

"WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?"

"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." James 4:14.

This important question has to do with the uncertainty of life and the consequent importance of timing everything thereto. It has concerned serious-minded people throughout the ages. It demands and deserves our attention. It challenges the whole plan and program of life for us. No sane person will flippantly ignore it. This challenge is directed toward life in its full plan and purpose, as embracing all motives, resources, and powers. It is provoked by that attitude which takes life for granted and makes life's choices without reference to God. It challenges all who leave God out of their thoughts, plans, and purposes. It warns all to take God into account, to intertwine life with Him and to tie in with the eternal lest life be lost and its labor spent in vain. After all, a real life is earth's greatest asset. It has been said that, "A few people make the world; the rest of us just come along and live in it."

May I remind you that it is a great privilege to have a part in this adventure called living. But, what is it all about? "What is your life?"

I. What Your Life Is Not.

1. It is not an abundance of things.

Many live for things, but they make a great mistake in doing so, for Christ said, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). God's Word teaches that not only is it impossible to identify life with things, but that things may become a serious hindrance to life. William Jennings Bryan said, "Those who live for money spend the first half of their lives getting all they can from everybody else and the last half trying to keep everybody else from getting what they have got away from them, and they find no pleasure in either half." Somebody asked Mr. John D. Rockefeller, "How much money does it take to satisfy a man?" He answered, "Just a little more." A small coin will shut out from our vision as large a thing as the sun, and as small a thing as money can shut God out of your life. Therefore, life must not be confused with things.

2. It is not an abundance of time.

Life cannot be identified with length of days. Methuselah held the long distance record so far as length of days is concerned. God's Word says "The days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years: And he died." One wonders if that was not a waste of time! Christ lived approximately thirty years on earth, but the quality of His life was such that He changed the course of history. One glorious hour of a crowded life may be more significant and meaningful than years of mediocre existence.

Life, as the New Testament used the word, is not simply a biological phenomenon. The startling teaching of the New Testament is that one may be alive physically and yet not have life. Length of days, then, is not life. Philip James Bailey put it this way:

"We live in deeds, not years;
in thoughts, not breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart-throbs.
He most lives who thinks most,
feels the noblest, acts the best."

3. It is not an abundance of thrills.

There are those who live primarily for thrills. In this connection God said, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (I Timothy 5:6). A colored man alighted from a merry-go-round and was met by this rebuke from his wife: "Now, look at you; you spent your money, you got off right where you got on, and you ain't been nowhere!" That is not a bad description of modern living, a senseless whirl, which can be spelled in three words -- Hurry, Worry and Bury. The most miserable people today are those who rush around in cars looking for a good time and never finding it, and who argue that "variety is the spice of life," but not having sense enough to know that people can't live on spice.

4. It is not an abundance of theories.

Those who would estimate life in terms of theories need the scriptural reminder, "The world by wisdom knew not God" (I Corinthians 1:21). Josh Billings used to say, "I'd rather know a few things for certain than be sure of a lot of things that are not so." It is glorious to be able to say truthfully, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (I John 3:14). "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Timothy 1:12). "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (II Corinthians 5:1).

II. What Your Life Is.

1. It is a preparation.

If you are going on a long trip, you must get ready; you must have sufficient apparel; you must have the wherewith to meet the necessary expenses; you must have a road map or time table. Likewise, you should have a plan for your life. Planning implies looking ahead with intelligence. Thus one avoids the loss of time and energy. Life should have a purpose to achieve and a destination to reach.

(1) Prepare to live.

Your purpose should be to live life at its fullest, to be the best and to do the best possible. The highest life is impossible apart from Christ.

(2) Prepare to die.

Your days are few, so do not live as though you expected to abide here always. Misspent time can never be recalled. You must give an account for the way in which you use the time that God gives to you. Your admission to heaven depends upon your preparation to do so in this life.

2. It is a pursuit.

People are always reaching out after something.

(1) Some pursue pleasure.

Bulwer said, "A life of pleasure makes even the strongest mind frivolous." Shenstone said, "What leads to unhappiness is making pleasure the chief aim in life." "Pleasures are as poppies spread, etc."

(2) Some pursue worldly praise.

Some are diseased with the notion that only publicly touted folk are interesting. Worldly praise is fickle and the bouquets the public throws are frequently followed by brickbats. Nobody can afford a comedy today that ends in a tragedy tomorrow.

(3) Some pursue ease.

It is the law of the universe that nothing good is gotten or held by an easy means. Life is an endurance test and its hardest stretches are run without applause, amid misunderstanding, abuse, discouragement, and disillusionment.

3. It is a possibility.

For each of you there is the possibility of salvation, of success, and of service.

4. It is a power.

A life is always sending out influence, just as the sun sends out light and heat. No one can measure the silent forces that go out from one's personality and take hold upon other lives and influence them. Every person has some influence, and it is either for good or for evil. Every person is responsible for his influence. His influence is permanent in its character. It can never be recalled, or undone, or destroyed. It will go on working until the end of time. God help you to wield an influence that will work for good to men, and result in the honor and glory of His name.

Whatever your present condition and needs may be, there are three things that can be said about your life.

1. Your life can be cleansed.

There is only one thing to do with a soiled life and that is to bring it to Christ, and let Him cleanse it from the guilt of sin, the defilement of sin, and the power of sin.

2. Your life can be changed.

A cleansed life will soon be observed as being a changed life. Christ is able and willing to take a marred and broken life and change it into a beautiful and useful life that can and will bring glory to His name. Won't you bring your life to Christ in order that He may cleanse and change it?

3. Your life can be controlled.

The same glorious Lord, Who controls the moon and the sun and the tides, is able to take your life and to control it. And, what a difference it will make when Christ controls your life!

If you will yield your life to Christ, He will cleanse, change, and control it.