

SOUND INVESTMENTS FOR THE NEW YEAR

“Your Spirit—Risk Free Investing” - II Corinthians 5:1-10

INTRODUCTION

If we are not careful, it is easy to get the priorities of our lives out of order. Fathers or mothers who are pressured by the demands of careers may place those demands over family relationships and the parenting of their children. Hectic schedules may overwhelm our need for quiet time. Watching the playoffs may prevent us from getting our proper exercise.

Perhaps one of the easiest and most common area of mixed up priorities is the relationship between the spiritual and the physical. It is so easy to become focused on the physical, making ends meet, buying bigger and better, job and career, and just getting through the stress and strain of every day, that we totally neglect our relationship with God, the spiritual disciplines, and thoughts about the eternal dimension to our lives.

Paul writes to the Christians of Corinth, and to all those in the years that follow, to remind them to attend to the spiritual dimension of their lives, so that they may avoid any regrets.

A DIFFERENT BEHAVIOR

Humans are both physical and spiritual beings. I believe it is this characteristic that separates us from the rest of creation. As such, it is necessary for us to pay attention to both sides of life in order to lead balanced lives.

Paul emphasizes our need to attend to the spiritual side of our lives, but he does it in a subtle manner. He demonstrates the difference of importance between the spiritual and the physical by the type of house that we live in. Our spiritual dwelling is a home while our physical dwelling is a tent. By using these illustrations, Paul points out the temporary nature of our physical existence, in contrast to the permanent and eternal nature of our heavenly home.

Paul is encouraging his readers to a radical transformation of their lives. It is a transformation needed by those who focus so much attention on this life and the things we have in this life at the expense of neglecting our need for Jesus and the heavenly home He offers. As the hymn declares, **“I’m but a stranger here, heaven is my home...”** So this should prompt a...

LONGING FOR HEAVEN

There are no perfect homes in this world. We gather our loved ones around us and think we are going to be supremely and perfectly and permanently happy. But death comes in to rob us of a loved one. Or one of those near and dear to us decides to move away to some distant city. Our homes are always being broken up. But God’s heavenly home is a complete and permanent home. Paul writes, **“For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”** (v. 1).

We have this assurance of heaven because of Jesus...**I’ve gone to prepare a place for you...**
(Gospel application)

But Paul also notes that all of us are to be longing for heaven: “For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened...” We groan under the burdens of life. We want release from our struggles, and an end to our pain. We want comfort and to experience heaven on earth.

Paul continues: “He who has prepared for us this very thing of God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee” (v. 5). God gives us the Holy Spirit—God’s presence in our lives and world today.

“ The Holy Spirit is a guarantee of heaven and the spiritual side of life.

“ The Holy Spirit is our taste of heaven. The main element in heaven IS God’s presence and not the absence of pain or conflict.

“ The Holy Spirit is our one experience of the spiritual and link between the physical and the spiritual in our everyday lives. This assurance should then prompt us to...

LIVE BY FAITH

Paying attention to the spiritual side of life requires us to live by faith. Paul declares in verse 7, “...for we walk by faith not sight.” According to the writer of Hebrews, “Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1). In the verses just prior to our text, in 2 Cor. 4 we read: “So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day...as we look not to the things that are seen but to things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:16-18).

When descending the Grand Canyon, often times a person has to travel on narrow ledges that have only enough room for a mule to get a foothold. The ribbons of rock that run along the edges of these towering cliffs overlook vertical precipices that descend hundreds of feet to the valley below. When one must make use of these stony paths, the safest course is to let the mule find his own way; for the slightest touch on the bridle may easily throw both the animal and his rider over the cliff to sudden death. So it is in our life. In some circumstances, if we want to keep ourselves from having sinful doubts and falling into despair, we must lay the `bridle` on the neck of faith, and trust in and commit our life to God. No matter how things look, we take comfort in our Lord’s words, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” In difficult times the only thing to do is to trust in God and walk by faith, not by sight.

Walking and living by faith means that we live and act like the spiritual: God, heaven, a relationship with God, well, they’re all real. This leads to a different style of life.

“ We nurture our relationship with God, through spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, worship, and service.

“ We tithe our treasures. There would be no sense in giving our money away if there was not a spiritual side of life.

“ We serve others. There would be no reason to serve others if there was not a spiritual side of life, and a God who has created us for service rather than accumulation.

CONCLUSION

God has given us a bigger life than work, taxes and death. God has given us an eternal, abundant life through a relationship with God. God has made this relationship possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Savior.

God waits patiently for us to respond to God's love and to live in the reality of the spiritual. The invitation is always there to come and walk and live by faith. In Jesus...

Amen.