

Why Immortality Matters

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I invite you to turn to the book of Matthew 28 as we have some thoughts on immortality that we want to consider from God's word here today. Matthew 28, beginning in verse 1. Matthew 28:1 just recording the, and remembering the historical fact of the resurrection. The tomb of Jesus is empty. It was empty on that first resurrection day and it's been empty ever since because our Lord is risen and he is risen indeed. Chapter 28, verse 1 says,

1 Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. 2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. 3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. 4 The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. 6 He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. 7 Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you."

You know, one of the things about ministry for me is this, is that I just live in perpetual concern that we take for granted things that should always instead amaze us and ever be the revolving contemplation of our meditation, that we would understand and think on these things, especially on resurrection day. It's just so easy and so blithely said, "He is risen. He is risen indeed," and we repeat that back and forth to one another as though it were some kind of chant without really contemplating the significance of what it means and that always concerns me. Whenever profound truth becomes the matter of trite repetition among Christians, we need to stop and consider what we're doing and thinking about. That is not healthy, beloved, and we need to contemplate that what Scripture has just said here in Matthew 28 is of the greatest and most profound significance and it has implications for every one of us here today in ways that perhaps you haven't thought about but which will certainly transform the whole way, the whole paradigm, the whole matrix through which you look at life if you take it to heart.

Jesus Christ was literally crucified. He was literally buried. He was dead and his death was confirmed by Roman soldiers who were experts in human mortality and that's why they placed him in the grave because his Spirit had departed, and yet we see from Matthew 28 that the death of Christ was not the end of Christ. As Scripture says in Acts 2:24,

24 ... God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Scripture goes on to say that God prevented him from undergoing decay. There was something miraculous that had taken place on that first morning of the resurrection and Mary Magdalene and Mary were among the first witnesses to see that empty tomb, and what that empty tomb testified to was this, it was that Jesus Christ had conquered death. Jesus Christ was now alive. Having conquered death once, it meant this, it meant that he was alive forevermore. He had conquered death for all time and Romans 6:9, which again providentially, we don't plan any of this stuff here at Truth Community Church, this just comes up providentially and is a testimony to the power of God to work through his word and through his providence to affect his people and influence them for godliness, in Romans 6:9 it says,

9 ... Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again.

Jesus Christ is immortal. He will never die again. He lives forever, Scripture tells us, and now that resurrection is central to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Look at 1 Corinthians 15. It is literally impossible, and I'm not using the word literally metaphorically here. People use the word literally metaphorically when they say, for example, "I literally exploded with laughter." You didn't literally do that, you're using the word literally metaphorically. But literally speaking, you cannot possibly overstate the importance of the resurrection. You could never talk about it enough, you could never emphasize it enough, you could never make it more important than it actually is. It is of transcendent eternal significance and Scripture makes it central to the proclamation of salvation to sinners.

1 Corinthians 15:1 says,

1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He

appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

Paul writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit reminds us that there were hundreds of witnesses to the literal resurrection of Christ. Hundreds of people saw him. This is a well attested historical fact. This is not a myth told by silly old women someplace. This is at the heart of what reality is. This is the heart of the Christian message proclaimed to the world. Jesus Christ died for sinners, he was raised on the third day and now he is the only Savior by whom you must be saved. You must repent and believe in him and the resurrection is at the heart of true saving faith.

Look over at Romans 10:9. Romans 10, we'll actually start in verse 8, why not? Romans 10:8. What is the essence of saving faith? What must you believe to be saved? What must you confess? What must you embrace in your heart? Romans 10:8.

8 ... what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart"--that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

You cannot be saved unless you believe from the depths of your heart in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You must believe that Christ is raised from the dead or you're not saved, you're not a Christian no matter what other kind of morality you might try to practice or profess. So these doctrines that we teach, these truths that we proclaim, actually literally matter and have a profound eternal consequence. The death of Christ paid the penalty of sin for his people. God accepts the death of Christ in lieu of imposing eternal punishment on those who repent and believe in Christ in the way that we've been talking about here this morning.

Now, those are basic Gospel facts that we talked about and rehearsed at length just a few weeks ago in our message, "The Gospel of Jesus Christ." I want to talk about something that's related to that, that's connected to that. Why does this matter? Why does it matter that those who believe in Christ have eternal life? What is it about humanity that makes this so urgent? You know, there is a most basic and profound fact about human reality, about the nature of man, using that in the great sense of the term, man as representative of humanity, men and women alike, there is a basic fact about humanity that makes this so urgent and that applies to every one of you here today. It is a fact that is ignored by our materialistic culture. It is a fact ignored by man-centered and earth-centered preaching that's just trying to help you live your best life now. What a despicable way to think and to preach, no less. And it is a fact that is ignored by men to their great peril. What is it? Why does all of this matter? It matters for this reason: it matters because you are immortal. Men and women are immortal. Immortality means this, as one theologian defined it, immortality refers to the eternal, continuous, conscious existence of the soul after the death of the body. That's really important, so important I'll say it again:

immortality refers to the eternal, continuous, conscious existence of the soul after the death of the body.

Beloved, in one way this is the most important thing you can hear at any time, in any place, if you have not come to grips with this aspect of your nature, of what it means to be you, of what it means that you are alive here in 2019. The Bible tells us that every human being will live forever; that the 70 year window, give or take, that we exist here on this earth is a brief passing moment of time that yields into our eternal existence. When you die, beloved, when anyone dies, they do not cease to exist. Their body dies and is in one way or another disposed of, I don't mean to be crass here but, you know, we just need to deal with reality here, the body is disposed of but the soul goes on living forever and ever and ever and the question that I would ask you here today, as God has providentially brought you into this room to be under the preaching of his word, those of you watching over the live stream within your circle of love and influence, the question that needs to be asked again and again and again is have you factored your immortality into your philosophy of life? Does this affect the way that you live? Does it affect the way that you think? Does it affect your priorities? Does it affect what you choose to do with your life? You young people, this matters. This matters.

The righteous man, Job, asked in Job 14:14 this profound question. He said,

14 If a man dies, will he live again?

He's peering beyond the edge of human life, looking into that otherwise dark abyss and asking the question, "What happens when I die? What becomes of me?" And the question that I would beg you to consider is what's going to happen to you when you die? You know, look, and Scripture just talks about this so immensely, so repeatedly, and those of you that are just wrapped up in what you're doing, wrapped up in your relationships or your family or your work or whatever it is and that's just what consumes you, oh, I worry about you. You say worry is a sin. Well, then I'm sinning in my concern for your soul. I'll let God sort that out with me later. I'm concerned about this because Scripture tells us, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?" What's the profit for you to be wrapped up in the things of the world and then die and live on forever without having given any regard to your immortal soul? What's going to happen to you when you die? That's the only question that matters in life, beloved. It doesn't matter, nothing else matters than that because eternity is forever. Eternity is 70 years to the 70th power to the 70th power to the 70th power. It goes on forever and ever and God's word emphatically teaches us in both the Old and New Testament that in one way or another every man, woman and child is going to live forever and the resurrection of Christ is the preeminent statement about that reality. Death has been conquered in Christ and God's word tells us that believer and unbeliever alike will live forever. For better or for worse, you have an immortal soul and the question is what are you doing with it and what have you done with it?

I want to look at this from two perspectives: immortality in the Old Testament, immortality in the New Testament. It couldn't be any simpler. Old Testament, New

Testament, you find both testaments testifying to the reality of the eternal existence of the soul and so we'll just walk through this rather quickly together, shall we? We have 45 minutes to talk about immortality. Time and eternity intersect here. It's amazing the significance of it. You know, one of the Puritan pastors said that, "I preach as a dying man to dying men. I'm dying. My life here is temporary and I'm preaching to people who are dying, whose lives are temporary and passing." And yet when we gather together under the word of God, things of eternal consequence and eternal significance are being discussed and are passing through your mind. I am grateful that there are wise people within this room who grasp the significance of that and pay heed. It's those who can just kind of flit along that concern me, that worry me.

Let's look at immortality in the Old Testament. From the very beginning, even in the book of Genesis, you see one of the earliest patriarchs named Enoch and Scripture tells us that he lived beyond his time on earth. In Genesis 5:24, I won't have you turn there, we're just making a brief passing point here. In Genesis 5:24 it says,

24 Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

Meaning that his existence on earth was removed because God took him away and brought him into another realm. Then in Hebrews 11:5 it says,

5 By faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death;

One of the very first men in the Bible is described by Scripture as someone who did not see death, who was living forever. He was never going to see death. How could that be except that humanity has an eternal soul?

Job who asked the question, "If a man dies, will he live again," later answered his own question in the book that bears his name. Look at Job 19 with me. Job 19 just before the book of Psalms, an easy one to find it because it's so long. Job 19:25, he says,

25 As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. 26 Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;

"After I die, I will see God," he says. Verse 27,

27 Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!

And Job was speaking millennia before the time of Christ. He says, "When I die, I'm going to live on. I'm going to see God after my skin is destroyed. There is a future for me after my earthly life," consistent with what Scripture describes about Enoch seen in the life of Job.

In the Old Testament also, Israel's great King David anticipated life after death. Look at Psalm 16 with me. Psalm 16. Let's begin in verse 7 and just pick up the context of worship that informs the last two verses of this Psalm. He says,

7 I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. 8 I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. 10 For [this is why I'm so confident, this is why I'm so joyful] For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.
[Sheol being the realm of the dead. He says] 11 You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

He he says, "You won't abandon me to the realm of the dead. You won't even allow Your holy One," looking forward to the Messiah, the Christ, "You won't allow Him to undergo decay even because I know that after I die, I will experience joy in Your presence. At Your right hand there will be pleasures forevermore." He is speaking clearly and in the New Testament this applies, the New Testament writers apply this passage to Christ, he is anticipating something beyond death where he is with his God and experiencing joy and pleasure forevermore. Why can he say that? Because he knew that his soul was immortal; that there was going to be a continuous conscious existence for him after the death of his body. Immortality, stated plainly in the writings of the Psalms.

So you have this from Genesis, you have it from Job, you have it in the Psalms. The prophets speak of this as well. Turn to the prophet Isaiah, going to the right in your Bibles, Isaiah 26. Isaiah, the first of the five major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel, and then the 12 Minor Prophets, so-called. Isaiah 26, beginning in verse 19 and ending in verse 19, as it happens. Isaiah 26:19,

19 Your dead will live; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew is as the dew of the dawn, And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.

There will be a resurrection and the prophet Daniel in Daniel 12 says this, Daniel 12 says,

2 Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

A prophecy of the resurrection of the saved, of the righteous to eternal life; a prophecy of the resurrection of the unrepentant to everlasting contempt and damnation. They will live on forever, beloved, is my point.

So here we are, I want you to contemplate the odd juxtaposition of what we're doing right now. Here we are gathered together in human flesh, in human time, in a human location, each of us having a prior point in time where we were born and our human existence

began, but each of us, if the Lord tarries, having a point where this life in the flesh will terminate and come to an end and, you know, in the passing of a few decades or so, no one is going to remember that any of us were ever here. So what we're doing now in one sense is very fleeting. It is very temporary in what we're talking about, and yet there is this intersection of eternity with what we're doing that God through his word is bringing to our consciousness that there is something beyond this life that matters to us, that we are going to live on beyond our death; that our souls will continue forever. It is a lie to think that there is nothing beyond the grave and it is only that lie that allows people to say silly things like, you know, "Eat, drink and be merry," I realize I'm quoting Scripture here but Scripture dismisses this mindset, "for tomorrow we die," as if we can just live any way that we want because there's nothing on the other side and so let's just maximize pleasure now, let's maximize prosperity now, let's maximize sensual pleasure now because it's all coming to an end. Well, that entire approach to life is built on a false premise. You live on after the grave. You live on forever and the question is what happens to you then. So somehow in the preaching of his word, God has appointed for us to contemplate in this passing mortal flesh of ours the reality of eternity, and we come to grips with these things as we read through God's word.

Does a man live again after he dies? The Old Testament emphatically answers yes. Then you step into immortality in the New Testament and you realize the New Testament is in perfect continuity with what the Old Testament has said, and you realize that the New Testament is just shining even greater light to bear on that which was revealed clearly and yet somewhat in shadows in the Old Testament. The Gospel accounts of the resurrection of Christ are simply doing this, in one sense, they're doing a lot of other things but they are doing this in addition to what I'm about to say, they are simply bringing a climax to the Old Testament passages that speak about the reality of life after death. When you read about the resurrection of Christ in light of what the Old Testament has said about immortality, you say, "Well, of course. The progress of revelation from Genesis through Malachi in the English Bible, Genesis through Malachi has led me to anticipate this, has led me to anticipate something more than somebody dies and that's the end of their existence."

Look at John 5 with me. John 5, beginning in verse 28. John 5:28, Jesus said this, actually let's begin in verse 25. Jesus said,

25 Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. 26 For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; 27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. 28 Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, 29 and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

Jesus says, "All will hear My voice." There will be a bodily resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous in the future. Christ will call them out of the tombs and there will be

a day of judgment for them and they will live. Their souls will be joined again with their bodies and they will live either in a realm called eternal life or in a realm called eternal judgment. The point here for this morning is that you are going to live on forever, beloved. You're going to live forever.

You know, as I look around the room, I know 80% of you by name, 20% of you, I don't even know your names and yet here we are somehow in the timing of God talking about the one thing that matters most in your life. God has brought you into this room to hear the one thing that matters most in your life, you're going to live forever, and what's going to happen to you then? You know, I have stood and knelt and sat by the deathbeds of countless people in my ministry, not literally countless, I'm just saying that metaphorically, but it's been a lot, and I wish, I wish, and I'm going on a little bit of a tangent here, I wish that every one of you shared in that experience with me from time to time, that you had some kind of perspective on that. When you have a blessed friend laid out before you and you're talking to them and you're realizing that it's the last time you're going to talk to them, and you realize that after 90 years or 70 years or 30 years, that their life is just about done, nothing apart from God's word brings the reality of death and a perspective on life into clarity in your mind than that. All of their goals and all of their aspirations and all of their loves and all of their sins are coming to an end right there and they are passing, and there is something profoundly clarifying in a greatly healthy way that helps you see life as it really is at a time like that and you just realize that none of that other stuff in the preceding 70 years even matters now. What does it matter what kind of car they drove or what kind of house they had or what kind of income they had, or whether their sports team won the championship or not? None of it matters, then, because you realize that everything that they had lived for is slipping away with their physical body and now they are entering into an open-ended existence either to eternal life or to eternal judgment.

And beloved, only the person of the Holy Spirit can open your heart to this reality because I can't force it upon you with my mere, empty, powerless, human words. That's going to be you soon enough. Maybe you'll have time to contemplate it, maybe a telephone pole will fall on you suddenly and you won't have time to contemplate it, but your time is coming, and then you will enter into a realm of eternal existence where there is no more opportunity for you to turn to Christ, there is no more opportunity for you to repent if you have not done so, and the question is what's going to happen to you then because everything else that came before is not going to matter. And one thing about today for you, one thing about this hour today for you, is that you're not going to be in a position after today to say, "No one told me. No one warned me." You've been told. You've been warned that this is real from God's word. So I say all of these things not to be harsh, not to be strict, not to do anything other than to love your soul and to ask you to contemplate have you dealt with that reality and does it factor into the way that you live life, and has the urgency of immortality and eternity caused you to flee to Christ for salvation while there was time? Nothing else matters, beloved, to you than that.

We see this reality of immortality being spoken of by the apostles in addition to the words of Jesus. Go back to 1 Corinthians 15. 1 Corinthians 15:50 says this. 1 Corinthians

15:50. I hear pages turning. I like to pause and give everybody time to catch up with me. It says,

50 Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

He's saying that we're going to transition from this mortal existence into our eternal immortal existence. Verse 54,

54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

There it is, speaking specifically to Christians, giving them the specific hope that is theirs, that is ours in Christ; that this fragile, mortal, oftentimes frustrating, earthly existence is going to give way to an immortal existence in the realm of the resurrection of Christ and we are going to be clothed with glory and clothed with that which can never be taken away from us. For the Christian, this is the greatest hope. For the Christian, this is why we live. We're not living for this life. We're living for the culmination, the consummation, the coming of that great glorious day when we are raised with Christ and we are with him forever. Nothing else matters by comparison to that, beloved. All the conflict of family is gone, all the pressures of work, the temptations of the flesh, the falling into sin, the stumbling along the way, the doubt, the unbelief. For the Christian, this is not our permanent existence. We have an immortal soul that Christ has saved and he intends us to reach perfection where the former things will be no longer remembered or brought to mind.

So all of a sudden there is a whole different goal and reason and purpose and pursuit in your existence that is tied to your immortality. Why does immortality matter? It matters because it redefines your focus in life. Friend, I'll say it one more time: you have an eternal soul that will either live forever in heaven or live forever in hell. One of two destinations.

Look at Revelation 21 and then we may circle back to pick up a couple of other brief passages as well. Revelation 21, beginning in verse 5,

5 ... He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." 6 Then He

said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. [Alpha and Omega being the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, a symbol for everything being included from beginning to end. He says] I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. 7 He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. 8 But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Elsewhere Scripture says that the smoke of their judgment rises up forever as they are with the demon and all of his, with Satan and all of his demonic host.

Immortality matters. Scripture testifies to this. Look at 2 Corinthians 5 in verse 6. 2 Corinthians 5:6, it says,

6 Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord-- 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight-- 8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

To be in the body is to be away from the immediate presence of the Lord, but when we die and our soul is absent from the body, Paul says, we will be at home with the Lord. We will be with him. We will be existing with him. That is where we will be living is in his immediate presence. You have an eternal soul that lives forever.

In Philippians 1, Paul said,

23 ... I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

Then he says in chapter 3, verse 20,

20 ... our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Our citizenship is in heaven. That's where we will ultimately live. That's where we belong. That's where our birthright is. That's where our Father is. That's where our elder brother is. And that only matters, that only makes sense, that is only coherent if you have a soul that lives forever, a soul that will have an eternal, continuous, conscious existence after the death of your body.

Why else, turn to John 14, why else would Jesus have said something like this? John 14 in verse 1, he says,

1 Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

Christ living forever in heaven says that part of the delay for us right now is as he prepares a place for us to be with him. After a while you're just starting to realize that there's just so much biblical testimony to this.

One more, one final one in 2 Corinthians 4. 2 Corinthians 4:16, he says,

16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

In my human physical flesh, it's decaying, but my inner man, my soul, is not subject to that decay. It's being renewed. It's being conformed. It's growing. It's flourishing even though my outer man suffers, he says. And he goes on and he says in verse 17,

17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

It is a weight of glory that is eternal and it is eternal because you have an eternal soul that will never die. Verse 18,

18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen

Our focus is not the tangible reality around me, it's on the unseen reality, the unseen things that are revealed in Christ, that are revealed in Scripture. That's where reality is, Paul says. That's what we focus on. That's what our priority is.

for the things which are seen are temporal [they're passing], but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Look, if you're not a Christian, the Gospel is the only thing that matters to you, that you would escape eternal judgment by coming to Christ, repenting of sin and believing in him for eternal life. That's the only thing that matters to you. Nothing else is going to consume your day after you leave this room in a few minutes that's going to matter in comparison to that, but we are all subject to being consumed with the things that we see. I plead with you to contemplate your soul. Christ is risen from the dead. There is life after death. You have a soul that will live forever. I can't say it any more plainly than that. You're responsible for what you've heard here today.

But let's think about this from the Christian perspective, shall we? Jesus Christ said in John 11:25, he said,

25 ... I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.

Do you know what immortality means for you as a Christian? This is a great way to bring a climax to it all. Immortality means for you that there is a better day ahead. After all of your suffering in this life, the rejection from loved ones, the suffering in the flesh, the doubt and confusion that sometimes marks your Christian life, the discouragement, the temptations, standing right on the brink of a pit of despair and it feels like you're just about to fall into it, seeing loved ones suffer, those things and a thousand more Scripture, Christ, sweeps up in his promise of eternal life, sweeps up in his promise of blessed immortality and tells you to take heart; that the things of this life are not the end; that what will prevail, what will triumph in your life as a believer is not the dissipation and the defeat of this life, what will prevail in your life is in full accordance with the great resurrection of Christ. The glory that was his and his resurrection will one day be yours. The glory that is his in his resurrected glory is what he plans to share with you one day soon enough and that, beloved, is your source of hope. The resurrected Christ promises you an eternal share in his glory. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I am, there you may be also."

Do you know what's ahead for us as Christians, and only for Christians, is that the one who loved our soul, the one who loved us enough to go to Calvary to bear the eternal weight of the punishment that our sin deserved in his own body though he was sinless, you know, Scripture tells us that that love is incalculable, that is the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. To have one like that in rule of the universe, in rule of your destiny, having given his life for your soul, immortality means for you as a Christian that whatever else happens now, what lies ahead with you is being in his blessed presence where you are welcome, and as I often say, where you are at home. That's what lies ahead for us as Christians. That's why you can forget the past, brother. That's why you don't have to dwell on your past sins. That's why you don't have to be consumed with guilt. Christ has paid for the guilt and Christ promises you that he is bringing you to a place where that guilt will never be brought up again. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and what immortality tells us is that our destination is to be in his presence, absent from the body, at home with him. To live is Christ, to die is gain. And the true Christian, the true Christian, the true Christian, that certainty that lies ahead for us is better than anything else, and that certainty that lies ahead of us sweetens every dark day here on earth. It's why Horatio Spafford could say after he went to the place where his family had perished in the sea, "I see it, but it is well with my soul. Christ has regarded my helpless estate and has shed His own blood for my soul."

And beloved, I want to tell you, speaking from my own experience, speaking into many of yours as well, that even for those of us who have lost ones we cherished, we know died without Christ, this hope of which Scripture speaks is enough to conquer even that. That's how much Christ has loved us. That's how great he is. That's how great the hope that we have in him.

Bow with me in prayer.

I don't know what to say, Lord. You've appointed for weak, feeble, human tongues to declare such magnificent glories and no one is adequate for such things. Father, the ears and hearts that hear are dull, are diminished by sin and indifference. The speaker is weak and the hearer is weak, Lord, and all is vain except that we would pray that Your great, mighty, Holy Spirit would enliven these words, shine light into the darkness of unbelieving hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ to them, that souls that walked into this room in darkness would walk out flamed with light because they saw the glory of Christ and believed in Him. Father, that's a work of God. No speaker can do that. We ask You to do so.

Father, for the believers that are with us here today, how I thank You for them. I thank You for our shared life in Christ, our shared hope in Him, the shared love that is ours in Christ. What a blessing it is to go through life with a body of like-minded believers. But Father, in this life we stumble, we struggle. I pray for them now, Father, for my brothers and sisters in Christ, that the reality of immortality in Christ far surpasses anything that momentary light affliction could bring to their hearts. I pray that You would renew us in our inner man day by day with the glory of these things; that You would sanctify us in the truth, and that You would work with such great power through Your word and through Your providence in our lives that You would conform us to the image of Your dear Son. Yes, Father, that day by day You would cause us to grow in that for which You have appointed us to share in His glory, to reflect His glory, to, as it were, expand His glory by being reproductions of the image of Christ in our lives. So help us to that end, Father. Somehow by Your Spirit, bring eternal fruit from this moment in time that we have shared together. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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