

DESTINY BULLETIN

A commentary sent to the supporters of the ministry of Christian Destiny.

Dear “Special Friend” of Christian Destiny,

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MOVING ON UP

Preparing for the life to come is one of the chief purposes of our time here on earth. Even while we are here, our true citizenship is not in any nation but in heaven. We anticipate the moment when we shall move to that world, stepping from the shadows of time into the substance of eternity. We are to have no permanent dwelling place in this world but are to be seekers of an eternal city whose builder and maker is God.

Many find these ideas preposterous. They believe that talk of a better, future life is at best irresponsible, and at worst a destructive lie. To suggest that a future life will hold meaning and purpose may elicit their tolerant smiles. To insist that the life to come will be glorious, eternal, and more “real” than this one is to risk one’s reputation.

It is not the Christian, however, but society that is irrational. Having given themselves over to a thousand errors that seem sensible by present standards, the men and women of our time have ceased to love truth. Believing that this life is everything, the people of our age have embraced what the Bible calls a “*strong delusion.*” Embracing delusion as truth is a most dangerous exercise; it is the prelude to judgment and inevitable damnation (2 Thess. 2:11).

Society is moving into a narrow valley of fate. Its position is becoming increasingly perilous as it follows the fantasies of an existential worldview. To those who subscribe to such thinking, the individual moment has no causes and no consequences. There is no heaven to gain or hell to shun. The call is to “Do it now! Enjoy it now! There is no tomorrow, so go for all you can get today!” Losing its concept of eternity, our generation has traded the doctrine of moral responsibility for that of instant gratification. This doctrine offers enjoyment at the beginning but entombment in the end. The law of diminishing returns, however, has now begun to set in. Politicians and philosophers labor to hide that truth of our deteriorating condition, but such a huge issue cannot be concealed. The crucial issues of our time—Communism, the resurgence of Islam, the turbulence in the Middle East, the threat of global economic collapse, the AIDS epidemic, the threat of nuclear war—are progressing to the point that any one could end our present form of civilization.

Yet society--irrational and blind by choice--continues to minimize its peril and promise utopia. Even the Church has been drawn into these delusions. We might hope that believers would make no such mistake. But many who profess faith in Christ have also become “presentists.” This moment is everything and eternity, if it exists, is irrelevant. Various new theologies have stolen away the emphasis on personal salvation and eternal life. They have substituted social change and economic reward as the true benefits of Christianity. The reality of

eternity has given way to the importance of time. The treasures of earth and the approval of men have relegated the golden streets in the New Jerusalem to the level of a childhood bedtime story.

Nevertheless, after all the speeches about “human possibilities” and “permanent gains,” the reality of humanity’s temporal condition remains. The days pass, the months expire, the years flourish and fail. How soon the world forgets, as Tennyson said, that “Our little systems have their day. They have their day and cease to be.”

The world emphasizes the present because it misunderstands the nature of time. We must remember that the past no longer exists; we have no influence over it. And the present is but a fleeting instant, not a thing of permanence. We can photograph this moment, but we cannot keep it. The only dimension of time that continues to exist is the future, and we can influence the future. In fact, our actions have significance only as they relate to the future. To concern ourselves with the future and our place in it is called planning.

The Apostle Peter invites us to plan the future by building “*these things*” into our lives. They are the imperatives of **Faith, Virtue, Knowledge, Self-Control, Patience, Godliness, Brotherly Kindness and Love.**

Notice again the promise that “*if these things be in you, and abound*” (2 Peter 1:8), you will avoid spiritual failure. There awaits for you a glorious entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord.

“*In you*” are the important words. We must ask, “Are these things truly in me?” Even as we have considered these eight imperatives, we know the answer to this question. If deep within my soul I find doubt, cynicism, and indulgence rather than faith and virtue, “*these things*” are not within.

We must further make sure that these things “*abound*” in our lives. Faith, even a small amount of faith, is the basis of our salvation. But abounding faith spills out from our lives and into the thirsting lives of others. Virtue purifies the person who makes it his practice. When virtue abounds, however, it becomes salt and light in society. These imperatives must become more than commitments. They must be our life’s enthusiasm. They must abound!

When they abound, they profoundly influence both time and eternity for the one who has pursued these imperatives. It is then they guarantee a most brilliant future. The believer, so endowed, will shine as the stars forever and ever. This eternal luminescence that the committed believer takes to himself will become apparent to all at a most momentous occasion that will take place in the beginning of our experience in heaven. That occasion is called the judgment seat of Christ. Concerning this, the Scripture says, “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done*” (2 Cor. 5:10).

Many believers, when they anticipate seeing Christ, have the image of a gentle Jesus, meek and mild. They imagine the one they have seen pictured in the pages of a childhood Bible. But to anticipate Christ’s appearance on that basis is inadequate.

God has provided us with a vivid description of Christ's appearance in heaven. The Apostle John, in the concluding book of Scripture, titled "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," gives us that description:

"And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the chest with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; And His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shines in his strength." (Rev. 1:12-16).

The prospect of standing before such magnificence is not to be contemplated lightly. We do well to note John's reaction, especially in light of the fact that he had walked for three years in fellowship with Christ on earth. On a human level, he knew Christ well. Nevertheless, he said, *"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not: I am the First and the Last: I am He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:17-18).*

As it was with the Apostle John, so it must be with you and me. Before that awesome throne and that King, you *must* appear! I *must* appear! We shall not fail that appointment. Considering that occasion, we do well to ask, "What will it be like? Am I prepared?"

It will, of course, be like nothing we have seen. When we appear before that throne we will answer for all we have said, thought, planned, or done. The thoughts, actions, and activities of each believer will be shown for what they *truly* are. They will be visible as gold, silver, and precious stones, or they will be revealed as wood, hay, and stubble. The works of every child of God will be tried by fire and the fire will reveal of what sort they are. The works of some will survive; the works of some will be consumed.

In the light of this final evaluation, we do well to ask, "What works of mine will be gold? What will be silver? What diamonds or rubies will I have to present to Him?"

The works of enduring value will be the ones associated with "*these things*"—those characterized by faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

Being convinced of the importance of the judgment seat of Christ, we may rejoice in the instructions we are given. We are told of the credentials we *must* have in order to anticipate our Lord's approval. These credentials are not secret, mysterious, or incomprehensible. They are stated for all. They are the imperatives of spiritual success. And we do not pursue them alone but with the help of the indwelling Spirit of the living God.

As Peter concludes his treatment of the imperatives, he warns us of the onrushing future

by saying, “*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto you do well that you take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts*” (2 Peter 1:19). As the dawn of eternity approaches, we must build these qualities within our lives.

Peter goes on to warn us of the spiritual subversion to come. He waves the red flag by saying, “*There shall be false teachers among you, who secretly shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction*” (2 Peter 2:1). Many will follow fatal paths. This warning, occupying a whole chapter in Peter’s letter, reminds us of the necessity of living for and preaching the truth. The time is coming when people will not endure sound doctrine. The best way to avoid spiritual subversion is by having the imperatives built into our lives.

He turns next to the end of the world and the events to come, which he calls “*the day of the Lord.*” “*The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up*” (2 Peter 3:10). The material things people have devoted their lives to—the cars, the clothes, the houses, the diamonds, the reputations, the successes—will be gone forever. Only spiritual qualities will continue to have value. In fact, Peter says, “*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God*” (2 Peter 3:11-12).

How soon will this day come upon us? We do not know, but we do know that sinful man has now taken into his trembling hands the equipment of devastation that could bring it to pass.

What, then, really matters in life? It is “*holy conversation and godliness.*” Although this may seem like prudishness or an abstraction, it is exactly the opposite. It is the fabric of eternity, fabric that will endure after the world is gone.

We are to refuse the temptation to live for the things that will soon pass away. The gold of this world will one day melt and run like mud through the streets of the flaming cities of earth. The passion of pursuing wealth will be shown to be without eternal value. The things of eternal value are spiritual. They are immaterial and the most solid, the most real things of all.

Spiritual success is the one thing in life without which nothing else is of genuine or lasting value. “*These things*” therefore—faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, love—must never be viewed as options within the Christian life. They are vital and achievable. They are the keys to a life lived for eternity.

From the writings of Dave Breese