

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

Holiness
2 Peter 3:10-13
Dr. Bruce Bickel
March 25, 2016

Bruce: Good morning, men.

Men: Good morning.

Bruce: You know, we are much more complete now that our brother Don is back. So Don, great to have you with us, buddy. *(Applause.)*

Let's go before the throne of grace and be aware that God is God. We are who we are. May He change our lives for His glory. Let's walk in His presence, and be still and know that He is God. *(Music.)*

Gracious heavenly Father, it is well with our souls, not because of anything that we have done, but because of the cross and because of the resurrection.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: For us to have a soul that is well it cost You Your life. But Your Father brought You back to life for our benefit and Your glory. And Father, we just thank You this day that we can be in Your presence. We pray, Lord, that You would open our eyes once again, that we might behold You in all of Your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: The passage of Scripture we'll be looking at this morning is found in 2 Peter chapter 3, specifically verses 10-13. Again I'll be reading from the English Standard Version of the Scripture, beginning at verse 10 of chapter 3 of the book of 2 Peter.

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. And the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for the hastening of the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn. But according to His promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells." This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. There is a very interesting theme that runs through 1 and 2 Peter, the major subject being holiness. But there is a major sub-theme he dwells on in both books, and that is this. There is a correlation between conduct and conversation and conviction. In other words, Peter is saying this. Proper thinking produces proper conduct.

Let me give you an illustration of what I mean just as a matter of review. If you take a look at 1 Peter 1, verses 1-12, he's talking about our living hope because of the resurrection of Christ. And then following in verses 13-21 is our response in conduct to our having a living hope. And then in 1 Peter chapter 1:22-25 we're told that we have been saved because of the living word of God.

And notice what happens after that in chapter 2, verses 1-3. It's our response in conduct. And then in 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 4-10, we're told that we are like living

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

stones for God's glory. And then what follows that in chapter 2:5-10 is again our response in conduct.

So Peter is now coming to the end of his second letter, and he applies this same principle—that there is a correlation between conduct and conversation and conviction. He applies this to the Second Coming. Basically he is saying this. The expectation of the Lord's return should inspire us to a holy life. When we consider the Lord's return, it ought to inspire us to a holy life. It's the same thing that Peter said in 1 Peter 4, verse 7.

Transcriber's Note: 1 Peter 4:7. *"But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers."*

Bruce: Now it would follow then, it seems to me, that the person who does not believe in the Lord's return is not likely to have any difference in his conduct. When someone does not believe that creation has a goal and that there is a climax to it, it leads to three possible alternatives. In other words, if somebody just says that nothing is going to happen to the world, that it's just going to take care of itself and go on and on, and there is no understanding of the Lord's return, I think that manifests itself in three different expressions.

First of all, it would be the hedonism of apathy and despair. I would define *hedonism* as someone saying this. "I was nothing. I am nothing. So you who are still around, eat, drink and be merry." That's one of the possibilities of an alternative to the Lord's return. They just don't consider the Lord's return. Hedonism might be a response.

The second possibility might be apathy. That person might say something like this. "Once I had no existence. Now I have none. I'm not aware of it. It doesn't concern me or matter anymore at all." There's just a whole sense of apathy.

And thirdly would be despair. That person might say, "All life is a loss. We're just lost and it makes no difference."

You see, there is a correlation between our conduct and our understanding of the Lord's return. Without the truth that life is going somewhere, as embodied in the Lord's return, there is nothing to live for. Peter is saying this. You've got to understand the significance of the Lord's return because that gives us a motivation for holy living.

And when we teach eschatology, that is, the subject of the Lord's return, it's really designed not for us to figure out the time and the date of His return, but to motivate us to holiness. Peter says this in our section, verses 10-13. What manner of life should we live as a result of our understanding of the Lord's return in all of His glory?

So Peter teaches us that when we consider the end times it should have a deep and abiding influence on our conduct—not so much a spirit of inquisitiveness as to the dates, but as an influence to practical holiness. Yes, Don?

Don: Bruce, you were talking about the secular alternatives.

Bruce: Yes.

Don: Those of you who listen to Al Mohler and "The Briefing" know that a couple weeks ago he had a section on there where he said that there was some scientific journal that referred to a Creator, and they had to nix that article. They had to replace those words. They're so opposed to even the notion of God the Creator that they won't even include it in their journal. That's how bad a lot of the situation is.

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

Bruce: And what journal is that, Don?

Don: I don't know what journal it was. I forget the name of it. I think it was in London or something like that.

Bruce: Okay.

Don: They referred to a Creator in the article—the wonder of the universe and the wonder of how the cosmos is and they referred to a Creator. And the people who were editing the article said, "We can't have that."

Bruce: We can't have that.

Participant: It was in a highly respected scientific journal. And the authors of that article used the word "Creator," and that created quite a stir. And there were calls and demands for the article to be withdrawn.

Bruce: Interesting.

Participant: This was not out of a creation science journal.

Bruce: Right.

Participant: It was a highly respected scientific journal. That's not to say that creation science is not respectable.

, "**Bruce:** Good. Thank you. But, you see, if you don't consider the Lord's return, if you look at the earth and there's just no future in the earth, and no understanding of the end times, the great possibility is that there is just going to be political correctness. You're going to have hedonism, apathy or despair. And Peter has something to say about it. He says that when you understand the Lord's return as it relates to the end times, it ought to motivate us to a life of holy living. And that's what he is going to teach us today.

So there are two things that we want to examine. First of all, *the reason described*. Why is the reason for holiness described by understanding the end times? And then secondly, *how is the response applied*, because he's applying this principle again. Right thinking produces right conduct. There is a correlation between our conviction and our conduct.

Our conviction is that the Lord is going to return in all of His glory. That's our conviction Biblically, as followers of Christ. We don't understand the timing of all of that and the date of all that, but that's not the important thing. The important thing is that we have a conviction that the earth is going to be destroyed and that the Lord is going to return in all of His glory. There will be a new heaven and a new earth. How we understand that is going to be the direction of how we're going to be moving as far as creation goes. And as a result of that, this conviction leads us to a certain form of conduct. And so we'll talk about the reason applied. How do we apply our understanding of this reason described?

But first of all, let's take a look at the first couple of verses. The reason is this. *The present world is to be consumed by fire*. That's in conjunction with verse 7, when God's final judgment will soon take place.

Now the former destruction was by water, and that was a consequence of sin and a declaration of God's wrath against sin. The first destruction was by water.

Now this won't happen a second time as an accident by some nuclear holocaust that causes the world to disintegrate. That's not what it's going to be about. God has designed

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

a means by which the world will come to completion and a new heaven and a new earth will be established.

Now the first time when the world was destroyed by water, man was warned. Yet he continued to sin. There were warnings, but he continued to sin. And the floods of sin called for floods of destruction. And that's what we see in the time of Noah.

Now God's final judgment will be by fire, not by water, as we just read in our verses. This is not going to happen as a result of some natural cause, such as an earthquake. It is not going to happen as a result of a nuclear holocaust. It's going to be a means that God has designed in His sovereign appointment of the end times when Christ returns. God intends to purge this material world from all traces of sin. We need to understand this not so much as annihilation as we do a purging. It's a purging of sin so that the new heavens and new earth will be introduced.

Some people teach that the world will be annihilated. This is not an annihilation. We need to view this as a purging. Just as the Flood came to purge sin from the world, the fire will come to destroy the world because it's a purging in preparation for something that's going to be newly created, and that will be the new heavens and the new earth. You see that in chapter 3, verse 13.

We are told in these verses that three things are going to happen. The heavens will be purged, and that would be the sky, the envelope above the world. We're going to see that the physical elements will all be melted and be dissolved. That would be the basic material of the earth—earth, fire, wind and water.

Now this is going to be a change. It's not an annihilation. It's a purging as a means of preparing us for the new heaven and the new earth. And lastly, the earth and all its elements shall be burned up. Again, understand that this is not an annihilation. This is a purging. Do you understand the difference? Some people say that the world is going to be destroyed. The world is going to be purged because God is involved in it. The world would be destroyed if this were a natural phenomenon. But this is not a natural phenomenon; it's a supernatural one. God will introduce it and the world will be destroyed by fire as a purging, to purge it of all its sin and to introduce the new heavens and the new earth.

So the timing of this is a quote of Jesus in Matthew 24. Look at Matthew 24:43-44.

Transcriber's Note: Matthew 24:43-44. *"But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

Bruce: Now that statement of Jesus in Matthew 24 is useful in curbing the excesses of enthusiasts who will always be trying to fix a date to the return of the Lord. While we consider the Lord's return, we do not become enthusiastic about trying to figure out the day or the hour or the date of His return. Jesus warned against that. In fact, we see this. Not only did Jesus warn against that, but Jesus said that He doesn't know the date Himself. He says this in Mark chapter 13, verse 32.

Transcriber's Note: Mark 13:32. *"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."*

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

Bruce: If our Lord doesn't know when it's going to happen, why in the world should I think that I should know when it's going to happen? He also told His followers not to speculate about it in Acts chapter 1, verse 7.

Transcriber's Note: Acts 1:7. *"And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.' "*

Bruce: Don't speculate about it. A lot of people like to talk about it because it's spectacular. But he warned us about not speculating about the date. We must learn to leave the time with God. It's up to Him. But we must be watchful. That's what Peter is teaching us.

We should feel that there is nothing permanent on the earth. One of the things we need to understand is this. We have a conviction that there is nothing permanent on the earth because of the Second Coming of Christ. This is not our abiding home.

You see, if you have the conviction that the earth is not permanent, that's going to determine how your conduct is. It means that you understand that our citizenship is in heaven, not on this earth, and that this is not our abiding home. And so we treat it differently. Our interests are in heaven, not on this earth.

Now that doesn't mean that we are so heavenly minded that we're of no earthly good. I'm not talking about that. I'm just saying that we need to understand that we have the conviction that our residency is in heaven, not on the earth, and therefore that changes our conduct.

We should be seriously humble. We should be prayerful. We should be watchful. And we should be preparing for the Lord's return, because the habitual contemplation of the end times should also make us seriously minded people, seriously minded people as a result of having a seriously minded contemplation of the end times as we see them revealed in the Scripture. We understand that God has a plan to purge the earth and to introduce the new heavens and the new earth. And we need to be watchful. We need to be prepared. And we need to take it seriously.

Now we take it seriously again not with the idea of trying to figure out the date or the time of it. We take it seriously as it relates to our personal holiness. And it should also repress excessive ambition and accumulation .

We talk a lot about sin in the world. Have you ever thought about the sin of accumulation? I'm just beginning to realize that this may be one of my sins over the years, that I've accumulated things. You see, all of this is going to be destroyed. Now that doesn't mean that you don't enjoy the things of this world. That's not what I'm saying. But how often do we find our security in our accumulation of things rather than in an understanding of God's word and God's grace? It's the sin of accumulation.

Participant: We're a population that rents additional space outside of our homes to hold our garbage.

Bruce: Isn't that true? Yes, absolutely.

Participant: In my own family I have hoarders. I know at least five in my church, and it just drives me crazy to know that there are people who could use some of the stuff—the poor, the needy. It's being hoarded by people who are supposedly loving and caring people. It drives me crazy.

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

Bruce: That's a good point. We need to lay up our treasures in heaven and not accumulate them in some storage bin.

Participant: Amen.

Second Participant: Hey, guys, don't forget. I run a distribution facility. *(Laughter.)* So that's exactly what we do.

Bruce: Seriously, that's what he does.

Participant: That's right.

Bruce: The gifts in kind he gives away to people that need them, primarily children. And so we just need to understand, you see, that this is what I'm trying to say. Peter sees a correlation between our conviction and our conduct. If we have a conviction about the Lord destroying the earth and purging the earth for His glory, to rid it of all sin, to bring in the new heaven and the new earth, that's going to impact the way we have our conduct in our daily lives. And that means this. We should be thinking of storing up our treasures in heaven, not accumulating them in our storage bins. Jus the whole issue of accumulation is one of the aspects we can apply here.

Participant: Brother Bruce?

Bruce: Yes?

Participant: You know I'm a fan of the Amplified (version of the Bible.) They break it down in Matthew 24:42. "Watch therefore. Give strict attention. Be cautious and be active, for you do not know at what kind of a day, whether a near or remote one, when your Lord is coming."

Bruce: Very much so. You see, when you have that conviction, Matthew 24 is going to impact your conduct. That's the whole point of Peter's thesis in this particular passage. There's a correlation between our conduct and our conviction.

It should prompt us to ask ourselves if we are really ready. Are we ready for the Lord's return? We need to ask ourselves that.

He's basically asking this question. The question is this. What kind of lives are we to be living as we anticipate the Lord's return? What kind of lives ought we to be living while we anticipate the Lord's return? That's his whole premise. There's a correlation between our conviction and our conduct as it relates to the end times.

Now let's talk about what the response is to that. Peter is saying, "Be ready. Be watchful. Be prepared. Understand that the Lord is going to come and purge the earth and set up a new kingdom, the new heavens and the new earth." How does that impact us, because he says that if you have that conviction, there is going to be a change in conduct. Let me offer to you some considerations for responses to this, as described in this passage.

I believe there are three moral implications to what Peter is saying about how we should respond to this. The first one would be this—*holiness of life, worship of God, and service to men*.

First of all, *holiness of life*. That deals with our actions. *Worship of God* deals with our aims. And *service to men* deals with our activities. When you have the conviction of the Lord's return in all of His glory, to purge the earth and set up a new kingdom, that ought to impact our actions, it ought to impact our aims and it ought to impact our activities.

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

Holiness of life, worship of God, and service to men. Let's take a look at each one of these very briefly.

First of all, *holiness of life*. He's basically saying that you need to be like Noah. Now did Noah store up money? I think that would have weighed down the ark. (*Laughter.*) So he didn't do that. He didn't store up money because that would have weighed down the ark. Did he accumulate acres of land? No, because it was all going to be destroyed.

I think that Noah, anticipating the rain to descend, would lead a life very different from anybody else, and he would be away from worldliness—a life of separation from evil and dedication to God.

Let me read how one of my favorite Puritans described Noah's life, anticipating his understanding that the world was going to come to an end. "Such conduct will separate you from fellow men." In other words, he's saying this. When you have an understanding of the Second Coming of the Lord, it's going to impact the way that you live your life. It's going to have an impact in our aims, in our actions and in our activities, holiness of life.

Here is a description of this particular theologian's understanding of Noah. "As there is down deep in your heart an object different from the world system, and as you set a different estimate on all things, this conduct will be wide apart from the world system, being swayed by different motives. Your life will diverge from theirs, and they will misunderstand you. And while trying to find motives for you, as they do not know the true motive you have, they will impute ill motives against you. But it must be so. You must come out from among them, be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. And the fact that all these things are to be dissolved should make it easy for you—no, I would say be natural for you—to do so, as much as it must have been both easy and natural for the patriarch Noah."

In other words, he's saying this. When you understand the Second Coming of Christ, the purging of the earth, the establishing of the new heaven and the new earth, it ought to motivate you to have a holy life and to become separate from the system of this world. We store up our treasures in heaven, not on this earth.

And that's what it means to be holy. It means to be set apart, a separation from evil and a dedication to God. That ought to be one of the responses that we have in our actions as it relates to our understanding of the Second Coming. It has to do with our holiness of life. How you regard the future of the world has present repercussions in your conduct. It should make you more holy and more separate from the system of this world. So I think that for item #1 the appropriate response would be our holiness, our actions, the holiness of God.

Next would be *the worship of God*.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, Don?

Don: Before you go into that, could you kind of elaborate? I know that it's hard for you to give practical examples or applications, but you know, when we talk about holiness and being separate from the system of this world, how does that work itself out practically in our lives? We don't want to go into monasteries or whatever.

Bruce: That's correct.

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

Don: How does that work itself out for us?

Bruce: That's a great question, Don. I think that one of the examples that we just alluded to is accumulation. We're not going to accumulate things and base our lives upon things. Our security, our sense of worth and value, is not going to be found in things. It's not going to be found in position or possessions or power. I think that we are separate from that.

I think Justin has a great illustration of this. He's taking things that people are no longer using and he's giving them to kids who no longer have the means of acquiring them. That can be one of the things that we do that is separate. We understand how we are stewards of things; we're not owners.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I think that one of the best things to understand is that God has given us the life to manage. That means you're a steward of your life. Stewardship means this. You're managing what Somebody else owns. I'm a steward of my life. God owns my life. I am managing it. He gives me the privilege of managing my life. But He is really the One who owns it.

There is a conviction I have of that, and that means I'm going to be different from the system of this world. I may not be accumulating all the things and building my life on that. But I'll store up my treasures in heaven. Yes, Don?

Don: One proof of that is death.

Bruce: Please explain that.

Don: When you die, you own nothing.

Bruce: You don't take it with you. When my parents died,--my dad died at 94 and my mom died several years later at 88—and they were at Country Meadows Living Facility. They were there for twelve years. They started out taking care of themselves and ended up in the Alzheimer's unit the last four years. And I was managing all of their assets, paying their bills, all the things I needed to do. And when Mom and Dad died, do you know what their estate was worth? \$0.76. *(Gasps.)*

And I called my brother and I said, "Rick, let's go buy a pop, because that's all that was left of it." *(Laughter.)* "We're going to celebrate."

Now I think that's good management.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I mean, they took nothing with them. They called my brother and I in years before and said, "Here are the antiques. You pick the ones you want because that's going to be your inheritance, because we're leaving you nothing financially, because we realize that we can't take anything with us." And I salute my mom and dad because when I closed their estate it was worth \$0.76.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Now I think that's rather interesting. I think that's good management, because you can't take it with you.

Now I'm not saying that you shouldn't prepare for the future. I'm not saying that at all. All I'm saying is, at the point of answering Don's question, that we think differently about how we accumulate things and possessions and how we use people. We are

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

stewards, not owners. Money doesn't kill; ownership does. And we are stewards. And Don, I think the best answer I can give is that we're stewards of everything, including our own lives. That's how we are separate from the world. And that will manifest itself in the decisions we make to become more separate from the world and not be controlled by it.

Participant: Yes. What's the old saying? "Love people, use things."

Bruce: Love people, use things.

Participant: Not "love things and use people."

Bruce: Correct. Yes?

Participant: Bruce, you were talking about stewardship. When you were a pilot for the United States Navy, you had a very expensive piece of equipment that was not to be used as a toy. You couldn't just go joy riding. So you had a set of directions, as we have the Bible.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Participant: This is what I'm supposed to do.

Bruce: Right.

Participant: When I'm supposed to do it, and where. You didn't have any choice.

Bruce: That's true.

Participant: But they spent a lot of money and a lot of time to train you in how to use that piece of equipment and to be a steward of it.

Bruce: That's right. Yes, Bishop?

Bishop Rodgers: On the lighter side of this, when we moved to a retirement community, I had to move all those books. And I concluded that you can't take it with you. It's not a threat; it's a promise. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: That's right. Amen! That's great! It's not a threat; it's a promise. Yes, please, Ted?

Ted: But it's interesting. Bishop, were those books about the Bible and theology?

Bishop Rodgers: Indeed they were.

Ted: Yes. He had a great accumulation that he couldn't take with him. So even the good things—

Participant: He's also nervous and obsessive. *(Laughter.)*

Ted: Right.

Bruce: Well, talking about that, I have about four thousand books in my library. *(Laughter.)* But I want you to know that I'm starting to give them away.

Participant: We have a lending library, Bruce,. Right here. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: I gave away about six hundred of them to Trinity Seminary. I gave another six hundred away to a Reformed Baptist church in North Carolina that I heard about. They were starting a new work, and I sent about six hundred books to them.

Participant: There you go.

Bruce: I realized that I can't take them with me.

Men: That's right.

Bruce: You see, the concept of understanding this is how we're separate from the world. I think the biggest concept is that we're stewards.

Participant: Yes.

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

Bruce: We are stewards. And that means this. We are managers of something that Somebody else owns. I don't own anything. I'm just a steward of it. And I think that's how we separate ourselves from the system of this world. And we apply that principle of stewardship across the board to everything in our lives.

Participant: I don't know, Bruce. I got rid of my six hundred and fifty vinyl albums, and my son will still never forgive me. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: Well, you'll have to work on your family harmony. *(Laughter.)* Yes, Bishop?

Bishop Rodgers: Wouldn't you say, Bruce, that these things that are going to be burned up can't be as ultimate in your life as the things that survive?

Bruce: That's right.

Bishop Rodgers: And that's your relationship with the Lord and with others in the Lord.

Bruce: Absolutely, absolutely. That's how we begin to correlate our conduct with our conviction, and it changes the way that we live. And the first area is in the holiness of life.

The second area is in *our worship of God*. The Greek word for *worship* means worship rightly directed. Do we direct our worship correctly to God? Or is it something that we're doing for entertainment's sake?

There is a difference between *holiness* and *godliness*. Holiness is behavior towards men, behavior towards people. Godliness is attitudes toward God. Do I have the right attitude about God?

As one consideration about the future of the creation, mere morality is not good enough. In other words, just being moral is not good enough as we consider the end times. The best morality in the world will not prove a man to be a believer in Christ. But if a man has no morality at all, it proves that he is not a believer in Christ. Do you understand that? The best morality in the world will not prove a man to be a follower of Christ. It won't prove anything. But if a man has no morality at all, that proves that he is not a follower of Christ. Our attitude toward God must be a part of our life in the present, even though we look forward toward the future. That's godliness—the right aims, worship—giving God honor and glory unto His name.

I did some study this morning trying to figure some of this out. Let me give you some things. I think that we need to have the right aims toward God. In other words, godliness is right attitudes toward God. Here are some attitudes that we need to have, correctly worshipping Him, directed at God's character. In other words, is it worship rightly directed?

Do we have the right motives? That's an attitude toward God. Do we have the right desires? That's an attitude toward God. Do we have the right attitudes? That's an attitude that we have toward God. Do we have the right disposition? And do we use the right words? And do we express the right deeds? Right motives, right desires, right attitudes, right disposition, right words and right deeds.

What do I mean by *right disposition*? I mean, do we understand what it means to be meek? Understand meekness. Meekness is not weakness. In the Beatitudes Jesus said,

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." The word *meekness* is really this. It means power under control.

Do I have a right disposition as I go through my relationships with God and my relationships with people? Do I have the right disposition? Am I a steward of God's powerful life that He has given me through the Holy Spirit? I think that one of the best examples of meekness would probably be when Jesus was taken captive by the religious leaders and the authorities. And Peter took out the sword and cut off the ear of the high priest. And Jesus said, "Put your sword away. If you live by the sword, you will die by the sword."

And then He said this. "Don't you know that I could call down twelve legions of angels?" He had another choice. But His disposition was such that He was understanding that He was a steward of the power of God. Meekness is power under control, and He said this. *"But how would the Scriptures be fulfilled?"*

You see, He had an alternative. Disposition means this. You have an alternative to do something that is stimulated within you, but you choose not to do it because you're meek. You're living with power under control. We have the disposition of meekness. Meekness is not weakness. It's living according to the power of God.

And Jesus said this. "How would the Scriptures be fulfilled?" He chose something that was aimed at honoring His Father. That's the choice of meekness. You always have a choice with meekness. But you pick the one that honors God the most. That's a disposition that we have of being meek. That's when we live according to the power of God.

Here are some other areas just dealing with glorifying God. Do we praise Him enough? Psalm 22, verse 23. *"You who fear the LORD, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor Him! Revere Him, all you descendants of Israel."*

Do we really revere God? That's one of the dispositions or attitudes that we need to have towards Him.

Again, do we have the right motive? Do we have the right desire? Do we have the right attitudes? Do we have the right disposition? Do we have the right words? And do we have the right deeds?

Jesus says this. *"Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks."* That may be one of the best barometers of our spirituality, our depth of maturity in Christ. It would be this. What are the words that I choose? There is a certain means that when we select words like that, this is the attitude that we have towards God. When I select certain words, it's reflecting my attitude towards God. The reason I don't use certain words is because it's a slap in God's face. It's more than just using profanity.

When the Scripture says, "Do not take the Lord's name in vain," that's much more than just using curse words. Literally it means this—thoughts that are an offense to God. Do I have thoughts that are offensive to Him? That's when I'm taking His name in vain. Thoughts that are unworthy of God is what it literally means. That includes such things as cursing. What about my thought life? Are my thoughts unworthy of God? That's taking His name in vain.

Participant: Hey, Bruce?

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

Bruce: Yes, sir?

Participant: It's a powerful thing. I remember when I was planning for a living. My job was to plan my two years out with this project. And we had this habit of saying, "I'm going to be in Philadelphia on the 17th, and I'll meet you at ten o'clock." And I train myself to say, "I'm planning to," or "I'm scheduling to be there," which left room for God's acknowledgement in my mind that I could plan to, but I'm really deferring to God's will.

Bruce: Right.

Participant: That little use of words in an email or on the phone was such a ministry to me, to remember my position. So those were the words—planning and scheduling, rather than "I'm going to be there." It was a little tweak that kind of kept me on track for the day.

Bruce: It kept you dependent on the Lord's will.

Participant: Yes, dependent on the Lord's will.

Bruce: Amen. Good point.

Participant: Hey, Bruce?

Bruce: Please?

Participant: Also, you know, when we think about using the Lord's name in vain, we think of, you know, Jesus and God. But more recently I've been impressed by the word *awesome* or *holy*. And people use those out of context all the time. And it's really starting to bother me. "That's awesome! This is awesome!" Only God is awesome and only God is holy. Think about those words, gentlemen, that when you're using those words, they should only be used with God and not for trivial things.

Bruce: Good point.

Participant: A cow? Holy cow! *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: Yes. How about this one? "I just love the Steelers!"

Participant: I do. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: How we trivialize the word *love*! We've brought it down to our secular world mentality. "I just love the Steelers!" I just love whatever it may be, as opposed to understanding that love is a sacrifice, a sacrifice to do the right thing. Are the Steelers going to sacrifice anything for us? I don't think so.

We just have to be careful. Do we have the right words? Everything that we do is an aim towards honoring God. That's part of our understanding of our response to the Second Coming of Christ.

And thirdly I would offer for your consideration not only the holiness of life which would be our actions, and the worship of God which would be our aim, but also service to men and to the world, which would be our activities. What activities do we give ourselves to? There is a correlation between God's purposes and His people's response.

The two principal means of our bringing people to Christ and to repentance is through prayer and preaching. One of the things that we need to be involved in is prayer and preaching. Take a look at 2 Timothy 4:8.

Transcriber's Note: 2 Timothy 4:8. *"As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist. Fulfill your ministry."*

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

Bruce: When you're waiting for a loved one to come in to visit, you can't wait for his or her return. You're just excited about it. So what do we do with men in between with our understanding of the Second Coming of Christ? Evangelism is basically made up of two things—prayer, which is Matthew chapter 6, verse 10, and preaching, which is Matthew 24, verse 14.

Transcriber's Note: Matthew 6:10. *"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

Matthew 24:14. *"And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."*

Bruce: We need to give ourselves to evangelistic activities until the Lord returns in all of His glory. It's because of the ultimate destruction of the world. And the ultimate destruction of men will be determined by the Second Coming. He urges us and his readers to cooperate with God with their service to mankind by understanding our role and responsibility to proclaim the gospel of Christ. Yes, Don?

Don: Bruce, in my translation of verse 12 it says, *"looking forward and hastening the coming of the day of God."*

Bruce: Right.

Don: I don't know what the ESV says there. I forget. The day of Christ's return is fixed. How do we hasten it? How do we make it come faster? Or is that—

Bruce: That's my point. It's through evangelism. In other words, the Lord is not going to return until all the elect are saved.

Don: Okay.

Bruce: The elect will not be destroyed and will not die until they are converted. Now the way that we hasten—and hasten means the responsibility that we have to be activity oriented. We can't determine the day. We're not going to change the day. But we are actively involved. Hastening means that we are actively involved in helping the proclamation of the gospel so that the elect will come to saving faith. So we're involved in it activity wise. Hastening means that we're involved in it with a great intensity and a degree of heightened interest, because we know that the Lord is not going to return until all the elect come to Christ.

So here's a good question for us. We can ask two things. We can say this. "Come, Lord Jesus!" That's one side of the prayer. Here's the other side of the prayer, I think. We can say, "Continue your delay so we each can proclaim Your life through the gospel by conduct and conversation so that You will come soon."

In other words, on one hand we say this. "Come, Lord Jesus!" On the other hand, "Delay your time so we have a chance to go and preach the gospel and fulfill our great commission to go into the world and evangelize and help the elect come to saving faith." There are two sides of that coin.

Do you see how that balances out? We can't change the date. But we can hasten it in the sense that we are actively and progressively working so that the elect will come to saving faith, and therefore Christ will return. We're not going to change the date, but we need to hasten its coming by being actively involved in evangelism. Do you follow that? There are two sides of the coin.

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

So what is it that we need to do, men, just in summary? There will be a day when Christ shall manifest Himself as Lord by rewarding His friends and conquering His enemies. As we think of our secure destiny in Christ, we are not to talk on a higher level or at a higher rate about His coming. But we are to live at a higher rate because of His coming. In other words, we don't talk about His coming. We live at a higher rate as a result of His coming.

Our actions with men are to be more holy. Our aims in life are to be more godly. And our attitudes toward people are to be more evangelistic. I believe that's the response we need to have. Our actions with men are to be more holy. Our aims in life are to be more godly. And our activities with people are to be more evangelistic so that the Lord will come.

Until that day, we can say this. "Come, Lord Jesus!" And we may also say this. "Delay so we have a chance to preach the gospel."

When I was in Vietnam working with the little church in the city of Hue, Pastor Nien used to tell me, "You're going to lose this war. You're going to lose."

And I said, "Now wait a minute! I have at my disposal the biggest arsenal in the history of mankind. All I have to do is call it in and use it."

He said, "But you've lost it here. Your country has lost it here. You don't understand that Ho Chi Minh and the Communists have been dealing with this for a hundred and fifty years. And Ho Chi Minh understands this. If he doesn't get it completed,--the unification of Vietnam—then his son will pick it up. If his son doesn't pick it up, then his grandson will do that. That's the mentality of the Oriental mind." He said, "You've lost it here."

And I said this. "Then what's the purpose of my being here?"

And he said, "From the spiritual point of view, you're delaying things so that we have more of an opportunity to share the gospel. Your being here is a wonderful gift to my country, because from a Christian point of view, it's allowing me to have an opportunity to share Christ more personally and more powerfully because you're here slowing things down."

Now that's a rather good perspective about the world. We can't change the Second Coming, but we need Christ's delay so we can be more evangelistic and share Christ so that the elect will come to saving faith.

So on the one hand we say, "Come, Lord Jesus!" On the other hand we say this. "Delay, so we can preach more of the gospel of Christ." Any questions? Yes, please?

Participant: I wanted to read in Jesus' prayer for His disciples. In John 17 He said, *"Just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You would keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."* And then in verse 20 He says, *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word."*

Bruce: Right. Amen. Amen. Yes, Brian?

Brian: As you're reading that list and everything we've talked about today, I don't think there is any one of us who can live that out. We can't live that out. We can try, and then we can be very tempted to stand up in our own strength. And I believe that you said

"Looking to the Future But Living in the Present"

this and I was wondering if you could give a verse to it. It's our heart's desire, but oftentimes we fail. But we get the credit for our heart's desire, although we can't do it in the flesh. Our spirits are willing, and I believe we get credit.

Bruce: We get credit for the intention. Yes, Bishop Rodgers?

Bishop Rodgers: I was just thinking, Bruce. Part of the impact of the Second Coming is the fact that we shall all give an account to the Lord before His throne as to how we've lived.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Bishop Rodgers: If you don't believe that, then there is no final accounting, so it's kind of come see, come saw.

Bruce: If you don't have that belief, you're going to be indifferent in the way you live, absolutely.

The illustration I would give of what you're saying about credit for the intention would be Abraham. It says that Abraham was righteous. Was he really? He was declared righteous.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: It doesn't say that he was perfectly righteous. He was declared righteous because he was given credit for the intention of his heart even though he couldn't fulfill it. That's great comfort. It's not for us to abuse it, as we do need to give an accounting when we stand before the Lord. Yes, please?

Participant: Was not Abraham declared righteous for his faith?

Bruce: Yes.

Participant: So without faith it is impossible to please God.

Bruce: Absolutely. *"And without faith it is impossible to please God."* Absolutely. Yes, Ted?

Ted: But the faith comes out of your intention.

Bruce: That's right.

Ted: The carnal man does not desire the things of God.

Participant: Amen.

Ted: The carnal man does not have faith and therefore he cannot act.

Bruce: That's correct.

Ted: He cannot please God.

Bruce: When God regenerates a person, He gives you the will to be willing. The carnal person, the person not regenerated, does not have that will. He is indifferent. When God regenerates us and gives us a new heart, we now have the will to be willing to trust Him and follow Him in faith.

Justin, let's just quietly go before the Lord and contemplate some of the things we've learned today about our aims, our actions and our attitudes. *(Music.)*

Come, Lord Jesus! And all the Brave Men said, "Amen!"