



## **An Eternal Perspective – Part 2**

### **Checking Your Confidence in the Resurrection**

**Pastor Mike Fabarez**

Well, I can appreciate that Home Depot and Lowe's and even True Value like to present themselves proudly as home improvement stores. That's certainly what they seek to do and God certainly is aware of how much money and time I've spent in those stores trying to improve my home. The problem is I'll probably be back there tomorrow because the improvement process on my home is never-ending. Even if I go there to fix a faucet or a drawer guide or whatever, I mean, in time it just needs to be fixed again or better yet, and in this case, they really are improving things, there's a better way to do it. So I go back there and spend more money, spend more time, and I keep trying to improve my house. Now, what I really would like is a home perfection store, where you just go once and you get what you need and it just perfects everything and you don't ever have to go back. That's the kind of store I want. Is that too much to ask, a home perfection store?

Well, theologically, of course, the answer is yes, it is too much to ask. You're never going to have a home perfection store because part of being alive in the home that you live in and the home of your body, it can never be perfected in this life. It will be like a dog chasing his tail, always trying to get this thing improved. It'll never get there. It's what the book of Ecclesiastes is all about in the end it's never going to arrive at perfection in this world. But the good news for Christians is that one day it will, that's the good news. One day God says as we started last week in this Eternal Perspective study that we are going to have promised for us, the perfect. God's going to take your body as imperfect as it is and increasingly so it seems as we near death it is going to be remade, remanufactured, resurrected, glorified, these are the biblical words for it and we're going to be made perfect and that's a great thing. The bad news is we're going to have to wait for that and it's probably going to get a lot worse before it ever becomes perfect.

That's the problem: the wait and the wait was characterized last week by the word "groaning." What's important about that is that we don't recognize that is simply just having a bad attitude. To the old curmudgeon who just sits there and complains about all the imperfections of the world and yourself. That's not what God is looking for here. God wants us to groan in a different way. The kind of groaning we should have is a groaning of great anticipation that really affects everything about our lives. It should be that your life is obviously distinct from other people's lives, your neighbors, your coworkers, who don't have this hope, this settled assurance of what's going to happen and what you will be experiencing 100 years from now. That should be so palpably clear in your own mind that it changes the way you live. And if it doesn't change the way you live, then you've have a problem. One of two problems. Either your problem is you haven't given it enough thought, you really don't have this clear in your mind as to what it's all about and why it should be anticipated more than anything else you anticipate in this temporal life now. Or worse yet, and I would say catastrophic, is if you don't have an assurance that that's even the future for you. Now, that you don't know for sure, you're not positive that this is the reality of your future 100 years from now. The jury's still out



in your mind as to whether or not you're going to be there in the place that the Bible talks about.

Well, either problem is a big problem. And in this passage that we've reached in Second Corinthians Chapter 5, God clearly wants us to have a grasp on this. He wants us to have so much of a grasp on this that it changes our daily decisions. So take your Bibles and let's see if we can't figure this out and understand how God would have us live and think and how he'd have us navigate this week in a particular way so that you are absolutely settled with an assurance that changes things about your attitude, your priorities, and your life. In Second Corinthians Chapter 5, we looked at the first three verses last week. Let's start in verse 4. We'll go all the way through verse 8 in trying to understand what Paul has to say to us, and of course what God has ultimately to say to us about how we should think and act as it relates to our future. I'll read from the English Standard Version, follow along. Here's what our passage challenges us to do and how to think in our lives. Verse 4, "For while we're still in this tent," this has nothing to do with the pop-up tents in our parking lot that you're sitting under right now. We're talking about, as we started last week, the idea of the tent being our body that is decaying, the body that is mortal, the body that is going to continue to increasingly give you trouble the longer you live on this planet. "While we're still in this tent, we groan, being burdened," and that's for sure. But it's not the kind of burdening we talked about last week. The groaning is not the kind of groaning that says, man, it sure is terrible to go through all this suffering here. It's a little different kind of groaning. It's kind of groaning that is like, I really am not comfortable with the current because I can't wait for the future.

Take a look at these next two lines here. "Not that we would be unclothed." It's not like we're just looking for relief. Like, I can't wait for this life to be over because it's so hard, I just want to be done with it. No. "But that we'd be further clothed." In other words, we're groaning, not in the sense that it's so bad to be a mortal person in a failing body in a failing world, but you know what? We are groaning because we can't wait for the great next thing that God has, "that we would be further clothed," in this glorious, resurrected body that we just talked about last time. "So that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." That's just a great line. The idea of what God has said to us through Paul in First Corinthians Chapter 15, which they'd already clearly ingested, now he's saying, you know, wouldn't it be great when all the things about the present problems of this life and my body would be completely just swallowed up by this thing that the Bible calls life, eternal life, abundant life, the life that God has planned for us ultimately. Well, that sounds good. Verse 5 says, "He," God, "who's prepared us for this very thing is God." Now, that's just an amazing thought that you were created not to experience the life you have now. God didn't make you so that you could make it through this world the way you're just kind of slugging your way through it now. But he's prepared you for this great thing beyond this life, "who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. Now, he'd already said that in First Corinthians Chapter 1, that the whole point of God giving us the Spirit was not only to help us through this life but to promise us that the experience that we have with the Spirit is a guarantee," a promise, a down payment, literally the word means, of what's coming next. So you know if you have the Spirit, well then you're guaranteed to be resurrected, that's the great news, in a perfect place surrounded by what he calls life, "swallowed up in life."



So what's the upshot of that? Verse 6, "We're always of good courage." So that doesn't sound like groaning like a curmudgeon just complaining, right? No, no, no. We're of good courage. We're not just sitting there, ah, it's awful to be in a terrible life, a terrible world. Look at this, the world's going to hell in a handbasket and my body's falling apart just as fast. No, no, no. It's not about that. I'm groaning with excitement. I can't wait like a kid waiting for Christmas, right? Because I have great courage, because "we know that while we're at home in the body we're away from the Lord," which is not as good as being there. He's going to get to that punch line in a minute. But he says, and that's why "we walk by faith, not by sight." We're not all about the things that we see. We're about the things that we don't see, which he said in verse 18 of Chapter 4, he says those things are eternal. This life is transit. What you can see is transit, what you can't see is eternal and this is a good thing he says. "We walk by faith, not by sight. Yes," he says it again, "we're of good courage, and we would rather be..." Now that's kind of a weak word for what I'm trying to get to. Rather be, I'd want to be, I can't wait to be, I'm groaning to be, "away from the body and at home with the Lord." The only way you're going to have what you really want is to get through this life, step through the portal of your own mortality so that you can be swallowed up in life.

Now the first stage of that, as we said last week, is this disembodied state that verse 3 talked about, being naked, having put off this mortal body. So we're not really arrived yet, although we're in a much better place, because you're with the Lord, and that's going to be good, but it's going to REALLY good when you get your resurrected, perfected body, your glorified body, and then we're going to be able to come back and have this great experience on an "earth where righteousness dwells," as Second Peter Chapter 3 puts it.

So, groaning. This particular groaning is a positive groaning. It's the other side of groaning. Groaning, yeah, I have no problem with you mourning the loss of a loved one, I don't have any problem being disappointed that you have a cancer diagnosis. I have no problem with us sitting around saying it's really painful, that pain is painful. Yeah, okay, great. But there should be something that undergirds all of that. There's at the same time an anticipation, like a kid who can't wait for something good to happen. And there's an anxiousness about it. You might even have a stomachache, thinking of my childhood, because something I want so badly is around the corner, a summer camp or whatever, the last day of school or graduation or whatever it is. You're waiting for something with great anticipation. Now, that's going to set us up for the first of three questions I want to ask you this morning. And I really want these not to be the L-shaped amen where you're thinking of someone else. That means, you know, that good preacher, but that other guy needs it. I don't want you thinking about your cousin or your brother or your uncle. I want you to think about yourself. I have three questions for you, okay? And so here's the first one as it relates to what verse 6 and verse 8b says, bottom of verse 8, would you rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord or do you really groan wanting to be further clothed and to have your life swallowed. Do you really desire, do you groan for that? Do you want that? Would you rather have that? Is that your ultimate hope?

Let's put it this way, question number one ask yourself this, "Do I Really Desire the Next Life?" Number one, do I really desire the next life? Clearly the Apostle Paul says that's what he wants. He wants to get on to the next life. And if you have any doubt about that, put it in



other words by reading Philippians Chapter 1 where he says it'll be far better, so much better. I can't wait to be in the next life. Now you sit here, I don't know how long you've been a Christian, if you are one, I trust that if you have been one you've thought about it. Yeah I get saved, I get right with God, I get my sins forgiven. So I can think beyond this life into the next life where everything's going to be great and at one point I assume you had some anticipation for this. But I want you to think right now, how much anticipation do you have for what's coming beyond this life? Do you want it more than anything else? Is this really what you want? Every now and then I'll have some young person whisper in my ear in the lobby of the church, "Hey, is it okay if I really don't want Christ to come back until I get married?" Like, oh man. I mean, like is it the worst sin I've heard of today? No, probably not, you know, and I think, but you don't want Christ to come back because you want to wait and get married? Have you talked to married people about marriage? (audience laughing) I mean, is this what you want? Really? "You know, I say I just don't want to Christ come back. I just want to have kids. You know my husband and I want kids. I just want the joy of holding my own baby. Is it wrong for me to think about it? You know I just don't Christ to back till that."

Okay. I get that there are a lot of neat highlights in this life that are, you know, they're high points. Things you take pictures of and you remember. This is great. People give each other gifts at certain points in their lives and these are good things. They're at graduation, right? Marriage, children, fine. Those are good things. But if you really, really in your mind do not want to be away from this body of yours and in the presence of God, then yes, you don't understand. You don't get it. You don't get it, because there's nothing in this life that you could look forward to that could ever compare to the thing we should be wanting to look forward to the most. We should be groaning for it. Just waiting for like, I really can't wait to get there. The only reason I'm going to stick around, as Paul would say in Philippians Chapter 1 is I have more work to do, right? And this is way better to be finished with our work and into the kingdom, that would be great. But right now, with all the highs, they're not high enough to get me to think, yeah, I really don't want this to start yet. Don't get this eschatological plan going until I have a few more fun things here.

Now that's just the wrong way to think about it. For two reasons. One is a review in verse 4, and one is a nuanced new thing in verse 8. So in verse 4, he's talking again about what we started with in the first three verses, being clothed with something better, right? We're done with this clothing, this life, this body, and all the problems with this failing, aging body, and we're onto a much better body. And we went back, dipped back into what he said they already knew, which of course if they read First Corinthians 15, they had been taught this clearly by the Apostle Paul in writing, it had been read in their church I'm sure many times. They knew about this ageless, perfect, glorified, great, tireless, energetic body and I hope that they all knew that it would be great for them to be perfected in that way, the biblical word is to be glorified. That would be a good thing. And I just want you to think about that. If you really start pondering that and you ought to, if you need help, go buy some books in the bookstore this morning that are going to get you thinking about the future and the future you that is promised. When we see him, "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Just think about that, First John Chapter 3. That picture of you being perfected.



Like if I came up to you this morning and you're walking from your car and you're coming into our tent city here and I said to you, hey, how are you doing? And you said, I'm perfect. I assure you this, I may not do it physically, but I probably will. I will roll my eyes at you. Like, come on, sure you are, right? And I am too, I'm perfect. No, there's no way I can compute that in the present life, I'm perfect. You're not perfect, right? Don't get me started on trying to point out your imperfections, but we could all point out your imperfections, things are not perfect for you. But here's something interesting you need to know. 5,000 years from now, when I come up to you and I look in your eyes that look a lot different than they look now, they're absolutely perfect, and then I ask you, how are you doing? If you say I'm perfect, no one will think you're arrogant, you're silly, you're crazy, you are nuts, you will be. And if you say I'm going to be perfect for the rest of the day, matter of fact, I plan to have a perfect month, a perfect year, I am going to be perfect, I look perfect, I feel perfect, I AM perfect. No one's going to think you are prideful. Because that's just an indicative statement of truth. That statement will correspond with reality, because that's exactly what you will be. You will be perfect. Your desires will be perfect. You will only want what's right. You will only feel what's right. You will only be right. There will be nothing but right about you. And call it perfection, because it's the way God designed human people to live. You will be living that way.

And right now, I don't care if you have a baby, I don't care if you're married, I don't care if you graduate, I don't care if you're retired. You're never able to say, I'm perfect, right? Because you're not. But you will be. And all you got to do is ponder that and drill down far enough in biblical data to come up with the idea that's way better. I would much rather have my mortal life swallowed up by life because one day when Pastor Mike says, how are you doing, I am going to say perfect and mean it and feel it and he won't roll his eyes at me because he'll know it's true. And that's exactly what you should be looking for. That's the old review in verse 4. There's something new about verse 8 though. Take a look at the bottom of verse 8. "We would rather be away from the body and," here's a great warm word, "at home with the Lord." Now there's something about that that goes beyond the perfection of your own body, your own feelings, your own desires, how you look, how you feel. There's something bigger than that. You will be at home, "at home with the Lord."

Think back to Jesus teaching his disciples how to pray in Matthew Chapter 6. You know, he teaches us how to pray. Okay, well here's how you pray. Good. Our Father, who is in heaven hallowed be your..., you know, worship you, grandiose your name, you're great, right? "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." So I'm supposed to be praying, and it gets into a bunch of requests here, but I'm supposed to be praying things like, you know, things are really messed up right now in my home or in my life or in this situation or this counseling, but I want your will to be done. I want it done here in this situation, right here on earth because I'm praying to you from earth. It's Mike from earth. I'm praying to you and I want you to do something according to your will here. Now I know it's done there. God didn't say to Gabriel, you know, go down and talk to Mary and tell her she's going to have a kid. Gabriel didn't say no, I don't want to do that today. He didn't say I'll do it tomorrow. There's nothing that the Lord wills in heaven that doesn't get done in heaven. Angels all obey him. Everything happens exactly the way it should in his domain and right now his domain is heaven. It's not earth, the god of this world, we learn that in Chapter 4 verse 4 of Second





Corinthians, we have a different person doing his will down here. But the will of God in heaven is always done. And when you're praying, you're praying that some little snippet of your life, some category, some crevice of your life, has the will of God done here.

Now wouldn't it be great if it were done in every area of life here? Well that's why it starts with this, the ultimate prayer you should be praying, "your kingdom come." I want you to come and set up a kingdom. Or as it says, and I often quote in Revelation Chapter 11, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord," the Father, "and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." We want him to take the domain of heaven and bring it to earth. Have you ever read the end of the book of Revelation? That's exactly what it says. The dwelling place of God comes down in this thing called the New Jerusalem and dwells among men. And to put it in the words that I've already referenced in Second Peter Chapter 3 then that thing that we're supposed to be desiring, "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells," then we'll have it. Home will be forever with God having everything done the way he wants it. Now, it's not done the way he wants it now. Just read your newsfeed. It's not done the way that he wants now, down here, but one day it will be. And so I'm thinking in praying, I'd like this, I'd like this, God please, let your will be done here, here, and here. That's what prayer's all about. And by God's sovereign decisions, he makes it, yeah, I'll do that, no, I don't do that. And so, we get little foretastes of God's sovereignty and his wonderful reign in the sense that something is done according to his will here. Right? His decreed will, right? What he wants done. Right? We know what his revealed will is that he says, here's what you should do, but we're not doing it, and the world's not doing it.

So, here's the thing. To be absent from the body, to "be away from the body and at home with the Lord." You will take your last breath here on earth, likely, unless Christ comes back before then. But let's just imagine, you're going to take your last breath on earth. Your spirit, as we saw all the way back to Genesis, will leave your mortal body. Your body will lie there breathless and dead, and you will go and be at home with the Lord. To be away from the body is to be at home with the Lord. You will go to a place where God's will is always done, and the presence of God in a place called heaven. Then you'll get a resurrected body down the road whenever God dispatches Christ to get his Church, and then you will put on flesh, come back with him to earth and inhabit a kingdom, if my eschatology is right, in Revelation 20 for a thousand years. And then we'll have a short rebellion for all the people who were born during that period, and then we will start the eternal state, the New Heaven, New earth, where righteousness dwells, or as it's put there in Revelation 11, or in Isaiah Chapter 9, he's going to reign forever and ever. And then we're never going to have anything that's not in keeping with God's will. But from the time you breathe your last, you will immediately be in a place where God's will is forever done. And that's what you call home.

If you are at least in tune enough with your own core desires, that what you really want is stuff you can't find here. Because marriage isn't going to do it, kids aren't going to do it, work isn't going to do it, retirement is not going to do it, a nice Sunday afternoon walk on the beach is not going to do it. It's just going to give you a little breath of fresh air. But eventually you're going to have to realize I'm still on this fallen earth in a fallen body. What I really want, as Ecclesiastes clearly references and C.S. Lewis said regarding desires that cannot be filled in



this world, God must have designed us for a different world and he has, a world in which God is in charge. And that's coming. So I want you to ask yourself, do you desire that? And you'd have to be absolutely insane and on some really hard drugs to not want that. You should want to say to me, I am perfect. And I will be for the rest of the day, the rest of the month, and as long as we're talking about time, I will be perfect for eternity. And I'm living in a place that is perfect. You will not get to the New Heaven or the New Earth, I mean, I don't think you're going to spend much time in the New Heaven, but you'll be on the New Earth.

And if you decide where to live... Has anybody moved lately, you're going to move from one place to another? I trust if I said we're going to move to another state, let's go to Chicago and live there, I guarantee you're going to spend a lot of time on Zillow. And if they haven't blacklisted all the websites, you're going to have some crime reports and try to figure out what is the best place for me to raise my family here? I want a safe neighborhood. You know you're never going to have..., there's not a bad neighborhood on the New Earth where righteousness dwells, right? You're never going to have a bad neighbor. You're going to have all the stats and the realtors are going to say, oh, this neighborhood's great, schools are great, everything's great here, and then you go there and you get stuck with the worst neighbor on the block. And it's hard to figure. I can't interview my neighbors before I buy the house. Here's the great thing. You will not need to. Everything, everybody you meet, if you say how are you doing, they'll say perfect. And they will be. They'll be perfect. You'll be perfect. You'll be living in a perfect place and there's not a bad neighborhood on the New Earth. You won't have locks on anything. Guess why? Because no one's going to steal anything. No one's going to want to steal anything! You're not going to have these video cameras watching everybody, you won't need to! There's no problem. Freedom in the New Earth is great because we want everyone to be free, because all they want to do when they're given freedom is do good things. It will be perfect.

Now I don't care what you think about this world and what gets you excited about what you're anticipating next in your life, whatever milestone you're looking at, nothing is better than that. And you better start thinking about that in very real terms. Just go to our bookstore, find some books on the next life, and start looking past the tribulation and rebellion at the end of the mourning and look to the good stuff and say I'm going to live there. That's a big deal. And nothing will rival that if you think about it.

So here's the deal. I'm concerned that you and I are not obsessed with where we're going because we haven't spent enough time thinking about it, we haven't spent enough time studying what the Bible says. I mean, some of the most exciting parts of our Bible study should be studying passages that talk about the future. And all the things, I mean it starts talking about the future even in the book of Genesis in Chapter 3. There are all these pictures of the good news of what's coming. And you can't get through the Old Testament prophets without seeing it. You can't even get through our daily Bible reading in Job, without Job starting to think about the future beyond this life. This is going to be really, really good. And you ought to groan with desire like a kid who can't wait for Christmas because you're thinking this through.



Jot these references down. I won't take time to quote them. But Second Samuel 23, Proverbs Chapter 29. In Second Samuel 23, by the way, verses 2 through 4 are great, and then verse 2 in Proverbs 29. That was a weird way to reference both those things. Did you follow any of that? Let me do it in a linear fashion. Second Samuel Chapter 23 verses 2 through 4, -- 2, 3, and 4, and I'll just tell you what that is real quick. That's David at the end of his life, his last words, his last speech, and he talks about when perfect justice is ruling on the throne, right? The people, everything, they flourish. And I'm thinking that's not fulfilled in his son Solomon or Rehoboam or anybody else, Hezekiah. No one fulfilled that. Christ is going to fulfill the perfect, just leader. And guess what? The people are going to flourish. Or how about David's son who did write about that in Proverbs 29:2, Solomon. Proverbs 29:2, he wrote about it too. And he talked about how the people thrived, they rejoice when the king is righteous and good. And here's the thing, we will have a King who is righteous in good and more righteous than anybody who's ever lived on the planet. And when that King is in just the right place where he ought to be in terms of righteousness and holiness, then you know the people are going to be glad, we're going to rejoice. There will be no troubles in this next life.

I'm going to take you in your small groups to Isaiah Chapter 9 verses 6 and 7, which usually we read at Christmas time, about the Son that's given to us, the child's given, the government's going to be on his shoulders. He's going to have all these great names, the "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end." I just want you to think about that. Every zip code in the New Earth, perfect, right? He will "establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from that time forth and forever more," I love the way it ends, and "the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this." He will accomplish this. God has promised to make not only your body perfect, which we are recapitulating in verse 4, but he has promised to make your whole home perfect because Christ is going to rule there, unrivaled, with unmitigated joy for the people whom he leads. It couldn't be better than that. So can we get excited? Can you really start to, question one, desire the next life a little more than you do? Certainly desire it way more than anything you desire in this life.

Verse 5, back to our passage, Second Corinthians Chapter 5. Second Corinthians 5 verse 5 is supposed to be an encouragement to us, but I'm a pastor and I have to sit here and make sure that everyone is encouraged by this, and I'm afraid that maybe some of you aren't encouraged by this verse. So let's dive into it. It says this, "He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee." Now he's already said this to us in verse 22 of the first chapter, and he's given us this seal, he's put a seal on us, giving us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. Or as he says in Ephesians Chapter 1 verse 14, the same thing, this promised inheritance is guaranteed to you because you have the Spirit. OK. I just have to ask you to ask, and I should ask this of myself, none of us should be immune from asking ourselves this question. Second question, number two on your outline, "Am I Sure I Have God's Spirit?" If you can say I'm sure I have God's Spirit, well then we can get excited about verse 5. He's prepared us for this because I know he's preparing it for me, I've had it too. I'm going to be there in a perfect place, perfect body, everything perfect. I know that's for me because I know I have the Spirit.





Now, you've had Pentecostal friends, right? Somebody at least has a Pentecostal friend. Pentecostal theology has made something out of this concept of do you have the Spirit, do you have the Spirit? And unfortunately, I don't think it squares with the Bible. And they go to the book of Acts, for instance, to show that there's something unique happening to these people when the Spirit comes upon them. Now, here's what I have to have you understand about the book the Acts, and I just taught through it not long ago. So go listen to those 315 sermons or whatever it was. It wasn't that many. Under 200. Listen to those sermons and get to those critical passages where you see things happening when the Spirit comes upon these people. Now even before you get there, and I hope if you hear some of my sermons on this, you're going to hear me quote passages like Ezekiel 34, Ezekiel 36, Ezekiel 39, Jeremiah 31. I'm going to take you all through Joel Chapter 2. I'm taking you to a lot of passages that deal with the fact that God has promised to do something special with his Spirit, putting it in each individual person. It doesn't matter who you are in the pecking order of society, if you become a follower of the true and living God, which is going to happen through his Son, you will have the Spirit.

Now that's kind of hard to understand, but Jesus comes along and says, oh I know the Spirit was active in the Old Testament. He's been with you guys. But here's the thing. He's going to be in you. Now the prepositions changed from "with" to "in." And that's supposed to mean something, right? So some different change of connection with the third person of the Godhead. So here's what happens some people say, how do I know if I have the Spirit? And they read Acts Chapter 2 when a miracle takes place. And I say that because that's the word, "sign," that is used, and it's a miracle. A miracle is something called a sign because a sign is clearly pointing you that this is something God just did. What happens is when God fulfills the promise of what he said he would do with the ushering in of the New Covenant is he gave these people an ability and remember the disciples, a lot of them, were Galilean fishermen and Galilee, these were like the hicks, right? These are the guys who were like speaking with an accent. They weren't all that bright and whatever, the Galilean fisherman They were young, they started following Christ probably as teenagers and as they're out there now at the Feast of Pentecost, all these people who have the money, like you might remember the Ethiopian eunuch riding in a chariot, they have the money to come to Jerusalem to worship the Lord.

Now the disciples are there, the Spirit comes on them, and they speak in languages of the people from all these places, right? They had come from Egypt, they had come from Parthia, they had come from the Persian Empire, they come wherever they are drawn to keep the festivals of what they've learned about the true God in Israel, and they come from all these places. So they're tri-lingual, they know languages from their home place, but they're coming, many of them of course probably know Aramaic, the language of the people there in Israel in the worship service, they might even understand classical Hebrew as the scrolls are read. But you know what, when you have a Galilean fisherman, some hick who stands up now after he's received the Spirit, speaking to you in a language that you've been speaking from your childhood and he's speaking it perfectly and he has never ever conjugated a verb in a classroom about that language, you're going to say that's a miracle. And they all did because they all kept hearing these disciples talking about the greatness of God and that was a sign



gift. And all of a sudden now they said, wow. And they said, what's going on? And people who couldn't understand this discussion over here in that language, or people couldn't understand, oh, these men are drunk. No they're not drunk. And Peter goes on to explain that this is about the Spirit who was promised.

Then we think about God's commission. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth. They're supposed to make this now an international organization where we're all following Jesus Christ no matter what country we're from. And by the time we get to Chapter 10, Peter is going to have an encounter with a Roman centurion, a Roman, a Latin, a guy who knows Latin from his childhood. And here he's having a conversation, which leads him and his cohort to Christ. And the problem God knows that he's going to have in just a few chapters is how in the world are the Jewish believers, and that's primarily all we have, Jewish believers of Christ, going to actually believe that the Romans now have the same Spirit that they have. Well, how about the special miracle that God did in Acts 2? Maybe if that were replicated here, and of course that's God's plan and those guys now have this pouring out of the Spirit, which is fundamental according to the Upper Room Discourse in John 14, everyone who was supposed to become a follower of Christ was going to have the Spirit. Well in this case, we knew the Romans had the Spirit because they had the same miracle, a sign miracle, as they had in Acts 2. And then later in Acts 16, we have the Asians, way out there in Ephesus. And the same thing happens as the apostolic retinue shows up and they say, oh wow, look, we see now that these Asians way out east, they actually have the miraculous sign that we had in Acts 2. Those were the three examples of the gift of languages in the book of Acts.

Now your Pentecostal friends go and say see, let's just say you become a Christian, but at some point you need to be baptized in the Spirit and we'll know you're baptized in Spirit because you'll have the same thing that happened in Acts Chapter 2, 10 and 16, but that's not really what they say because really no one's saying well that was a miracle. What they're seeing is something that religions have been doing for a long time. A lot of groups have been doing it, tribal groups have been doing it, cult groups have been doing it, and that is to speak in an ecstatic utterance. Now of course they go to Acts Chapter 14 and they start saying well, that's the same thing that's going on there. It's kind of shifted out. It's not really that, it's this and it's speaking in an ecstatic kind of euphoric utterance. We're saying things that no one understands, but God understands it. Okay. I don't think that's what's going on. I think that's something that's been going on in a lot of places, including the mystic religions and the cultic groups of Greco-Roman pasts, as long as we talk about anthropologically looking at all the groups that have had experiences like that. It's not something that says, well, clearly this is a miracle.

So what I'm saying is I'm not going to ask you, do you have the Spirit, oh, have you had some strange thing happen to you? Have you been taken over in a euphoric state? No, that's not what I am going to look for. Because I know this, number one, it's not post-conversion that you get the Spirit, as it says in Romans Chapter 8, right? If you're not of the world and you become a Christian, you have the Spirit. Or let me just put it this way. Turn with me to Romans Chapter 8 just to make this point. Then we'll try to figure out even from this passage, how do we know if you have this Spirit? Because if it's not contingent on evidencing that by



some kind of strange utterance out of your mouth, then how do we know if you have Spirit in your life? Great question. Let's go to Romans Chapter 8, let's start in verse 7. Romans Chapter 8 verse 7. "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God." Are you with me on this? Romans 8:7. "For the mind that is set on flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed it cannot." Verse 8, "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." Okay, Spirit of Christ, also called the Spirit of God, also called the Spirit in this passage. We know we have the Spirit, and if we don't have the Spirit, then we don't belong to Christ.

When do we belong to Christ? In the Second Blessing? No. I don't believe in the Second Blessing theology. I believe when you become a Christian, as this text would say, as John Chapter 14 says, you get the Spirit when you're no longer a part of the world. You get adopted out of the world and you get placed into the kingdom of his Son. And when you get out of the domain of darkness into the domain of light you now are set apart for God. That's justification or positional sanctification. You become a Christian and God gives you his Spirit. And it guarantees you that you are going to experience the New Earth with all of the righteousness dwelling there and you will have a perfect, resurrected, glorified body. Okay. That is happening for everyone in this hearing of my voice right now who is a Christian, right? You are, according to this passage, you have the Spirit. Now I want to look at things that we see in this text that might make me think, well, that's true for me. Because there are a lot of people who go to church who are not Christians. I know that when Jesus said in Matthew 7, many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord we did this, this, and this. And he'll say, "I never knew you; depart from me."

So there are people listening to me right now who are not Christians. They do not have the Spirit. Well, they should be able to know if they have the Spirit or don't have the Spirit. How do we know? Well, let's look at the passage that I just read again. Verse 7, "the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God." I would think someone who has the Spirit of God is not hostile to God. Well that's how he goes. Verse number 9. Well, that's not you, because you have the Spirit. Okay, so something about this hostility toward God disappears. What are we talking about? Middle of verse 7. "It does not submit to God's law; indeed it cannot." Okay? "Those who are in the flesh," apparently that means you don't have the Spirit, "cannot please God." However, that's not you, right? "In fact, the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who doesn't have the Spirit of Christ doesn't belong to him." Okay. Something about this phrase in the middle of verse 7, "does not subject to God's law." Let's just start at the very basic level that I think experimentally you might be able to say this is true of me, or it's not true of me. When it comes to the law of God, of course, the tripartite law of God, which I believe, obviously, includes civil instructions for leaders of villages and cities and towns in Israel and governors in Israel and kings in Israel. We're not talking about that. We're not talking about the ceremonial law, like, yeah, I have a burning desire to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. We are not talking about that. I'm not talking about circumcising your kid or wearing tassels on your robe. We're not talking about ceremonial law. We talk about the moral law of God, right? To reflect God's attributes, to want to do what he does. I know that my flesh doesn't want to do that, but the Spirit is supposed to now have done something in me, according to Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 34,



Ezekiel 36, Ezekiel 39. Apparently the Spirit changes me. So now I WANT to submit to God's law. And as a matter of fact, I'll get to the next phrase in a minute, indeed I can, so the opposite of that. If I don't have the Spirit, I don't submit to God's law, and I can't, and I can't even please God, verse 8.

So, let's start at the core of that. That you might say my experience with this is based on that truth as the old Puritans liked to say, the experimental reality of this verse is that you, let's just start with this and it's spelled out in Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 15, is that you want to submit to the law of God. So if you're going to make three sub-points let's start with that Letter "A." Do you want to ask yourself do I have the Spirit of God, don't look for a miracle, don't look for ecstatic utterance, look for this, let's start with this. Do you want to submit to God's law? Do you want, let's put it in 5:15 that we're going to get too soon in Second Corinthians, do you no longer want to live for yourself, but you want to live for him who died for you and rose again? That's the question you need to let marinate in your heart right now. Do I have God's Spirit? Well, sub-question Letter "A," do I want to do what God wants? And I mean that at the core of your heart, the core of who you are. I often talk about core desires, and I think that's a good way to differentiate the fact that the desires of my flesh are also a part of who I am. But if I came to you in the middle of your worst failure in the last month, and I could just jump in, I could teleport into you wherever you were when you sinned the worst you have in the last 30 days. And I came to you and startled you, because I just teleported into your room, and I grabbed your face and I said, whoa, whoa, wait a minute, you're about to sin right now. Whether it's the sin of omission, because you don't want to do what God says, or the sin of commission, you're going to do what you shouldn't do, but you're going to do it. You're about to step across the line and I grab your face and I shake your cheeks, I say whoa, whoa, wait, wait. Is that really what you want to do? Is that... I mean just stop. Is that REALLY what you want to do? Is that what YOU want to do, is that what, hey, Christian, right? Is that what you want to do? Every real Christian, listening to me right now, I think would have to admit, yeah, that's not what I want to do. And you know how I know? Because after you do it, that gets really super clear, doesn't it? Like, I didn't want to do that.

OK. You didn't want to do that. Because you're more than just you, right? There's something else going on, and this is Letter "B," look at verse 10, "If Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness." So I have a dead body and a living Spirit, and the Spirit, capital "S," is in me. OK, this creates the problem seen throughout the New Testament. And that is the fact that we know, Galatians 5, you should jot it in the margin, Galatians 5, I know that "the works of the flesh are evident," they're obvious, and they're not godly. Let's look at one of them, right? Outburst of anger. Well, I, know maybe you're about to yell at your wife or whatever and I grab you, hey, is that what you really want to do? And your flesh is going to go, you're darn right that's what I want to do, right? That's why I'm about to do it. My face is red, the veins are popping out. Of course I want to do that. But I'm trying to shake you. I'm trying to violently shake your face, and say think, think, thing, think. Is that really what you want to do? At one point you're going to say, well, that's the problem. The desire of the Spirit sets itself against the desire of the flesh. You can't do what you want to do. Because when it comes down to it these two "wants" are in conflict with each other. So what you need to stop and think is what's your core desire? And then you need to



say, well, the whole passage sets me up for problems where I and my flesh do not get along. As he ends up saying, "All those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its desires." What does that mean? I'd be dead if I did that. No, we're not talking about that literally. We're talking about the fact, as it says in Colossians 3:5, that you're constantly putting to death the deeds of the flesh.

The whole list of the fleshy things in Galatians 5 is what your body wants to do, which when you were a non-Christian and you were dead to God, yeah, whatever I can get away with. As long as I don't get in a lot of trouble or ruin my life, I will do those things because that's what I want to do. I'm guided by the flesh and I'm dead to God. And therefore, I just do whatever I can get away with. But then I become a Christian. And now it says in Romans verse 10, "The Spirit is life because of righteousness" and I see the righteous desire in my life because the Spirit is present, but it creates a battle. So if I'm taking sub-points here, Letter "A," I'm saying Spirit of my life, number one, do I have a real willingness? Do I have a desire and a willingness to submit to God's law? Number two, is there a battle in my life that wasn't present before? The battle I had before was just simply what could I get away with. Now I really have a battle within myself. Let's put it in the words of Peter. Peter says, these "passions of your flesh which wage war against your soul." You should feel like you're at war. And that's why your inner self has a harder time as a Christian than you did when you were a non-Christian. Think about that with me. Think about your life. You should be able to say, I'm sitting here as a Christian and I feel like I'm battling in myself. Right? That's true, but you're not battling you, you're battling your flesh. Is your flesh a part of you? Well, of course it is, but really your core desire is to serve God. So I need to know this battle is ongoing. Non-Christians don't have the battle that Christians have.

So is the presence of the Spirit true in your life? Is he there? Do you desire to live for him who died for you and rose again? Is that really your core desire? And secondly, are you in a battle that the Holy Spirit, just picture boxing right now, he's pushing you back from the corner. Don't throw in the towel. Get back in there. Fight, fight, fight. And you're having to fight the passions of your flesh. If you feel that some people think there must be something wrong with me as a Christian. Everything's right with you as a Christian if that's how you feel. Okay, thirdly, look at verse 11. "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you." Okay, so I have the Spirit dwelling in me, and you're saying the same Spirit that's dwelling in me is the same Spirit that took a dead, putrefying, corrupt body that was wrapped in stuff and spices were being brought by the pounds and pounds so that we wouldn't smell the stinky, putrid, decaying body of Christ. And you're telling me the Spirit went BAM and all of a sudden now that body was perfected and glorified and sat up and now was living.

Now, if the Spirit can take something dead, dead is a very strong force, right? The kind of putrefaction, the kind of corruption that takes place at a cellular level in a body when your body dies is massive and it's multiplied, it's exponential. And you think about a Christ who is lying in a grave two and a half days after he was crucified, with bloodied, open wounds, and now he's dead. If the Spirit could bring that to life, well then he can give life to your mortal





body. Now, you just said in verse 10, my mortal body wants to sin. That's the whole thing, my mortal body's all about sin. Yeah, but here's the deal, three things. Number one, you're going to want to please God. Number two, you're going to be shoved into the battle every day with the passions of your flesh. And number three, you can have some success at this. Every now and then, like he said in Chapter 6, different analogy, but you're going to have a mastery with increasing success, I trust, mastery that tells the members or parts of your body, parts that want to do bad, and you're going to subject them as your slave. You're going to be able to say that there was success. Let's use my analogy again. You're going to be pushed back from the corner by the Spirit into the battle, and he's going to help you, and he is going to coach you, and he's going to be your parakletos, saying, come on, you can do this, and you are going to have success.

Now, perfect success? No. The number one book in the New Testament about what this looks like is First John. And First John starts with stop thinking you don't have sin. Of course you have sin, every Christian has sin. But then it goes on to say, but you're going to see some wins. You're going to land some punches. You're going to have a few knockouts in your life. That's happening because the Spirit of God will not allow you to continue to be subject to the desires of your flesh. Are you going to sin until you die? You're going to sin until you die. But you're going to have, it's going to be like the S&P, right? There'll be ups and downs. But in the long run, this thing, you're going to have what's called progressive sanctification. But it's going to be hard. And all these people talking about this will be easy and you will just float your way through it. If you haven't read my twelve articles on the "[aggressivesanctification.com](http://aggressivesanctification.com)" website, you need to go there and read them today. Because you need to know it's a fight, but you will see increasing success. And I know everyone spells it wrong, but "[aggressivesanctification.com](http://aggressivesanctification.com)." If you haven't read that, read that. Because all of the stuff that says, no, it's not going to be hard, it's the Spirit within me. And I'm just cruising because God's going to make this... It is a fight. Put to death whatever is fleshly in you. Colossians 3:5. You're going to battle against the desires of your flesh.

So do you want to please the Lord? Are you forced into the battle by the Spirit every day? And does the Spirit, by his grace, and his guidance, and his empowerment help you land some punches so that you see increasing sanctification? Are there down days? Sure, did you have a bad month? Maybe, but you're going to see this thing increasing in conformity to Christ, because the Spirit of God has that as his agenda. If you see those things, like you go to a lot of passages in the New Testament, I just chose this one, to say to you, here's an example of what is evidence of the Spirit in your life. It's like when you go a hotel. You go to hotel, and a lot of times I'm in a hotel, so I'm at a conference and I'm either speaking or listening to speakers, and so I leave in the morning, go eat with the pastors at the hotel restaurant, and then I go off to the conference or I speak at this workshop or I do whatever. I go to the exhibition hall and then I want to go back in peace to my own hotel room. I go back and here's the thing I'm hoping as I'm going toward my door, seeing that housekeeper's card at the end of the hallway. I'm hoping she's already been in my room.

Now here's something you know for absolute sure, unless you stay in a really bad hotel, is the minute you open the door, you know it. She's either been there or she hasn't been there,



right? There's no question. Now it could have been leprechauns who cleaned my room. I never saw anybody clean the room, but I know she's been there because now my bed is made and you know when you're in a hotel, you don't even try and you have to use five towels after the shower, your mattress is everywhere, you throw your pillow across the room. But it's all going to be magically put back in place because she's been there. Now, take that analogy and flip it upside down, because here's the problem that most non-Christians don't understand and most people who are new in Christianity don't really understand. It's like our life is working pretty well when the sinful heart is dealing with the sinful flesh. When the housekeeper gets there, the Holy Spirit, guess what happens? There are signs of a struggle everywhere, right? Because now all of a sudden you're at war with the passions of your flesh. But, you know the thing is, there's success, increasing success. And you will see that you will be coming more and more like Christ and less and less like the old you. Perfection? Never, right? I'm not a Wesleyan, I don't believe in perfectionism. I think empirical data of looking in the mirror should convince you that you should not be a Wesleyan perfectionist. It's not what the Bible teaches. You need to understand that we are in a battle for the rest of your life and the evidence of a Spirit who you can't see and is not doing miracles through you is seeing the miracle of sanctification taking place which is involving a desire, and then a battle, and then success. And I hope you have the Spirit, because then I can just simply read the point of verse 5. Then you're guaranteed to have the new body in a perfect place. It's that simple. But you better leave here, pastorally, I'm concerned that we all leave here knowing whether we have the Spirit or we don't. And if you don't, I think that's a fix that's simple to explain and may be hard for you to wrestle with. But you've got to fully repent of your sins and put your trust in Christ today and the Spirit of God will invade your life.

Back to our passage with this and I'll get you out of the heat. Second Corinthians Chapter 5 verse 6. "So we're always of good courage." Why? Because I'm guaranteed today, I know I have the Spirit in my life, and I know this is all going to happen. The best things in life cannot compare to how good it's going to be on the worst day in the next life. I'm going to be of good courage because I know where I'm headed. "We know that while we're at home in the body we're away from the Lord." This home, not so good, pretty bad, pretty messed up. The god of this world, Second Corinthians 4:4, I just know it's rough. So I'm away from the Lord. The Lord is ensconced at the right hand of the Father in heaven. I'm not there, I am here. I get his Spirit, that's true. He's working, he's making me fight my flesh, but I'm not there. So now, because I'm not there and I'm here, I have to "walk by faith, not by sight," because all the promises of God have not been fully realized yet, but they're going to be, so I trust him, that's called faith, and I don't look at the world and think, this is my home and I don't think I have to see it before I believe it. I know that "is the assurance of things hoped for," and the hope is not cross your fingers, it's knowing God promised it and it will come true. And then he says it again, yes, "we're always of good courage." Why? Because we'd rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

So, what I see in this passage is that should make a difference in your life if in fact this is your hope and if you trust in it. If you have faith in the promise of God and therefore you have the Spirit in your life, it should make a difference. I put it this way, question number three, ask yourself this, "Does My Attitude Reflect My Faith?" Three quick questions. "Do I Really Desire



the Next Life?" Do you really desire it? "Are You Sure I Have Spirit?" And "Does My Attitude Reflect My Faith?" And let's start with the first thing, Letter "A." It says here... "We're always of good courage," verse 6. It says in verse 8, "Yes, we're of good courage." Now he's of good courage because he knows where he's headed and it doesn't matter that the outer man's decaying, the "inner man's being renewed day by day." How about you? Does your faith give you good courage, good courage? Turn with me, if you would, to Psalm 112, a great psalm, by the way. A good psalm and a helpful psalm for us. Some of the things we've already talked about are evident in verse 1, by the way.

But let's drop down to verse 6, the Spirit's work is going to make me delight in the commandments of the Lord. I hope that's true of you. You really desire to live for him who died for you and rose again. Verse 6 now, "For the righteous will never be moved." Psalm 112, is that what I said? Did I say that? Okay good. Psalm 112 verse 6. "For the righteous will never be moved." That has something to do with your disposition, you're grounded, right? "He'll be remembered forevermore." Do you know why? Not only because God is going to make sure his children are famed, but because you know what? You're different. You will die, I hope, as a different person than all your coworkers and neighbors. Why? Well, here's one reason, because when you're alive, you were "not afraid of bad news." You were not afraid of bad news. "His heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. His heart is steady, he will not be afraid, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries." That doesn't mean you're going to start being afraid then, but it means, you know, any reason that should make you afraid, all the reasons are gone because all your adversaries are gone. I love this in light of what we're studying because in First Corinthians 15 Paul clearly said the last adversary you have is death, it is the ultimate adversary. And that adversary has no longer a sting because the hope of what is coming for you, and that is a perfected, glorified, resurrected body is already on the docket. God has prepared you for that and he's prepared a place for you. He went to "prepare a place, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also," you will be at home with the Lord.

So this is going to be perfect. And what I read in Psalm 112 is that means you're not afraid because you know all the problems that are of any import have already been dealt with. Therefore, when your boss comes in tomorrow morning at your company and says, everyone's being laid off, our company went belly up, we've been sued, we lost the lawsuit, everyone is laid off, you should be different than everyone else in your office. You should be different. When you come home and you find out that your doctor calls and says yes, you do have cancer, you should be different than all your neighbors who get the same kind of phone call. You should be different when things in your life fall apart because you are not moved by bad news. What does that mean? The worst of the news in this world, as I often quote from Romans Chapter 8 verse 18, is "not worth comparing with the glory that's to be revealed to us." This world is not our home. Your job is not the end-all. Your marriage is not the end-all, your kids are not the end-all, your health is not the end-all. What really is the thing that matters of all importance, supreme importance, is where you're headed. And if you're sure about that because you see evidence of the Spirit in your life, it's guaranteed for you, then really, what does the rest of this matter?



It matters. I get it. You have the right to be sad when your wife dies. I get it, I get it. When you get cancer, sure, that's a sad day. But you know what? It has nothing that it can do to impinge upon the hope and the promise of what is coming. And you ought to be different. You're not shaken by bad news. There's something about your disposition that's so grounded in the hope that your attitude is fixed in a place where you are not rocked. Do you understand that? Christians in this environment, this room, I don't know what we're in, out here in the parking lot. You should never be anxious about anything. You should not be worried.

Turn with me really quickly to Matthew Chapter 6. Matthew Chapter 6. The things that should be affected so clearly in your life are that your faith is obvious. It's worked out in obvious ways. And here's the comparison that I'm trying to get to in some practical illustrations. But verses 31 and 32 talk about the non-Christian world. He calls them Gentiles here. People who don't know God. They're anxious about all kinds of things. What are we going to eat? What are we going to drink? What are we going to wear? Where are we going to live? Are we going to be able to pay the mortgage? I don't know if we have enough retirement in our accounts. They worry about all those things. "The Gentiles," verse 32, "seek after," chase after, "all these things." Now here's the deal. If you think Pastor Mike said it doesn't matter, I know it matters, right? I get it. You should have money to pay the mortgage. I understand that. It'd be good if you had something when you're no longer able to work to be able to at least feed yourself. I get all that. "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things," that your heavenly Father knows you need he'll take care of all that. But this shifts your priority from the temporal that you can see and everyone else is fixated on what they can see. But you're fixated on what you can't see because you have faith in the promise of what's coming. Therefore, you're living for what's over the horizon.

Is that obvious to people? If your company went under and everyone in your office lost their job, could you be the least affected by that? I'm not saying you go around, you know, let's all sing, you know, he's a jolly good fellow. I mean, there's no need for that. But I am saying you're not devastated. You're not devastated because really at the end of it all that matters is the kingdom that you're praying for every day. It started at the beginning of the passage, praying all the time that the kingdom will come. And you know, when the kingdom comes, that's the answer. You can call us all the names you want. Escapist, you know you're so heavenly minded, you're no earthly good. Call us whatever you want, this is how the Bible expects us to live. And that is that we are fixated so much on the truthfulness and the trustworthiness of the God who made us promises that in this world we are not shaken by bad news. And when it comes down to it we're seeking God's agenda.

Go back up in this passage. Look at, let's start in verse 23. It's about how we see the world. Verse 22, a lamp of the body, your eye. And the point is how you view things. Verse 23, "If your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness." And if then, you can put this in quote, "the light in you," if you think you're all enlightened, you know all this stuff, "is darkness," well then, "how great is that darkness!" You're boasting in foolishness. What is the eye all about? What are we talking about? Well, we're talking about the basics of how everyone lives, and he's going to get into it in verses 31, 32, and 33. And they are chasing after all these things, and you know what they care about when they lose their job? It's not,



ah, it'll be really sad, I don't get to drink the coffee at the office anymore. What they're sad about is the money, because the money is the thing that gives people security. Money is the thing that gives people convenience. Money is the thing that buys them stuff that makes them comfortable. Look at the next verse. If their eye is only fixated on this life, they're going to serve money. I need that. I'm a slave to that next paycheck. "No one can serve two masters for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he'll be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." So you have to pick your God. And here's the point. You better pick the God whom you cannot see, who has promised you something in time and space in the past and proved it through Christ's resurrection. And you're saying, I believe what he says, his word is true and I'm going to look forward to that. And therefore, if something goes wrong here, no big deal. My goal is not to make a lot of money. My goal is to do something that is useful for God and his righteousness in the kingdom.

Now I have to make money, and here's the thing about you when you take money out of the crosshairs of your goal, as it says in First Timothy Chapter 6. It's amazing how God just makes sure that your bills are paid. And sometimes, he'll just put a lot of stuff in your wallet, and he'll make you increasingly generous, and you will try to out-give God, and you'll never be able to do it, and you be trying to store up for yourselves things that are going to be beyond this life, that as he says in First Timothy Chapter 6, talking to people who make a lot of money, he says this, and then you'll take hold of that which is life indeed, which is truly life, right? Our mortality will be swallowed up in life. How you use your money, how you prioritize your life, those are the things that prove whether or not you really believe that the next life is way better than anything you could anticipate in this life. Go back up, I mean, and he gets right to the point in verse 19, the very familiar words, "Don't lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal, but lay up your treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves don't break and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." I think this is the most over-quoted verse for people who don't ever do anything about it. What does this mean? This means that you really have an attitude that's affected by the fact that the most important thing about you is not this life, it's the next life. What matters is not how much comfort, convenience, or stuff you can have. It's not about your life and where you live or what you drive. It's not about how you look, how many pounds you weigh. It is about where you're going. And where you are going is a place where you will look at me 10,000 years from now, I say, how are you doing? You say perfect and I don't roll my eyes, I smile. Because you will be. And we'll look around at the place that we're at, and it will be perfect. And if that sounds boring to you, you don't understand perfection. Because all the things you try to do to make your life better, all the life improvement really is a quest for perfection that the life of this world can never give you. You've got to have this effect on your attitude. If there's no effect in your daily life, then I really wonder if you understand it or if you're even qualified for it and if you even have a guarantee or an assurance in your life that it's true.

Speaking of life improvement, Solomon's a good example of a guy who could afford anything. Read his book, Ecclesiastes. I guess in the more New Testament era you could take someone like a Roman emperor. Do you want life improvement? You could certainly improve your life if you were a Roman Emperor in the heyday of Rome. Take Hadrian, for instance,





the beginning of the second century. He's the Roman Emperor, and he's just riding on the coattails of the success of the imperial state of Rome and he's out there doing his thing. He traveled more than any other emperor. He built all kinds of things that he put his name on. He was an amazing emperor in the sense that you talk about life improvement in this temporal world. I mean he loved Greek culture. He had his slot of what he loved he even just groomed his beard in a way to look like the Greeks, where he put money in the pantheon, he did all this stuff. Everyone started to wear their beards like Hadrian did because Hadrian was an influential man and he had everything that he could want from this world. But it's just like I started. He's chasing his tail, trying to get fulfillment.

Do you think he knew about biblical Christianity? Of course he did. As a matter of fact, some of his rulings were to make sure that in the courts, I know a lot of people, they were down on the Christians. He said can you at least make sure you give them justice in our Roman courts? He knew about Christianity. He even seemed to have a soft spot for it, but he never responded to the message of the gospel. I know that because of the famous poem he wrote in Latin at the end of his life. Here's what he says, the eminence of death is approaching his life. He wrote this in Latin, and some people think it's so poignant, you have to learn Latin to even get the full weight of it, but we don't have time for you to learn Latin. So let's just quote a translation in English, okay? He says, "O little soul." He writes a poem to his own soul. "O little soul, A wandering, gentle, charming thing, Guest and companion of my body." Have some decent theology there, right? We know this, we're a dichotomy, right? We have the reality of who we are is resident in our body. He says, "Into what places will you now depart?" Sounds like Shakespeare, right? What am I going to have when I cast off this mortal coil? He says all I know is I'm "pale, stiff, and bare." And he says to his soul, nor will you, in other words, you're not going to be happy anymore, you're not going to be vibrant anymore, you're not going to experience all these great things. "Nor will you make your usual jokes."

Now, of course, it doesn't rhyme in English and it doesn't have the power of Latin, but the idea is this. He knows I'm facing death and I'm dealing with a pale, foreboding, sorrowful insecurity about where I'm going. That's how the most successful person in his generation died. And he died with that hopeless perspective. Someone was alive at that time who surely heard about Hadrian's death. His name was Polycarp. He was the personal disciple of the Apostle John. Now John had died before the turn of the first century. But into the second century, Polycarp was a pastor in a place called Smyrna, one of the seven letters to the churches that was written there when it talks about the angel or the messenger, that's probably speaking of the preaching pastor, who was probably Polycarp. And Polycarp followed Christ for many years, taught by the Apostle John himself, and he was nearing death. You know why he was nearing death? Because the Roman officials, regionally, we don't have any connection between the successor of Hadrian. Antoninus was his name. And Antoninus they called him the Pius, right? Pius not because he's godly, but because he is faithful and consistent. Well, he was familiar with New Testament Christianity as well. Happening somewhere in his realm, in Smyrna, modern day Turkey, the Roman officials came to this prominent pastor and they said, hey, you don't get a pass on pinching the incense into the fire and saying Caesar is Lord. That's kind of like, you know, putting your hand over your heart and saying the pledge. So get over here, Polycarp, and say Caesar is lord.



Now I hope someone trained in good theology is going to say, I ain't going to say that. And a lot like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to use their Babylonian names in the Old Testament, they weren't going to do it. And he said, forget it, I'm not going to do. And they said, well, we're going to kill you. They gave him one last chance before they martyred him, executed him. Here's what he said in the famous quote of Polycarp before he died. He says, "86 years I've served Christ, and he's done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme him, my king and my savior?" You're never going to say something like that unless you have full assurance of this person that you say you've lived your temporal life for. You're never going to have that kind of assurance and courage in the face of death, unless you're absolutely confident that you know where you're going. And this is the amazing thing. You can have all the riches of Rome and die holding your teddy bear and sucking your thumb and saying, I don't know where I'm going, I'm scared. Or you can die with courage like Polycarp. He was courageous because he was assured. I want you to be as assured as Polycarp that it doesn't matter what happens to you in this life. What matters is who you are, whose you are and where you're going. That's what matters. And if that doesn't make any difference in how you live or prioritize or spend your money or spend your time or spend your effort, it doesn't mean you have to be a missionary or a pastor, but it does mean that you're seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness in your workplace, in your neighborhood, in your church. And if you do, it'll prove something about what you truly believe. I hope that you can be courageous, faith-filled, trusting in the promises of God no matter what comes.

Pray with me, please. God, help us as Christians in a world filled with bad news to never be shaken by the bad news. To be what we see in Psalm 112, immovable and remembered not only by you and the saints, but we'd like to be remembered even by non-Christians. Who knows what Antoninus thought, having all the privileges of his predecessor Hadrian? I just wonder what he thought about the story of Polycarp. I assume he heard it. Certainly, his predecessor, Hadrian, died a lot differently than Polycarp did. Help us to be more like Polycarp and a lot less like someone who's just chasing fulfillment in this life, constantly trying to improve their lives. God, we live in the life improvement county. I mean, here, everyone is trying to improve their lives. Chasing their tail, knowing that ultimately it doesn't ultimately matter. These things that become so obsessive for our neighbors and our fellow citizens of Orange County, help us please to be focused on what matters the most. Setting our minds on things above, not on things of this life, but things that relate to the one whom we say is our blessed, happy hope. The great appearing of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Let us long for that and pray every day that your kingdom would come, waiting anxiously with a sense of godly anxiety about the coming of Christ. We can't wait. We're groaning with anticipation for the arrival of Christ.

In Jesus' name. Amen.