love goddess, who'll be as energetic as a Belgian workhorse, who will be as frugal as the most tight-fisted miser? Where is this woman of my dreams? And if I must push aside all standards of godliness and virtue of character to have what I've conceived is what I want?" That's his deepest anxieties,

And likewise with the young woman: her greatest anxiety is not, "How may I be the handmaiden of the Lord Jesus to serve Him in marriage or in singleness? How may I be the Lord's handmaiden to render to Him the fruit of His mercy and His love?" Oh no, her greatest anxiety is, "What will I do if I'm not married by the time I'm 25? I'll lower my standards a bit. And if I'm not married by the time of 25, I'll lower them yet, lest I pass the dread thirties and still be single." Her greatest anxieties are not about having a heavenly bridegroom, but having an earthly husband. And she's willing to sell her soul to have a husband. He's willing to sell his soul to have a wife. Why? Because his or her heart, you see, is fixed upon this world, and therefore the greatest anxieties are pertaining to marriage and family and home and job security.

If they were told, "You have a cancer that will kill you in six months", oh, how anxious they'd become! But they can sit in a church like this and be told every week that the cancer of sin has already passed the sentence of death upon the soul, and one heartbeat alone keeps you out of hell. Then there's no anxiety. You could care less, walk out of this place flippant, jocular, young and old, talk and laugh, "Ha ha, hell, heavens." That's a worldly thing, living for this world, living for this world.

Do you see yourself? We're sitting across the kitchen table. I'm in earnest with you. You've asked me, "Pastor, how can I know?" I'm telling you, young man; I'm telling you, young woman, this is how you can know: if your greatest anxieties are experienced in connection with this present world, food, drink, shelter, clothing, marriage, a husband, a wife, home, job security, good health, pleasure, feeling good, being accepted, being loved, being thought the smart, infallible girl, face what you are. You're a worldling living for this present world.

The fourth mark of someone who lives for this present world is this: his greatest joys are in connection with the things of this world. You see, what gives a man his greatest joy is often one of the most certain indices of the state of his soul. Look at the people who hit it big in the lottery. They really think they've caught the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, and now life's problems are over. They really do. Because they are worldlings who really think that life does consist in the three million won in the jackpot.

Now you ask yourself, what causes your greatest joy? Is it the acquisition of money, a new dress, a new boyfriend, a new girlfriend, the prospect of marriage, the prospect of a home, the prospect of security? What gives you your greatest joys in this life? Be honest now. Don't play a head game on yourself. Don't cooperate with the devil in damning your soul and do a con job on your own mind. Answer honestly, man, woman, boy or girl. What gives you your greatest joy? Is it sitting here when Christ in His glory is being preached, and the Holy Spirit, as it were, pulls back the veil of your understanding, and you catch just a fleeting glimpse of the edges of His glory, and your heart feels it will either shrink and sink beneath the pressure of the sight of a glorious Christ, or it will burst for sheer joy at the sight of so glorious a Savior?

Do you know what it is to truly be excited and filled with joy at the sight of Christ in the preaching of the Word? And when heaven is spoken of and the glory of the world to come, in which the saints will serve Him with undimmed vision of perception of His glory no longer veiled by the limitations of this present state, no longer distorted by their remaining sin as it impacts upon the mind, that they shall see and know even as they are known, Do you enter into the joys of those prospects, the joy of the language of Murray McShane, "When I see thee as thou art, love thee with unsinching heart?" Does that get you shouting happy, the thought that you can serve Christ without sin?

You see, you can know whether you're living for this present world if you really want to know. Just ask yourself, what gives me my greatest joys? Is it things connected with this world? Money? Marriage? Reputation? Acceptance of my peers? Is that what gives you your greatest joys? If so, you're living for this present world.

Now those are four outstanding marks, major marks of someone who lives for this world. His heart is fixed in loving the things of this world. His energies are spent in pursuing the things of this world. His greatest anxieties are experienced in connection with the concerns of this world. And his greatest joys are found in connection with the things of this world.

Now then, what are the major marks of one living for the world to come? He still lives in this world. He may have to fight traffic on the Garden State Parkway every day. He may have to sit and listen to the rattle and clatter of the train as it makes its way under the Holland Tunnel as he goes into the city. And he may have to see the filth, both the garbage on the streets and the moral garbage on the posters and the ethical and moral garbage in the office. He's very much aware that he's living in this world, but if he's living for the world to come, what will be the marks of such a man?

Now we're sitting across the table and you're really dead in earnest, and you want to say with the Spirit, "Oh God, search me and know me, help me to know if indeed I am one who's living for the world to come." Well, here's the first mark: his heart is fixed on loving the things of the world to come.

For example, 2 Corinthians 4, verses 16 and 17, Paul in the midst of his great tribulation and his multiple sufferings for Christ's sake, says of those sufferings,

"Wherefore we faint not, though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more and more an eternal weight of glory." His mind did not look upon his lacerated arms. He didn't stand wherever he could get a crude mirror of that day and constantly gaze upon his lacerated, scarred back that had felt the lictor's lash many times. He said,

"No, all of that is our light affliction and my gaze is fixed upon that eternal weight of glory. I know that in the world to come, this body that now feels the ravages of sin, the additional ravages of advancing age, and the added ravages of the sufferings I've endured for the gospel, all of it is but light affliction that is storing up for me an eternal weight of glory, when this body will be resplendent with the life and power and glory of the glorified body of my Savior."

That's where his gaze was fixed. Verse 18: "While we look not on the things which are seen [yes, I'm a man who's living in this world, but the focused gaze of my heart's deepest affection is not on these things, but on the things which are not seen], for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." You see, there's a man whose heart is fixed on loving the things of the world to come. The glorified body that awaits him at the second coming, the weight of glory that will be his in the reward of grace, the immediate vision of his precious Savior, standing amidst an entire glorified church, never to have to pen a weighty Corinthian letter again, with all of the scabs and wounds and scars and disfigurements of the church in its imperfect state, but contemplating the church glorified with the full splendor of the glorified Christ, he said, "That's the thing on which my heart is set." Or in the language of 2 Peter, chapter 3, another example, concrete, specific example of the mark of one living for the world to come. Peter speaking of the return of the Lord and the fact that the return of the Lord is delayed that God's purposes of salvation might be accomplished, but though delayed, that day will certainly come (verses 10-13):

"And in that day the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up, seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved [recognizing that everything that is in this present world order, even the things we receive and use with moderation according to the law of God and to the glory of God, they will pass away in their present state and order] what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy living and godliness [look now], looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. But we, according to his promise, look for a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness."

Here's a man whose heart is fixed on loving the things of the world to come, and he says that pattern is the pattern of all of God's people. We, according to His promise, look for what? Not heaven on earth, comprised of a well-padded bank account, a well-secured retirement account, a well-furnished home, a well-adjusted family, and all of the things of this world. No! No Christian can ever think that his heaven is here

in the most favorable of all circumstances. He looks for the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwells righteousness. That's the mark of one living for the world to come. His heart is fixed on loving the things of the world to come. Not fixed perfectly, not fixed with equal constancy, not fixed at all times with the same intensity. I know that! I have to live with my own fickle heart! But it's nonetheless fixed. Sometimes not fixed as quite so much as others. Sometimes the fixation is more intense, more steady, more stable. But when you dig down through to the raw stuff of someone who's living for the world to come, there you'll find a heart fixed on loving that world to come.

Secondly, his energies are spent in pursuing the things of the world to come. Because his heart's there, that's where his energy's on. Yes, he may have to spend a lot of energy putting in his eight to ten hours at the shop, in the office. She may spend a good deal of energy chasing around kids and changing diapers and banging at a typewriter and fulfilling some function in an office. Yes, much energy and time is spent in doing the revealed will of God according to Scripture. However, in all of those endeavors, the person who is living for the world to come is spending those energies, even in the mundane things, with a view to pursuing the things of the world to come.

That woman is given herself up to the selfless, inglorious task of motherhood. Why? That she may rear a godly seed for the advancement of God's glory and the betterment and blessing of society and the restraint of evil in the world. And that man is punching his clock, and standing at his bench, and banging his hammer, and standing at his lathe, and sitting at his word processor, and making the computer hum, and giving orders to those under him, taking orders from those over him that he may earn a decent wage to provide for his family, that in that family life regulated by the Word of God, they may be light and salt in a wicked and perverse generation, to get some people thirsty to ask a reason of a hope that is in them, that they may bear witness to the grace of God and prepare some more people for heaven and for the world to come.

They labor that they may have to give to the work of God, that when we pray for laborers to go forth, we won't have the embarrassment of saying the head of the church has formed a competent laborer, but there is no money to underwrite him and send him forth. They say, "I'd rather die in shame than that should ever happen." And if I must work overtime, that I can increase my giving, that there will be money to send the laborer. I'm willing to work overtime for that. Men in the world bust their hump to meet their inordinately assumed mortgage payments. Should I not bust my hump for getting someone out with the gospel?

Their hearts are fixed on the world to come, energy spent for the things of the world to come. It is God, it is Christ, the salvation of sinners, the advancement of the church, the imparting the knowledge of Christ to one's children. You see, though he may spend his hours in exactly the same way as the man whose heart is set on this world, the chasm between their intentions is light years.

Third major mark of one living for the world to come: his greatest anxieties are in connection with the things of the world to come. Oh yes, he has some anxious moments about how to meet that emergency problem that's come. He has anxious moments when he finds his wife or husband may have cancer. There are anxious moments over a wayward son or daughter. I'm not talking to you like some 18-year-old kid who's starry-eyed about life. 32 years of marriage, 27 years as a parent, 35 years in the ministry--I think it taught me a few things. I think I'm in touch with reality. Dear people, I'm not denying all of the anxieties that come in the course of living in this present age, but what I'm saying is this: the mark of the man or woman who is living for the world to come is that he or she knows that his or her greatest anxieties are found in connection with the realities of the world to come.

In the language of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5, here's an example of such a man. He had anxieties for the churches. Often he was anxious for his own life as they sought to track him down like a common criminal. He had to be let down over a wall in a basket in the middle of the night, a very inglorious way to leave the city. But now listen to this man's heartbeat (verses 8-10): "We are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Wherefore, we also make it our aim [literally we are ambitious], whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him. [Why?] For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ." He says,

"In the world to come, I'm going to be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ. And it is not what men think about me now. It's not the laurels they put around my neck or the stones with which they pummel my back. Those are matters of indifference, praise or blame from men in the world to come. I'll meet my Savior. And I'll be fully known in that day to receive in the body the things that I've done, whether good or bad."

You see, that's why this same apostle said (chapter 7 of this same epistle), "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God [that is, as beneath the eye of God, as accountable to God, on our way to stand before God]. The greatest anxieties of one living for the world to come is that he may hear in that day, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And he knows that if God gives him strength, he's prepared to face any opposition; he's prepared to undergo any disappointment, any suffering, any maligning of his name, whatever, if only he may hear his Lord say, "Well done." And his greatest anxiety is that he may do something to incur the frown of his Lord.

And then fourthly, his greatest joys are in conjunction with the world to come. One example, because time is going so quickly from us, when Jesus was dealing with the inevitable suffering that would come to His own people (when heavenly-minded people live in the midst of earthbound creatures, there's bound to be friction): "I came not to send peace", He said in Matthew 10. But in Matthew 5, He describes that beautiful mosaic of the character traits of the sons and daughters of the kingdom.

And He said people like this, poor in spirit, who mourn, who are meek, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, who are merciful, the world cannot be indifferent to such people. Their lifestyle exposes the sham and the hollowness of the lifestyle of the worldling, and so the worldling opposes them. Verse 10: "Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when men shall reproach you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad." Let this be your great joy. What? Here it is: "for great is your reward in heaven." Their greatest joy is found in conjunction with the world to come, and they're willing to wait for it. They're prepared to be vilified here that they might share in the joyous reward of grace with prophets and holy men and women who've gone before them.

Well, these are the marks of one living for the world to come. His heart is fixed on loving the things of that world. His energies are spent in pursuing them, seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. His greatest anxieties are found in conjunction with the world to come. And his greatest joys are in conjunction with the world to come. Now let me ask you, sitting across from the table, sitting in your living room, which description do you fit? Which one are you? Are you living for this world or for the world to come? You say,

"Pastor, I've tried to be honest. It hasn't been easy. I've been fighting, rationalizing. I've been fighting a turmoil of my own thoughts. I find myself trying to put the best construction on the things that expose me. And I find myself trying to amplify beyond reason the things that comfort me. But if I'm going to err, I'm going to err on the side of being suspicious of my judgment. And if I do that, I have to say, I'm living for this world."

That may be the first ray of hope for some of you is honest self-evaluation. And if you're there and say, "That's who I am, I'm the very person you've described."

And the great question with which we close tonight is this: "How can I be changed from one who's living for this world to one who lives for the world to come? How can I?" Well, my friend, let me tell you up front, no human being can make the change, neither you, nor I, nor your mom, nor your dad. There is no ritual, there is no sacrament, there is no form, there is nothing, nothing. With men this is impossible.

That was the very problem with the rich young ruler. He was living for the things of this world, and Jesus said, "Do you want the things of the other world to be your treasure?" That's what he held out, remember? And He said, Go, sell that you have, come, follow me, thou shalt have treasure in heaven." And he was so chained to the things of this world, he couldn't let them go, though his conscience told him he needed eternal life. His chains bound him to his box. And he went away sorrowful, and Jesus said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom." And the disciples were really shook by that, and they said, "Who then in the world can be saved? And Jesus said, with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.

So my friend, in answer to your question, "How can I be changed from one who's living for this world to one who lives for the world to come?" The answer is not in yourself, not in me, not in anything man can do upon you or for you, or that you can do for yourself. But let me give you three simple principles from the Word of God as we close.

Number one, recognize the frightening state of being one who's living for this world. Do you know that's not an innocent condition? I want you to turn to the book of James, chapter 4. You are in a frightening state if you are one living for this world. You may not be living a life of open, flagrant immorality, a life of utter abandonment, of sensuality and dishonesty and thievery. It matters not. Listen to the statement of James in chapter 4 and verse 4: "You adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

Now, you talk about uneven combatants. What would you think if they arrange the world title fight between the super bantamweight (I think the top weight for super bantamweight is 108 pounds) and put him in the ring with Mike Tyson. You'd say the guy's crazy. The disparity of height and strength and muscularity and punching power. No way!

Look at this text. My dear fellow puny little worm in the dust, you've taken on God. You've made yourself the adversary of God. When you've said, "I'll take the world and make it my bosom friend. I'll give my heart to it, I'll spend my energies for it, I will have my anxieties provoked for it, and I will pursue it with all my heart. You've declared war on God, my friend. What a frightening thing to be God's enemy. The God who holds your breath in His hands, the God who is the sovereign judge of the universe, the God Jesus said Whom we are to fear in the light of His power to cast soul and body into hell.

My friend, sitting across the table as you get anxious about the issue and you say, "But pastor, what can I do? I must confess, I am living for this world. What can I do to live for the world to come?" My answer is recognize the frightening state you're in right now. Almighty God is against you. You've declared yourself his enemy.

But then secondly, recognize that the death of Jesus Christ for sinners is God's ultimate judgment on this present world. You want to know what God thinks of this world system and the things of the world, the things for which you're living, the things for which you're spending your energy, for which your anxieties are stirred, which bring you your joys? You want to know God's estimation of them? Go to a place called Calvary. And I want you to go there with these two texts before you, Galatians chapter 1 and verse 4, and Galatians chapter 6 and verse 14.

Galatians chapter 1 and verse 4: "Who gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil world." He died to deliver us out of this present evil world. And how does He do it? Chapter 6 and verse 14: "God forbid, far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ [now notice] through which the

world has been crucified unto me and I unto the world." We've never seen a person crucified. You've seen in some movie or television program someone being killed, quickly shot, but even with the lowered standards of modern so-called entertainment and the other media. Seldom would anyone even attempt to portray the horrible, gruesome, sickening sight of someone hanging on a cross with all his bones out of joint, dying of dehydration, the buzzards circling above waiting to pluck the flesh when the light is gone.

And Paul said, "You know what happened in my spiritual experience? There was a time when I lived for this world." And he did it in a very sophisticated religious way. He was not a lecher and a thief and a disrupter of society. He was a proper religious Pharisee. But he was a worldling, living for this present age and the approval of his peers. And he says,

"This world, its values, its friends, its approval, its approbation, its encouragement, its wisdom--there came a day when by the Holy Spirit I understood the cross of Christ. And when I saw in the immolated, forsaken, abandoned, incarnate God upon Golgotha, this is God's judgment upon the world's wisdom. This is God's judgment upon the world's values. This is God's judgment upon the world's lusts. This is God's judgment upon the world's idea of acceptable religion. This is God's judgment upon everything in this present world. When I saw that, suddenly the world became as attractive to me as a dead man hanging on a cross. The world became crucified to me."

My dear friend, listen to me. You will never be delivered from living for this world until living for the world to come, except that deliverance be found by way of a spiritual sight of the meaning of the cross of Christ. It is in the death of Jesus Christ for sin, sin that is the ugly outgrowth of hearts committed to the world. It is only as you see in the horrible sight of the Son of God, shrouded amidst the darkness of those heavens from the third to the sixth hour, amidst the cry of dereliction, you see what sin and the world are in the estimation of God. And in the language of John Newton, "A bleeding Savior I have viewed, and now I hate my sin."

And then thirdly, you must repent of your attachment to this world and embrace that Savior, the Lord Jesus, Who went from the cross to Joseph's tomb, from Joseph's tomb to the right hand of the Father, where He sits in all the livingness of everlasting life as the great Prophet, Priest, and King of His people. And in the language of Acts 2, Peter called men to repent. Then he called them to save themselves from this untoward generation. He called them to turn their backs upon living for this present age and to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ with a view to the forgiveness of sins.

You say, "But pastor, that's what I've heard in this place since I was a kid." Yes, and as long as we're true to this Bible, that's all you're ever going to hear. There is no bridge from living for this world, for living to the world to come but the bridge composed of a Roman gibbet on which hangs the incarnate God, dying the just for

the unjust, that He might bring us to God, that He might wrench our hearts loose from the world and fix them upon heaven, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

So in answer to your question, "How can I be changed from one who lives for the world to one who lives for the world to come?" The answer is, recognize your present danger. Recognize that in the cross of Christ is God's ultimate judgment upon your present lifestyle. And repent of all that attachment to the world means to you in the concreteness of your own peculiar chains and bonds to this world, and embrace Christ as Savior and Lord.

But some of you say, "Pastor, if I stop living for this present world, it's going to cost me something. I've got a romantic involvement with a woman that I fear may be ruptured and forever severed if I begin to live for the world to come." My friend, I'm not indifferent to the pangs and the pull of romantic involvement. I've been very much romantically involved with a woman for 36 years, 32 of those in marriage. Still haven't lost the romantic involvement. I don't say this insensitively that romantic involvement is real with that young woman, with that man. Yes, but listen, listen, listen. "Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Why? Hebrews says, "He had respect to the recompense of the reward." He looked beyond this world to the world to come.

Suppose you go ahead and marry that boy, marry that girl, have your kids, have your grandchildren. One day you're going to die. You'll stand before Almighty God. And you lean on that object of your affection to blot out your sins, to pardon you and give you a righteousness that will make it right for God to say, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord." You want to pin your hopes for heaven on her pretty brown eyes, on his lovely curly blonde hair? You want to pin your hopes to miss hell and gain heaven? Then abandon that relationship and abandon it now before you damn your soul with it.

You say, "But Pastor, if I give up the world, I know I have to give up its ethical standards. That'll mean I'll probably lose my job. There's no way you can make it in my business but by half-truths and overstatements and manipulating facts and figures. Remember the young man in the Philippines? He told his boss, "The price for maintaining my job means manipulating the books. Give me my walking papers." We've got good news for you Wednesday night. Can't tell you now. But God honors those who honor Him. But God didn't tell him that beforehand. He had to be willing to lose his job, but he'd rather lose his job than lose his Savior.

Whatever it is, my friend, that binds you to this world, it can't save you. It can't go into the jaws of death with you. And it can't go to judgment and plead your cause on your behalf. But Jesus can. Jesus can. Abandon whatever keeps you from embracing Him.

And there may be some of you who think, "Well, pastor, you've really overstated it. I think you can really have the best of both worlds." You do? And you'll sink into hell with your delusion. For that's turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. Jesus

Christ died not to take worldlings to heaven after they die, giving them a heart for heaven. "He died", Paul says, "to deliver us from this present evil world." And Paul said in Titus 2, "The grace of God has appeared, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust here and now, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." In 2 Peter 1.4, Peter says that it's through the gospel and the exceeding great and precious promises that we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. If you've not escaped now, if you've not been taught the grace of God in such a way that you're denying these things now, you're turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and you'll experience a double damnation.

And no doubt many of us, as my own heart has felt the pressure of these things in preparation, say,

"Oh God, I believe I can say, fundamentally and basically, I no longer live for this world, but I'm living for the world to come." But even when you say the words, you can't even pause to put a comma. You must almost take a big breath and say, "Oh Lord, you know that I'm living for the world to come. But oh, how ashamed I am at how quickly my heart is seduced by the bared leg of this adulterous present world. How quickly my energies are channeled off into things that don't matter a hill of beans in the light of eternity. How quickly my anxieties are all stirred up over things that are of no account. And how often my joys are over the trifles of this world."

And, oh dear children of God, will you not pray with me, "God, make us more heavenly minded?" You've heard the statement, so-and-so is so heavenly-minded, he's no earthly good. I've never yet met such a person in my life. I tell you, I have to live with one who so much of the time is so earthly-minded, he's no heavenly good. And I see all over the churches of Christ, people so earthly minded there's so little heavenly good being done. Oh, let us cry to God. No one, no one can be too heavenly minded. Because if it's true heavenly-mindedness, there will be such increasing devotion to Christ that there will be intensified care to obey Christ, and that will make us meticulous in our obedience to Christ in every detail of life here on earth. We will be more good on earth in direct proportion to our heavenly-mindedness.

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Well, we come around full circle to where we started. Are you living for this present world or for that which is to come? There's my question. I've tried to help you answer from the Word of God. I've done all I can do except to pray for you when I leave, to cry to God that you will not quickly throw off the pressure of the Word upon your conscience. If God's shown you you're living for this present world, I lovingly implore you and entreat you. Go to the one place by which you can pass from being one who lives for this world to one who lives for the world to come. And that's the place called

Golgotha, where Christ died the Just for the unjust. There, confess your sin and plead for His mercy and embrace Him as the Savior. He offers Himself to all in the gospel, saying, "Come, and I will give you rest."

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