

# Murder Self and Live for God, Part 4

Jack Hughes

October 1, 2006

If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Luke 9:23–27. If you don't, you can find one in the pew and turn there anyway. We are going to be finishing up this little section [in] our last sermon here in our series “Murder Self and Live for God.” If you've been here the last three weeks, the sermons have been like three blows from a hammer. [They have presented] pretty sobering truths, and I could see in the looks [on] your faces and in the tears in some of your eyes, that you were being hammered out on the anvil of Jesus' words. I just want you to know, I've been there and for a lot longer than you have. I have to go over my sermon [again and] again to get it to where it's preachable, and so I have to be exposed to this over and over again. I realize that it's burdening, but it's not bad. It's good. It's good to be searched by God's Word, to be confronted with it, to have your sins exposed by it.

But, as is often the case when God has a section in His Word that is very forceful and often very confrontative and searching, it is almost invariably followed by a very sweet, wonderful, comforting, merciful text. He is quick to pour in the balm of grace, and mercy, and the hope of His promises into our soul[s] so that we are not excessively overcome with grief. That's not the exception in our text, because in verse 27, we have some encouragement. What I would like you to do is read along with me [as I] read verses 23–27 of Luke 9.

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God." [Luke 9:23–27]

So Jesus presents four necessary truths in this text [that] every Christian needs to know, understand, and experience in order to have [the] hope and comfort [that] they are Christians indeed and actually going to heaven. The first [truth] we learned is [that] you must die to yourself. You must deny yourself, even though the world says [to] focus on yourself, be selfish, take time for yourself, have good self-esteem, subscribe to *Self* magazine. God says the exact opposite. He says you need to die to yourself, you need to see yourself as a wretched sinner in need of God's grace.

Second, we learned that it is folly of eternal proportions to think that you could actually save your life and live it by living it for yourself. That somehow, by saying "no" to God, "no" to Christ, "no" to eternity, and living selfishly here on earth—preserving your life, saving it for yourself and your own selfish pursuits—that somehow you're going to be saving it that way. Jesus says quite the contrary. Those who wish to save their lives for themselves end up in hell for all eternity. The antithesis of that is that those who wish to lose their lives and "waste" it for Christ, those are the ones who will receive life everlasting—they will gain [life].

Third, we learned last week about the fear that we must reject. The fear that Jesus talks about is that fear which comes from fearing men because of what they might think of us, because of a position we might lose, because

of relationships that might be strained or lost, or our fame, or whatever it is. There are things in the world that we want and we lust after, and so we are ashamed of Jesus, ashamed of telling people, “I’m a Christian. I love Jesus.” [We are] ashamed of actually telling people the truth of God’s Word. Jesus says [that] those who are ashamed of Him and His words, He will be ashamed of them when He comes back in glory. So that is where we left off.

Those were the first three hard, searching blows of Jesus’ “hammerous” words, and now we come to verse 27, which is really nothing more than a transitional verse between verses 23 and [26] and the next section, which talks about the Mount of Transfiguration. Luke includes Jesus’ statement so that everybody is ready to receive what [Luke is] going to tell us in the verses [that] follow. When you look at this, you might think to yourself, “So we’re going to spend a whole sermon on this?” And the answer is “yes.” We are going to focus on the reward you will receive [as Christians who choose to live for Christ].

This statement begins in verse 27: “But I say to you truthfully,” and you just need to stop there. Notice [that] there is a little conjunction “but” [there]. Jesus has just said [of] those who are unwilling to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow after Him [that] He will be ashamed of them. Then, [the word] “but” tells us He’s going to talk about the exact opposite—the antithesis. What is the antithesis of Jesus being ashamed of people who are ashamed of Him and His words? The antithesis is Jesus being proud of—you might say glad [for or] affirming toward—those who have denied themselves, who have taken up their crosses, who have followed Him, who have proclaimed Jesus and His words. In other words, true believers.

We are talking in this particular message about true believers, not unbelievers. If you don’t know Christ, if you’ve never given your life to Christ, if you’ve never been born again or transformed by the gospel of God’s grace, this is not true of you. . . yet. It is true, though, of all who know Jesus. Jesus goes on to [enforce] this happy antithesis with this phrase: “I say to you

truthfully.” This is not to say that Jesus usually was untruthful. He’s not saying, “Usually I lie to you, but I’m going to tell you the truth now.” He’s not saying that. What He’s doing is He’s emphasizing the certainty and absoluteness of His comforting words. He really wants to comfort those who are there who are going to follow Him, or who are following Him.

What is the good news? Look at verse 27. Jesus continues, “there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.” The phrase “there are some of those standing here” is a reference to those who [were] present who would actually see God’s kingdom before dying. That [occurrence] is accounted in the verses that [follow], but the people, at this point, don’t know [what’s going to happen]. Of course, [those who would see God’s kingdom] would only be true believers. The phrase “will not taste death” is emphatic: “they will in no way taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

You can imagine what this crowd was thinking. Here you have a bunch of disciples and a huge crowd of mixed people, and they’re probably thinking, “Is the kingdom of God going to be realized *right now*? Is Rome going to be overthrown *right now*?”

I mean, what if [Pastor] Edward [Willis] were to stand up here giving the morning announcements, and say, “Oh, by the way, some of you will not taste death until you see Jesus face to face.” And, [suppose] he had that information and it was true. What would you be thinking?

You’d probably be thinking, “Is the Rapture going to happen? Surely the Rapture is going to happen! It’s going to happen before some of us die. Who’s the youngest person here? [Will it be] seven years? Forty years? Maybe today? I’m going to see Jesus!” People would be excited, they’d be talking, “Do you think you’re going to make it? Are you going to be one? Will I get to see Him?” People will be wondering about how incredible it would be to actually be able to see Jesus face to face. Some would be fearful, thinking, “Oh, no! I don’t *want* to see Jesus face to face. I would be ashamed to see Jesus face to face,” because they would know in their hearts [that] they’re not living for the Lord. But others would have this great joy,

this eager anticipation, and would be thinking to themselves, “Surely I’m one of them. I know the Lord. I love the Lord. He saved me. The Rapture is going to happen, and it’s going to [happen to] me.”

Surely Jesus’ statement had the same kind of effect on the people He was speaking to. I mean, imagine that: “Some of you will not taste death until you see the kingdom of God.” These thoughts are all running through the disciples’ minds, and the crowds’ minds, and they’re all wondering [what’s going to happen]. Well, what we discover is [that] six days later, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up onto the mount, often referred to as the “Mount of Transfiguration,” peels back His humility, and they see Him in His glory, along with Elijah and Moses, and hear the voice of God. Therefore, Jesus’ words were fulfilled: the “some” were Peter, James, and John.

So, now what? Do we get to go home? Verse over. Not on your life. There is always more in a verse than you can get at first glance. If you just sit down here, and you ponder this verse, and you ask yourself, “OK, let me think about this. What is the principle here? What is the truth here that is true of any Christian of any age? What is that little, sweet drop of nectar we can get out of here and take home with us?” It is this: There are some of you here this morning who will be in God’s kingdom and live there for all eternity. Now, I wish I could say, “You will not taste death before [that happens],” but I can’t do that. The Rapture may be prolonged another 500 years. But I can tell you this, and I can tell you this truthfully, that some of you will exist in heaven in the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ for *all eternity*.

I have created an artificial outline [for this sermon]. There were so many things I wanted to say, and there’s never enough time. Let me just give you this artificial outline with two points. The first point is: Fix your mind on home.

If I were to ask you, “So, where’s home?”

You’d probably say, “Well, I live in Burbank,” or “Sunland,” or “Glendale.”

I say, “No, no, no. Where *exactly* is your home?”

“Well, I live on such-and-such a street.” If I pressed you, maybe [you’d give me] your zip code. This, in a biblical sense, would be incorrect. It’s not that you would be lying to me about where you’re presently living, but you would be incorrect in calling the place where you now live “home.” Yes, it’s your earthly home, it’s your temporary residence, but in a biblical sense, this world is *not your home*.

I know that some of you have to travel for business—some of you are sick and tired of traveling for business—and you fly from place to place, city to city. [You] get out of the airport, get the rent-a-car, drive to your hotel, check in to your room. [You] get all your junk, get there, put the little card in, pop the door open, open it up, and what do you say when you walk in? “Ah, I’m home!” No. “Another hotel room.” Why does it not thrill you? Because you’re just staying there so you can get back to where you came from.

You and your family go on vacation. You’re excited about [being on] vacation. You’re driving around, maybe visiting some relatives, seeing the sights, staying in some hotel, maybe doing some camping. It’s fun, but after a while it gets kind of old living out of the suitcase—dirty clothes start piling up—and eventually you turn back. You pull into the driveway, and Mom says to Dad, “Ahhh. We’re *home*.” No. In a biblical sense, in a truer sense, you are not home. You’re merely where you are staying for a few days.

*Worldlings* are at home in the world—people like Demas. Do you remember Demas? Paul describes Demas in 2 Timothy 4:10 with these words: “For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.” You may feel very comfortable in your home, surrounded by your stuff—your plasma TV, your favorite chair, computers, your junk. But James tells us in James 4:4 “that friendship with the world is hostility toward God” and that those who love this world are hostile toward God and are not going to heaven.

This is why the Apostle John says in 1 John 2:15, “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the

Father is not in him.” Christ commands believers [to not] love the world. In John 15:19, Jesus, in his upper room discourse, says, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.” [He] says pretty much the same thing when He prays to the Father in John 17:14 in His high-priestly prayer, where He says, “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” Did you get that? “Chosen out of the world” and “not of the world.” Beloved of God, when you were chosen to be taken out of the world, that happened in eternity past. You were chosen to be removed from this evil world system and this sin-cursed place to live in glory, glorified, sinless, and perfect with Christ.

Now, you may be thinking to yourself, “But, Jack, wait a second here. I’m still here. I still live here. I’m still a sinner, my address is city, street, street number, zip code. I’m still here. How can it be true that I’m chosen out of the world, that I’m not of the world, and yet here I am?” Listen, one time I was fishing, [and] I caught this fish. It was a trout. I caught several, but [this] one was a nice size, and I decided to keep him for dinner. So, I was cleaning [the fish I had caught], and I noticed [that] in [its] stomach there was something large. And I thought, “Hmm.” So I did a little further dissection, and out popped a blue-bellied lizard. Now, am I to suppose, because I saw this with my own eyes, and experienced it with my own life, that blue-bellied lizards live inside trout bellies? [No.] They *die* there. They don’t *live* there.

In the same way, I exist in a sin-cursed world and I’m a Christian. I see other Christians living in a sin-cursed world, and they’re Christians. But I’m telling you, we’re just dying here. This is not where we live. This is not our home. The Bible describes Christians as “aliens” [see Hebrews 11:9], “strangers” [see Psalm 119:19], “foreigners,” [and] “ambassadors” [see Ephesians 6:20] for Christ. All of these terms are terms used to describe people who are away from home—the foreigner lives somewhere else, the alien lives somewhere else, maybe another planet. An ambassador

is somebody who's in one place representing the country [that] he calls home.

Thomas Watson rightly said, "The world is but a great inn where we are to stay a night or two and be gone. What madness it is so to set our heart upon our inn as to forget our home!" Well, I am afraid that many Christians have fallen in love with their inn and forgotten where home is.

Turn to Hebrews 10:34. This is a great text because it shows us a group of believers who not only believed heaven was home, but lived it. Speaking to these believers, [the author] says, "For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one." Notice [that] they didn't just accept the seizure of their houses, and their clothes, and their money, and their property. They did it *joyfully*. Notice why they were able to accept it joyfully: they had a better and lasting possession. Where? Hawaii? Tahiti? The Cayman Islands? No. In heaven.

You're on a business trip, you[r plane] land[s], [you] get the car, drive to your hotel, and as you're approaching, you see all this black smoke. As you get closer and closer, there are all sorts of fire engines, and ambulances, and police cars. You get to the first police officer you can find, and say, "What happened?"

The police officer says, "Man, the hotel caught fire and burnt to the ground. Luckily nobody was injured."

Now, is this going to ruin your life? [Are you] just going to be weeping for weeks and months, "The hotel burned down"? [No.] Why? Well, it's not your [home]. I mean, you were going to stay there, and yeah, you're inconvenienced, but you'll find another place. You're just glad you weren't in there when it burnt down. Well, this is the attitude the Hebrew Christians had. Surely they were inconvenienced when everything they had was plundered by those who hated Christ, but it didn't ruin their lives. It didn't cause them to go into great distress because they had a possession [that] could not be taken away from them. They were living in light of eternity.

Turn to Colossians 3, and notice what Paul says [in] verses 1–2: “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.” This is to be the Christian focus. This is to be the Christian mindset. You live here on earth, thinking about heaven all the time, fixing your mind and your heart on the things above, where Jesus is at the right hand of the throne of God.

Turn back to Luke 10 and look at verse 40. I’m confident that many of us need to receive the rebuke that Christ gave to Martha. Jesus is traveling with His disciples, [and] they come to Martha’s house. She says, “Come in. I’ll help you out.” So it’s Martha and her sister, Mary. But Martha wasn’t expecting this huge group, [and] she takes it upon herself to turn into Martha Stewart. She decides that she’s going to make this big feast and she’s all bothered by the preparations. Look at verse 40: “But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him, and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.’” “C’mon, Man! Look at all these people I’ve got to feed here. Man, I’m trying to get my act together and I don’t have any appliances—electrical ones.”

“But the Lord answered and said to her, ”Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things,” read in the spaces there “worldly things,” “but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her” [10:41]. It was good that Martha wanted to serve Christ, but it was better that Mary wanted to focus her attention on Him. Mary had chosen the better part, which was to not be caught up in all the distractions of the world when the Messiah was here on earth, but to be distracted with the Messiah Himself. And you know what? These verses we’re reading teach us that [we] as Christian[s] here on earth need to be distracted with Jesus and the things above.

Turn to Hebrews 12. Sorry about making you go back and forth, but some of you need to pry open the pages of that brand-new Bible. [In] Hebrews 12:1–2, the author of Hebrews tells us [where] we’re to fix our hearts

and minds as we live in this world. He says “Therefore,” starting in verse 1 of chapter 12,

since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The “great cloud of witnesses” being referred to here are all those faithful saints that were just described in [Hebrews] 11, who all believed the promises of God, yet never received them here on earth. The analogy of the runner is that the runner, when he gets ready to run in a race, removes all clothing that might hinder him from his winning, from his running with endurance. The clothing represents those sins, those temptations, those OK things in the world, or good things in the world that are not the best things in your pursuit after glory. But did you notice where the Christian runner is to fix his gaze? On Jesus, the “author and perfecter of our faith.”

Just talk to a runner sometime, and say, “So, when you run, do you run for [the] beginning? Do you run for the middle of the race as you’re turning that big corner? What do you run for?”

“The end. The finish. I run to win. I run to get to the finish line first.”

Well, the finish line is Christ. He is the goal, He is the finish, He is what Christians are to keep their eyes fixed on as they run in this world after Him. Where is Jesus? The text says, “at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Now, when you start talking to people about this, people [say], “Well, I mean, how do we pursue the things above? How do we dwell on the things above? I don’t even know what heaven is like.” They’re kind of a little [skeptical] that heaven is actually as good as people [say it is]. [They wonder,] “What is it even like? What is so neat about heaven? Are you sure that it’s better than Yosemite?”

Thomas Watson, in his work *The Godly Man's Picture*, said:

An ignorant man looks at a star and it appears to him like a little silver spot, but the astronomer, who has his instrument to judge the dimension of a star, knows it to be many degrees bigger than the earth. So a natural man hears of the heavenly country that it is very glorious, but it is at a great distance. And because he has not a spirit of discernment, the world looks bigger in his eye. But such as are spiritual artists, who have the instrument of faith to judge heaven, will say it is by far the better country and they will hasten there with the sails of desire.

So, Christian, what is your home like? OK, heaven is your home. You are to think about heaven. You are to fix your mind on the things above, on Jesus. What is that like? Well, let me just tell you. You're going to enjoy food there. That's good. We all like eating. You won't get fat, either. You just eat for pleasure. Remember what Jesus said in the upper room as He was instituting the Lord's Supper? He [said], "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" [Matthew 26:29].

In Revelation 19:9, it says, "Then he said to me, 'Write, "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb."'" In Revelation [22], John describes the tree of life, which bears its fruit in every season [see 22:2]. When you read commentaries, they [say], "This is symbolic. This isn't actually a *literal* tree." Well, it's the same one that was in the Garden of Eden that God put cherubim and a flaming sword [in front of] [see Genesis 3:24] so that Adam and Even wouldn't what—symbolically eat it?

Just think about your favorite food. That nice, hot, juicy steak, with just a little bit of salt on it; a thick, chocolate malt on a hot summer day; or that perfectly ripe peach—you know, those ones that [when] you bite into [them] you have to lean over the sink because they're just dripping, and

they're *so good*. Or maybe that perfect cup of coffee on a rainy day—a day off. Or hot brownies with cold ice cream. Mmm. Lobster dipped in butter. You're going, "You're killing me. It's almost lunch!" Listen, that stuff is trash. That stuff is garbage compared to what we'll be eating in heaven. That's just sin-cursed food for sin-cursed men compared to the gastronomical delights of heaven. I mean, what Iron Chef with limited skills, and limited ingredients, and limited equipment can compete with God Almighty, who not only has unlimited ability to create out of nothing, unlimited ingredients [that] He could conjure up, but also a perfect knowledge of you, and He could make the perfect dish just for you without any problem, every day? So, you'll eat in heaven and it'll be good—better than anything you've ever had here.

You'll also have a perfect body. That sounds better and better the older I get. First Corinthians 13:9–13 [and] 1 Corinthians 15:47–57 tell us that we will have a perfect, immortal, resurrected body that will last for all eternity. It will never hurt, it will never [wear] out, it will never get sick, it will never get injured. It's just going to be perfect. You'll feel perfect. Paul says to the Philippians in Philippians 3:20–21:

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 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.

Find a perfectly fit, athletic young man in the prime of life, full of energy, full of vitality, quick, alert, [with lots of] stamina. [He's] an infidel, a weakling, a sin-cursed child of Adam ravaged by millennia of the curse. [He is] as feeble as dust, a worm to be pitied. But in heaven, you will have a perfect body.

Not only will you have a perfect body, you'll be perfect in spirit. This is where it really starts getting good. The author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 12:22–23, that believers in heaven are spirits of righteous men made

perfect. You will be perfect, holy, without sin, [with] not even a trace of a wicked thought—ever. Only perfect. It's hard to even imagine. I was thinking about that this week, and I was thinking, "How would that be? I don't know. I'm so sinful I can't even think about how it would be not to be this way."

[There are] those of you who have strong marriages, who love your spouses and just love being around them, and love spending time with them. They're your closest friends and you can barely endure to even think of being parted from them. You both argue about who's going to die first. Consider how close you are with your spouse, and think about what Jesus said to those who are married here in this life and [who] die. He says, "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven" [Matthew 22:30]. Think about that. As close as your love is and as intense as it is toward your spouse, that's nothing compared to the relationships you will have with *everyone* in heaven.

You are a sinner, your spouse is a sinner, and though you may love your spouse as much as you can here in your sin-cursed state, it will be nothing compared to the love—that unconditional, self-sacrificing love, expecting nothing in return—that you will have for everyone in heaven. You will love without reservation and without hesitation, expecting nothing in return. And rightly so, because I'm telling you, other people are going to be easy to love. They're going to be perfect—every one of them. It's easy to love a perfect person because they're perfectly trustworthy. They will love you perfectly, too, expecting nothing in return. And love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control [see Philippians 2:2–3] will be yours in perfection and everybody else will have it in perfection. You will love everyone more in heaven than you do your spouse here and now on earth.

[Also,] there will be nothing to fear. No one's going to hurt you. Jesus is watching, [and] you will exist every moment of eternity with peace and comfort the likes of which words cannot express and imagination cannot conjure up. You [will] walk up to a complete stranger, someone you've

never met before, and you [will] trust him implicitly. And he [will] trust you implicitly. He's perfect. You're perfect. And so, you talk about heaven, and you talk about Christ, and the angels, and salvation, and God's grace, and meeting the apostles, and talking to Bible characters, and meeting famous preachers, and women missionaries, and people you'd only read about in books here on earth. And you talk with him, and you share your experiences and you bless each other, and you talk about how good God is, and you do this for all eternity and you never forget anything. Ever. Forever and ever. No forgetting. You're perfect.

All of this will cause you to want to constantly praise God, and you will, and He'll accept it. In Matthew 25:14–30, the parable of talents not only teaches that we will be perfect in body, perfect in spirit, [and] have very close relationships, but that we'll also be given responsibilities. Think about Hollywood and how they portray heaven—some stark white cloud, somebody trying to figure out how to play the one-handed harp, “Der, der, der.” It's boring. Who wants to go to heaven? The fun is at Joe's Bar and Grill.

In Revelation 7:15–17, we read:

For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Do you like to sing? Maybe you wish you could sing. You're going to sing in heaven. You are going to sing in heaven, and I imagine you're going to have a good voice, a great voice—a perfect one. Revelation 15:3 speaks of the saints in heaven singing the praises of God. Revelation 19:1–8 speaks of worshipping God. Isaiah 6:3 says the angels will be there. Imagine, if you

can, this: a perfect choir in perfect pitch, in perfect harmony, stretching for miles. [A choir made up of] angels, and men, and women made perfect. Imagine what it would sound like—the sound of millions of voices—of men, women, and angels—reverberating through the corridors of the throne room of God.

“But wait,” someone says, “I’ve really suffered here on earth and have a lot of painful memories, and I can’t keep from thinking about my sin. What about the memories of sin, and suffering, and death?” Isaiah 65:17 [says]: “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.”

Some people think, “Oh, yeah, God’s going to erase our memories.” I don’t think so. All we are is our memories. But, what could He mean? I think that what the Bible [means] when it [describes] us not remembering things or things not coming to mind, is that when we’re perfect in heaven, and we’re sinless in heaven, why would we dwell on sin? We’re going to have a lot better things to think about than those things. So we aren’t going to recall them to mind, they’re not going to come to mind, because they’re just painful thoughts—a bad dream that’s over with. Here we grieve that sinners die and perish in hell. But in heaven, the Scriptures say, the saints cry out for the sinner’s destruction and rejoice when God judges them.

Here [on earth], we sin and are sinned against. We suffer the consequences of it, and it’s painful, and it’s hurtful. But there, [in heaven], there’s no sin—ever. No one ever hurts anybody. No one ever suffers any consequence of sin. Sin is conquered, it’s cured, it’s eradicated from heaven. The Apostle John, describing a scene in heaven in Revelation 21:3–4, wrote:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be

any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

And so I’m telling you, the Christian perspective—the command of God—is to keep your thoughts focused on home.

[The second point is]: picture Jesus. The Apostle John gives believers some very comforting words in 1 John 3:2, where he says, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.” We’ve already touched on this. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus. Does this mean that when we [become] like Jesus that we’re going to be omnipotent—all powerful—all knowing, and everywhere present, and we’ll be God? No, but we *will* be sinless like Jesus. We will be glorified like Jesus. Remember how Jesus appeared to the apostles [after His resurrection]? He just kind of showed up into the room, came through the walls [see John 20:26]. He ate, and then He left, but not through the door.

You are going to be like Jesus. Jesus was able to chew up food and swallow it, and it didn’t fall on the floor. When He left, [the food] wasn’t strained out and left behind in the room. He was glorified; you will be glorified. He had substance—you could feel Him—but not an earthly substance. When you’re glorified, you’ll be able to take your hand, stick it through a piece of plate steel [and] feel it on both sides. [You will have] substance, heavenly substance that’s not of this world.

But what about the phrase “because we will see Him just as He is”? This is something to set your mind upon. This is something to spend as much time meditating on as you can afford. Have you ever thought about seeing Jesus? You know, I think some people think, “Oh, yeah, in heaven I’m going to see Jesus,” but do you think about it? Seeing Him face to face? [Imagine that] right now, you’re Raptured, you’re glorified, you’re in heaven, [and] you’re standing before Jesus. What do you do? Have you ever thought about that? What are you going to do? If you’re a Christian, you’re going to be before Jesus. What are you going to do? Let’s think about it.

There He is. Maybe your first thought is, “He’s a man, but I knew that. He’s five-foot-nine. His hair isn’t like I thought [it would be]. He isn’t anything like I thought [He would be]. He’s not like those pictures from the Renaissance. His nose is smaller.” But you’re looking at Jesus, and He’s different than you ever imagined, but He is Jesus. And He’s smiling at you. He enjoys seeing you. As a matter of fact, He has waited a long time to see you. You don’t feel guilt or shame because He has taken all of that out of the way, and you begin to kneel because you realize, “This is the Creator of the universe, this is my Lord and Savior.”

He says, “No, do not kneel, brother, sister. I want you to stand in My presence, blameless, with great joy.” So you stand, and you look at the ground because you’re still kind of feeling unworthy to even look Him in the face. He says, “No, look at Me, face to face.” He says, “I love you. Do you see these scars on my brow? Do you see these scars on my hands? Do you see them on my feet? I love you. I died for you.”

Then He reaches out to you, and the thought comes to your mind, “Can I hug the Son of God? Can I embrace my Creator and my Savior? Is that OK?”

He knows your every thought, and He says, “Yes,” and you embrace your Savior and Lord. Now you’re overwhelmed with a deep sense of unworthiness. Do you weep over your sins? Do you ask for forgiveness? Do you just grovel after that? I mean, what do you do? “No,” He says, “You have no sin. I have made you perfect. I have cleansed you with My blood. I have forgiven you. You are justified by My death on your behalf.” And like iron, you’re drawn to the magnet of His eternal love. You are now with your closest friend, who has loved you until the end, the one [who] “sticks closer than a brother” [Proverbs 18:24]. You fix your eyes on Jesus, there before you, and you think about that. It’s going to happen, and it’s going to be good.

Charles Spurgeon, in his sermon entitled “The Hope for Future Bliss,” said:

The vision of God! To see him face to face, to enter into heaven, and to see the righteous shining bright as stars in the firmament; but best of all, to catch a glimpse of the eternal throne!

Ah! there he sits! 'Twere almost blasphemy for me to attempt to describe him. How infinitely far my poor words fall below the mighty subject! But to behold God's face. I will not speak of the lustre of those eyes, or the majesty of those lips, that shall speak words of love and affection; but to behold his face' Ye who have dived into the Godhead's deepest sea, and have been lost in its immensity, ye can tell a little of it!

Ye naughty ones, who have lived in heaven these thousand years perhaps ye know, but ye cannot tell, what it is to see his face. We must each of us go there we must be clad with immortality. We must go above the blue sky, and bathe in the river of life: we must out soar the lightning, and rise above the stars to know what it is to see God's face. Words cannot set it forth.

Does this [talk of heaven] worry you? Do you want me to talk about TVs, computers, the latest cars, fashion, money? Do you want me to dwell on the world, with its immorality, and its cruelty, and its vice? Do you desire to be consumed and [to] fix your thoughts on the things below in the sewage pit of Satan's world? No. So, what has happened? You've fixed your mind on Jesus. That's what's happened. I've encouraged you to take your mind and fix it on the things above, and you're caught up there because the Holy Spirit and Christ within you longs to be home. When I explain that, you're thinking, "Yes, yes! Keep going, Pastor Jack!"

Do you see why it is good to keep your eyes fixed on your home, on the things above, on Jesus? It helps you to say "no" to all of the barking temptations, and sins, and futility of this world, and to see it in its proper perspective.

The chorus of the old hymn says it all:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim  
In the light of His glory and grace.<sup>1</sup>

That, people, is why we need to fix our hearts on our home and keep our eyes on Jesus. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You so much. We are so privileged to have Your Word. Father, those of us who know You want to confess our sins, that, yes, we have often been caught up in this world. We have been distracted by perishing things. Father, we would ask You to help us fix our minds on Jesus and the things above so that the things of this "earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." Father, if there are those here, which I know there are, who don't know You, who are still caught up in lusting after the things of the world, who maybe are willing to be "religious," but not repentant unto salvation, I pray that they would see the futility of the path they are taking. That in trying to save their lives, they will lose [them]. I pray that they would humble their hearts, cry out to you, receive the Lord Jesus Christ, be saved by your grace by trusting in Christ alone for their salvation. And, Father, that You would make them children who then live the rest of their days on earth with their eyes fixed on the things above, too. Help us to all do that because we know it's Your will, because we've seen it in Your Word. We pray these things in Christ's name, Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup>Taken from "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus," by Helen H. Lemmel.