

The Motivation to Persevere

Last Great Day

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Here we are at the Last Great Day. It's the last and the largest part of God's plan of salvation. Remember James Smyda gave a sermon on the Last Great Day a few years ago and he said, "This is the big deal." It is the big deal; it really is. Everything comes together on this day. This is my favorite day.

I remember my first Feast in Mount Pocono, Pennsylvania, years and years ago, too many years ago. I ended the Feast, the Last Great Day and during the last service as the service progressed, I got a bigger and bigger knot in my stomach. The service was in the big tent; this was before they built the building. There were 7 or 8 or 9,000 people there all singing together. You know you're going back into the world. My world at that time was I was a young First Lieutenant in the United States Air Force stationed at Kincheloe Air Force Base in the upper peninsula of Michigan right on the Canadian border and it was at the height of the Cold War.

It was a SAC (Strategic Air Command) Base. We had a squadron of B-52s at the end of the runway on fifteen-minute alert twenty-four hours a day. That squadron had to be airborne from the time the Klaxon sounded until the last plane had wheels up; they had to be off the ground in fifteen minutes. That meant that at any one time there were three planes on the 10,000 foot runways. There was one just lifting off at the end. There was one in the middle at the middle of its roll, and the third one was the plane at the start of the runway powering up—very dangerous. One screw-up and three planes could go down and of all the crew.

It was an ADC (Air Defense Command) Base and we had F-106s, which are double sonic delta wing fighters, and they had nuclear air-to-air missiles. To scramble up they were on five-minute alert. They had to be wheels up in five minutes and heading north to intercept Russian bombers coming over the pole. So this was serious stuff.

And I was going back to that knowing that if they had an alert on the Sabbath, which they commonly did, and I was ordered to my post, I would have to say "No". And in those days—as I said, this was at the height of Viet Nam, the height of the Cold War; this was before it was fashionable to burn draft cards. Everybody was kind of gung ho about it, but very aware of the Cold War. If you didn't obey an order in the Cold War, there was only one place for you. You went to the court-martial and then you went to jail. So the dangers of living God's truth became very real to me right when I first came into the church because you had to take a stand one way or another and you had to be prepared for whatever the consequences were.

Now today as we end the Feast, some of you may have a knot in the stomach for personal problems and situations you're going back to. And, in addition, we return to a

world that has a very troubled, very uncertain future. We don't know what lies ahead in the next year and we often wonder what is it going to be like a year from now when we come back here.

What we do know is this. Let's be turning over to 2 Timothy 3. And just a reminder, I read out of the King James unless otherwise noted. So, if I don't say it, it's out of the King James and I do my best if I use a different translation, which is not too often, I will let you know. 2 Timothy 3, we'll begin in verse 1.

2 Timothy 3:1. *This know also, that in the last days ... (KJV)*

And we are certainly in the last days. Nobody can argue about that. Notice.

1) *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. (KJV)*

The Greek word for "perilous" is Strong's #5467 and it's the Greek word "chalepos" (khal-ep-os'). It can mean *difficult, dangerous, (by implication) furious, or fierce*. It's a pretty broad range of meanings. The New King James margin says "times of stress."

The only other place that is used is found in Matthew 8:28. We won't turn there; I'll just tell you. Christ was in the country of the Gergesenes and two men who were possessed of demons came out to meet Him and it said they were "exceedingly" [chalepos] fierce so that no man might pass by that way." Meaning: *They were dangerous; they were furious.*

So Paul is telling Timothy here that in the last days we're going to have times of extreme stress. Exceedingly difficult, dangerous, even fierce times will come. How will this happen?

As we look around us today, we see the United States is weaker than it has been since the late 1920s, early 1930s. Russian recently went into Syria. They went into the Crimea. China is building islands in the South China Sea and our president just wrings his hands—very weak.

We see the rise of radical Islam and taking no prisoners, especially Christians. We see the secularization of the world. The European Community, the United States are increasingly secular, but even in the secular countries there is an anti-religious bias. If you are religious, you are suspect; you are weird. And in the US and Canada, it is extremely so. Then on top of that, we have the gigantic counterfeit church, the counterfeit religious system with its head, the Pope, and he is becoming increasingly popular by the minute. I think we've all see that recently.

So, with that in mind, let's turn to Daniel 7 and read verse 21. This is a prophecy about our time and it is a prophecy about us. Daniel says:

Daniel 7:21. *I beheld, and the same horn ... (KJV)*

This refers to this false religious system with the Pope at its head.

21b) ... made war with the saints, and [Guess what?] prevailed against them; (KJV)

Prevailed against them! And we see persecution against “Christianity.” And I use “Christianity” in quotes meaning the broad scope of Christianity today. It’s at an all time high in the US. Look at the recent Oregon shootings. People identified themselves as Christians and were blown away. Then in the Middle East, the “Christians” are being killed by the thousands and they are forced to flee. A country that has been their home for thousands of years, they’re forced to flee. Now, the persecution against the true church has yet to begin. We think we might have it tough a little bit but it hasn’t started yet although it could come very quickly. We don’t know.

Now, how will this “horn ... prevail against the saints,” which we just read? Look at verse 25.

25) And he shall speak great words ... (KJV)

The New King James says “pompous words.”

25b) ... against the most High, ... (KJV)

And this is what we want to focus in on.

25 continued) ... and shall wear out the saints of the most High, ... (KJV)

The Hebrew word for “wear out” is Strong’s #1080 and it’s an Aramaic word, the language that Christ spoke when He walked the earth. Now listen carefully to this. It means *to consume, to make old, to spend, but it is only used in a mental sense; only in a mental sense—consume, make old, spend.*

The Complete Jewish Bible translates this as “he will try to exhaust the holy ones of the Most High,” again in a mental sense.

It’s clear that Satan is attempting to cause the end-time church to give up its calling; to turn away from its calling and to simply walk away in weariness. Just fade into the sunset, just walk away from it. We’ve seen that since the break-up of Worldwide. We’ve seen many good friends make no attempt to hold onto what they previously believed. When the change came to eat pork, they just jumped right in. They made no effort to hold onto it or the Sabbath or the holy days. Their spark went out.

As the famous coach Vince Lombardi—I’ve read several books about him, the coach of the Green Bay Packers. He said, “Fatigue makes cowards of us all.” When we’re tired, if you’ve ever played football.... I was down on the line and when you get tired, you just

don't want to hit as hard. You just don't want to give that extra shove. What Vince Lombardi was saying was that when we're tired, we can turn into cowards.

This is exactly what "the horn," this system wants—to cause us mental fatigue so that we just don't have the energy to do what needs to be done. And we have seen some who have left recently that just faded away, just no commitment, no fire, just fade away.

Now, let's look at a prophecy that is yet future, but it has an important principle that we need to pay attention to today. Let's go to 2 Thessalonians 2 and verse 9 that talks about this same horn. It has yet to be fulfilled, but there is an important principle that we need to pay attention to and to heed.

2 Thessalonians 2:9. *Even him [referring to the horn, to the papacy, to this false religious system], whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power ... (KJV)*

Notice this: all power, a lot of power.

9b) ... and signs and lying wonders, (KJV)

We're going to see signs and lying wonders. And if people aren't prepared, they're going to think it comes from God. "The church isn't doing this right now but this guy's doing this. Maybe we're wrong. Maybe God's with him." Verse 10:

10) And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; ... (KJV)

Now this can be translated "are perishing" or who are in the process of perishing by the way they conduct their lives.

10b) ... [that are perishing] because ... (KJV)

Now why are they termed "are perishing"?

10b) ... because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And, brethren, this tells us that brethren are going to be deceived by all of these lying wonders and all of these apparent miracles because they don't love the truth enough. Especially when they see these powerful signs and if you're caught off guard, you can be tripped up. But guess what? It's prophesied to get worse.

Let's go to 2 Timothy 3:12 and I'm going to read this out of the NLT. It's very interesting. Paul is reminding Timothy:

2 Timothy 3:12. *Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. (NLT)*

It's guaranteed. And that's happened to all of us, but it's going to get worse.

13) But evil people and impostors will flourish.... (NLT)

We're seeing that even in the greater church that "evil people and impostors will flourish." The great horn is obviously an imposter.

13b) ... They will go on deceiving others ... (NLT)

If you look at the Greek word for "deceiving," it means *to cause them to go astray, get off the path, go somewhere else.*

13 continued) ... They will go on deceiving others [to go astray] and they themselves will be deceived. (NLT)

We know who by. They're deceived into doing what they do. As I said, we see this in the greater church. And I have personally rubbed elbows—I should feel honored I guess—personally rubbed elbows with five self-proclaimed apostles and two self-proclaimed prophets alive today—rubbed elbows with them.

It's clear that one of Satan's major tools in getting God's children to give up is by wearing them out, get them tired. And, as we get older, it's easy to get tired, but to wear us out on a spiritual level. As we get older, we get tired physically, but if you keep wearing out spiritually on top of that, it gets tough. Or said another way, what Satan wants to do to us is to get us to lose our motivation, the fire, the motivation to get closer to God, to get closer to Jesus Christ, to get closer to the brethren, to have more love, to become like the Father and the Son. Staying spiritually motivated is really hard and Satan is going to do everything he can to keep us from being spiritually motivated. It's difficult for a reason and that is because this is Satan's world and God has given it to Satan for a period of time. And we have to live in it.

Most of us have to rub elbows with what's going on in the world. It can be difficult. It can be challenging and it can wear us down. It can just wear us down.

George Orwell, who was the English essayist, journalist, novelist; he wrote 1984, the famous novel. He says this; listen to this. "In a time of universal deceit, merely speaking the truth becomes a revolutionary act." Let me repeat that. "In times of universal deceit," and those are the times we live in, no God, no God at all. "In times of universal deceit, merely speaking the truth becomes a revolutionary act." These are the times that we live in. Living the truth—not just speaking the truth; we try to live the truth. Living the truth will become more challenging, more dangerous as time progresses.

Speaking out against homosexuality is a hate crime. In Canada, it is a hate crime. You cannot do that. If they catch you, it is a hate crime and you can go to jail. Speaking out against abortion, you're accused of hating women. Speaking the truth is going to be

more and more of a challenge as we go forward, more and more dangerous as we go forward. Therefore, we need to stay spiritually motivated no matter how old we are, no matter how long we've been in the church. We need to stay spiritually motivated.

So, the goal in this last sermon at the Feast is to help you and me as we leave here and go on in our lives is to stay spiritually motivated as we go back into an increasingly dark, dark world. I want to talk about five reasons that should motivate us to endure, five reasons why we can't give up, five reasons that will, hopefully, help us not to be worn out or exhausted. And we'll weave the meaning of the Last Great Day through all of this. So the title of the sermon is:

The Motivation to Persevere

We have to be motivated to stay with it. We can't let up.

1. The first point I'd like to make is we need to be motivated to persevere to be with God and Christ eternally in their kingdom.

Now, if that doesn't motivate us, I don't know what does. We have to put up with this life so that we can be with God and Christ eternally in their kingdom. We need to persevere so that we will be at the marriage supper. Let's go to Revelation 19 and look at verse 6. This is after the seventh trumpet, after the fall of Babylon, Revelation 19:6. John is hearing the voices of a great multitude.

Revelation 19:6. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, ... (KJV)

John tries to put into words, to describe what he hears.

6b) ... and as the voice of many waters, ... (KJV)

I've been to Niagara Falls and heard those waters running over the falls and it is all consuming. John says:

6b) ... and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, ... (KJV)

I grew up in west Texas and I know what thunder is all about.

6 continued) ... mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent [reigns].

7) Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife [has] made herself ready. (KJV)

She has put in the effort over decades to make herself ready and now is the culmination of that.

8) And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen [this clean and white raiment] is the righteousness of saints. (KJV)

The NIV says, “Fine linen, bright and clean is given to the saints to wear.” They are totally righteous in God’s eyes at that moment.

9) And he [said] unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. ... (KJV)

Blessed indeed! That’s what we look forward to, that fulfillment. So we persevere so we can be at that supper. We persevere also so that we can dine with Christ. We’re sitting here and we think, “Dine with Christ? Me? Dine with Christ? Us? Have a meal with Christ?” Look at Revelation 3:19, which I’ll read out of the New King James. It’s the letter to Laodicea and we’re in that era. Not that we have to be Laodiceans at heart, but we’re certainly in the era. Christ says:

Revelation 3:19. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.... (NKJV)*

We need to heed that.

*19b) ... Therefore be zealous and repent.
20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock.... (NKJV)*

And today Christ is knocking through His word. And shame on us if we don’t listen to His word. He’s knocking. He’s saying, “Hey! Wake up! Time is getting close. You had better pay attention. You had better get with it.

20b) ... If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, ... (NKJV)

This is a promise.

20 continued) ... I will come in to him and ... (NKJV)

Notice. What does it say:

20 continued) ... dine with him, and he with Me. (NKJV)

The words “to dine” in the Greek means *to take the principle meal*, the big meal of the day.

Of course, this is going to be the big meal of human existence—a big, big, big meal. I don’t think we can even comprehend it. Can you imagine? Can you picture dining with Christ? If we can, it will help us as we go forward.

We also need to persevere so that we can be personally introduced by Jesus Christ Himself. Can you grasp that? Personally introduced by Christ in front of the elders and the angels and the Father! Let's go to Revelation 3:5, from the New King James. This is the letter to the Sardis era but it applies to us all.

Revelation 3:5. *He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but ... (NKJV)*

I'm going to read the rest of this verse out of The Jewish New Testament.

5b) ... I will acknowledge him individually before my Father and before his angels. (JNT)

How would you feel at that moment when Christ acknowledges each one of us personally in front of His Father? Is that something to hold onto? Is that something to keep in our mind as we go through difficult times?

With that in mind, let's go back to Matthew 10 and we'll read verse 32 out of the King James. This is about a personal introduction by Christ to the Father after we're resurrected.

Matthew 10:32. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, ... (KJV)*

The New King James says, "acknowledge Me before men." If we acknowledge, if we confess God before others, notice:

32b) ... him will I confess [or acknowledge] also before my Father which is in heaven. (KJV)

"I will acknowledge them. I will present them before My Father." If we do what we should do on this earth and acknowledge Christ in our lives, in our thoughts, in our talking, in our actions, the reward for that is for Christ to acknowledge us in front of the Father. So, we see here that we are personally introduced/acknowledged by Christ before the Father. If that doesn't cause us to persevere, I don't what would.

But even greater than that is that we persevere so that we can see and know God as He is. Now we see and know God through the book. We see and know God by talking and hearing sermons or talking amongst ourselves, but we're talking about a time where we actually see God and come to know Him as He is right there.

Let's go to 1 John 3 and verse 1. This is a promise to us if we will hold fast. John is saying that we can't comprehend the blessings God is going to give us. We just can't comprehend it in this physical life.

1 John 3:1. *Behold, what manner of love the Father [has] bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: ... (KJV)*

Can you imagine a blessing of being called “God’s sons” and having eternal life with God forever? We don’t deserve that. We’re stinky, smelly human beings. We eliminate waste products. We do all kinds of things, and, yet, look at the promise.

1b) ... therefore the world [knows] us not, ... (KJV)

Because we’re of God; the world isn’t.

1 continued) ... because it knew him not.

2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it [does] not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear [Christ’s return], we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (KJV)

Then, there will be no interpretations, no speculations about this or that aspect of God. It will be face-to-face. A promise—face-to-face. So, we want to persevere so we can be there at that day to see God, relate to God, talk to God, talk to Christ face-to-face. Hold onto that!

Now, how could this happen—talking to God face-to-face, seeing Christ face-to face, dining with Christ, being acknowledged by Christ that we just covered? One huge way is at the marriage supper. Isn’t it?

Now I’m going to speculate for a little bit and you can take my speculation and a \$5.00 bill and buy a Starbucks. That’s about what it’s worth, but the fact is that whatever we speculate, it will not be the half of it! Remember the Queen of Sheba said, “I had heard of Solomon’s glory and I’ve arrived and it just wasn’t the half of it.” So whatever we speculate can’t even get close, but we’re going to speculate for a little bit.

Talking about the marriage supper, what if God built a banquet hall just for the marriage supper? I think that’s likely—this gigantic banquet hall that will hold 144,000 people. Now think about that. What would it be like? Would there be paintings on the wall starting with maybe Noah, Abraham, and past history frescos? They would probably be 3-D; we don’t know.

But this gigantic banquet hall would hold 144,000. How big would that be? I did a little math. If God allowed us 3 feet, that’s nice room, less than you have here. God’s not going to use folding chairs at the marriage supper—not going to happen. Big nice chairs, maybe we’ll have 3 feet, plenty of elbow room. Do you know how long that banquet table would have to be? It would have to be over 40 miles long. Forty miles to handle 144,00 each with about enough elbow room to make you feel comfortable with Christ at its head—way down there.

But guess what? We’re spirit; we’re not encumbered by hearing difficulties and seeing difficulties. We can see and hear Christ right down there 40 miles away not a problem, not a problem at all. Christ is at the head. Everybody there, remember, is spirit.

Now let's just say (again, we're speculating); let's just say at this 40 mile long table, those nearest Him, He takes it by date starting at the beginning of time and comes down to us. So Christ has righteous Abel and Enoch close by. Then, maybe a few seats later, it's Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And down a little ways, you have Samuel; you have David; you have Jonathan. And then, a few seats down the road you have all the apostles sitting together, renewing old acquaintances, so to speak. "What happened to you? I died here. What happened to you?" and those kinds of conversations. And after the apostles, the early New Testament Church, the brethren and the leaders of the early New Testament Church. Then the Dark Ages came; the Middle Ages came, and the martyrs. Those who had to stand up for what they believed are all seated there. Then guess what? At the end of the train, we're there. Now, we don't know, thousands? Tens of thousands? We don't know, but just put this banquet table in your mind all the way down.

Then the Father and the Son address us. You would think that would happen. Obviously, we're not just going to sit and eat a meal and go home. They are going to address us and possibly they could show us creation. Wouldn't that be wonderful? We're all sitting there and we see what creation was really like. They don't have to have a slide show or a PowerPoint demonstration. They just put it in our heads. We've had thoughts in our heads and sometimes those thoughts can be awfully real. Can you imagine what it would be like we're spirit-beings and God puts thoughts in our heads?

And we see how He made things; we see how the world came into existence, then the history of the earth from Genesis 1, how that happened. Then we see the snake slithering down and how all that occurred, and going down over the centuries the history of mankind. We see Moses leading the Children of Israel. We see Christ walking the earth. We see the apostles down through history.

Then after all of that is over, Christ stands up to the one next to Him, maybe it's Abel, puts His hand on his shoulders, and says, "Let Me tell you about Abel." Then pictures come into our minds of Abel, of what he was like as a little boy and how he grew up, everything that happened to him, and how he dedicated himself to God, how he was faithful and how he died. Before He goes onto the next one, He says, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Then Christ goes onto the next and the next and the next through 144,000.

And we don't get tired because we're spirit. We don't 'need sleep because we're spirit. Then, they come to us and our movie is portrayed in the minds of other people. Maybe at this time we meet our angel or angels. Matthew 18:10 says we have our angels. So, maybe we meet them. "Oh, I knew you as a kid. I saw you. You did this. You did that," the angel says. And maybe even the angels serve us the supper. Maybe they do; I'm speculating, remember.

Maybe it is spiritual food that we've never tasted before that goes beyond our senses here on this earth. Maybe it's some new thing that we've never had because I don't

think God's going to serve us a McDonald's. That's not going to happen. So it's something new which takes senses we don't have as humans.

I remember our little granddaughter. Our son is an elder in the church. We went to visit. She was less than a year-old sitting in a highchair. She had been nursed up until that time and this was the day she was getting her first taste of solid food. We just happened to be there. It was pureed pumpkin. It was yellow, squash or pumpkin. Little Josie had never before tasted food, just milk. And the spoon went in her mouth and her eyes got big as saucers and her legs started kicking and her arms started flailing and her mouth was going "Mmh, mmh, mmh," like "More, more, more!" She just couldn't get enough of it!

What if it's like that with us? Not that we're quite like that. But there are joys down the road and here at this marriage supper, I don't think we can begin to comprehend what it's going to be like. All of this, whether this marriage supper takes place in human terms over, it has to be days, maybe weeks, but as far the world is concerned, it could happen in less than a second because God is not limited. Spiritual time is not limited by spiritual time. So God could fashion all of that in a half a second if He chose to do so.

So, my point here in our first point is: Would we want to be here and experience that? Is that worth persevering? Is that worth hanging on? Of course, it is!

Here's the crazy thing. Olympic athletes train hard for years, hours every day. They have diets and protocols that they go through. And what is their reward? Standing up on a platform to receive a gold medal and their reward lasts about five minutes? Three minutes? Yes, they have fame afterward. But how much more energy and effort should we expend in this life for the eternal reward that we're talking about today? How much more work should we put in than an Olympic athlete?

So everything that we've described up to this point in the first point, would these facts be a motivation for us to persevere? If they aren't, I don't know what will. Now, let's get to the second point.

2. We need to persevere to be with our family, to be with our brethren, to be with our friends for an eternity.

That is a motivation for us to hang in there. After Trumpets—I'm speaking of the meaning of the day—spiritually resurrected dads, moms, and children will be together forever in the first resurrection. Forever! Is that worth hanging on for? And it will be a far better road down the road to live. Let's go to Revelation 21:3. Spiritually resurrected families in the first resurrection will be together for an eternity with no worries about death, illness, accidents.

Revelation 21:3. *And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, ... (KJV)*

What a thought!

3b) ... God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

4) And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: ... (KJV)

And a lot of you out there in the audience and a lot of you in Elkhart and a lot of you listening at the other end are in pain.

4b) ... the former things are passed away. (KJV)

Those are gone. Is that worth persevering for?

On the Last Great Day we have a chance to teach family members who are not called in this life—my parents weren't called. My brother has been and our son, but not my mom and dad. We have a chance to teach family members not called and we have a chance to get to know them better. We have a chance to get to know our grandparents and our great-grandparents and going on back.

Frankly, we have a chance as spirit-beings to make amends to the people we've sinned against. I've sinned against a lot of them. We have a chance to make amends for those we have hurt or offended over the years, apologize. And I can't wait for my parents to come up on the Last Great Day because I want to apologize for all the grief I have caused them, particularly as a teenager. I caused them grief. I just cringe at the grief I caused them. And I want to thank them for the sacrifices they made for me growing up—all the sleepless nights.

I remember in high school one time I got a wild hair and I stayed out until 2:30 in the morning. When I got home, dad was gone. He was traveling all over town looking for me. Just grief! He was worried sick. I didn't think anything of it. I was just having a good time. And you just want to apologize for that and the inconsiderateness that we have had and the lack of thankfulness. It comes at this time.

Let me give you an aside. Let's just stop here and let's go to an aside. What about those who are not granted eternal life—our friends, our family members, parents, mates, children? For whatever reason, they reject God. For whatever reason, they aren't resurrected to eternal life. The plan is over and they're not there. How would you feel about that? Would God want us grieving for an eternity over a mom or a dad or a child that didn't make it? Would He want us to do that?

God has an answer for everything. The plan is perfect. Let's go to Isaiah 26 and look at verse 14. We're just taking an aside that maybe will give some comfort. God's plan of salvation answers every possibility. One thing I learned when I first came into the church, the first sermon I heard on God's Kingdom, I remember it as though it was yesterday. The minister said, "Not everyone is going to make the Kingdom of God."

Now I know there are some people that believe otherwise, but I don't. Not everybody is going to make the Kingdom of God. For those who don't make it, what about their relatives who are in the kingdom and having sorrow for the fact that their mom or their dad or their child for whatever reason gave it up?

Isaiah 26:14. *They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: ... (KJV)*

It's pretty definitive here.

14b) ... therefore [have you] visited and destroyed them, ... (KJV)

The lake of fire time, but notice this.

14 continued) ... and made all their memory to perish. (KJV)

Now the Hebrew word for "memory" is Strong's #2143 and it means *remembrance*.

So at some time after this whole thing wraps up, for those how have gone into the lake of fire and we are sitting there, grieving for the fact that loved ones have ceased to exist, here is a promise that God is going to wipe away our memory of them. It is as though they never existed so that we don't grieve for all eternity. It tells us there comes a time concerning those who were not resurrected to eternal life that God just comes in and blots out our memory of them as though they never existed.

It would be like I had a glass of water and my finger represents the person that is not in God's Kingdom. The glass of water represents the physical life. Their essence is when I put my finger in the glass of water, which makes a few ripples in the water. They live for however long they live. They reject God; they die. They go into the lake of fire. And I pull my finger out of the water and it's exactly like it was before, as though they never existed. Life goes on. The kingdom goes on, but the memory of them is now extinguished. It's all done because of God's mercy, because He doesn't want us grieving for loved ones for all eternity. That would be punishment. That would be agony. And it will be as though they never existed, as though their finger was never in the water.

Now with that knowledge, we have to ask ourselves as we close this second point: Would I want that to happen to me? Would I want life to go on as though my finger was never in the water? Would I want it to go on as though I never existed? Would that be a motivation to persevere? To hang in there because we want to make a difference and we want to be there with our family and our friends and our brethren? If that doesn't cause us to be motivated, I don't know what does. That leads us to the third point.

3. We want to persevere to help the billions of humans who have never experienced God's way of life.

We can't just love ourselves. We just can't love our brethren. We just can't love our family because all of God's people are our brothers and sisters at the end of the day. The reality is most human beings have lived lives not worth living. We are so blessed in our lives in this country, Canada, the modern world. We are so blessed compared to most of the people who have ever lived because they have lived lives not worth living and then they died. Most of them died pretty early in their lives. And they died under the worst conditions possible—horrible disease, wars, famines, pestilences. In the modern world, we have a hard time understanding this and comprehending it.

Let me give you an example of mothers and children who died during childbirth. I did a little research on the history of that. At the time of the Pilgrims coming to North America, the chance of a child dying before its fifth birthday was about 20 percent. So if you had five children, you were going to lose one before they were five.

Infant mortality among African American slaves in this country in the eighteenth century ranged from 28 to 50 percent depending on the local conditions, the local slave owner, what part of the country they were in. Mortality of children under ten-years of age was 50 percent; only half made it to ten. That's due to maternal malnutrition, to overwork, disease, no medical attention at all. And there is evidence, if you look at the history, that some slaves smothered their babies because they did not want their baby to live their life—a life of slavery.

Then focus on Europe. As Europe became more crowded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, communicable diseases caused more and more frequent deaths in childbirth because they didn't understand the existence of germs. They didn't have a clue. And there was a fever called "puerperal (puerile) fever" that was common in those days.

Guess what? When hospitals began to develop and they began to have maternity wards, that fever began to progress and it was easier for it to be transmitted because the physicians assisted the births. This bacterial infection was on their hands and on their instruments and they didn't have a clue about washing. So, in the maternity wards the doctors went from mom to mom and they spread this fever, because women gave birth within shouting distance of other women. Doctors went from patient to patient unknowing affecting every mom in the ward with their instruments and unwashed hands. New mothers died a painful death typically lasting a week.

In the twentieth century despite the advances in medicine, the lower classes continued to suffer. When Dr. Josephine Baker was appointed City Health Director for the area of New York City called "Hell's Kitchen"—a slum basically—in 1901, she found out that the death rate, the infant mortality rate was 1,500 babies a week in Hell's Kitchen in New York City.

Now think about that. How many millions and billions of mothers and their children have died over the millennia? Think about that. And those mothers and children are going to

come up and we should want to be there. We should want to be there to understand, to comfort.

This is not the time for a rod of iron. This is not the time for jackboots and people strutting around saying, “Look at me. I’m boss.” We’ve heard plenty of sermons on that going back decades.

How about the billions (This is one of my pet things.), the billions of babies who have been aborted? I just grieve at that. And in the US between 1973 and 2013 (thirty years), the National Right to Life Committee issued a report. How many babies have been aborted in those thirty years in the United States, not worldwide? Fifty-six million babies dismembered, pulled out their mothers’ wombs. The World Health Organization says that about forty to fifty million (We’ll never know the truth.) are aborted every year. That’s 125,000 per day in the world today that are aborted. And when these babies come up.... I don’t know how old God will resurrect them as. I don’t know if He’s going to resurrect them at a year-old, 6 months, 3 years. Someday we’ll find out, but when they come up, guess what they need? Somebody to take care of them. And we should want to be there to help.

What about the billions who have starved to death over the millennia. The United Nations World Food Program says that—now this is 2014 when we have agricultural production at an all time high; this is when we can transport food within hours, or days certainly, anywhere in the world—we have 8,500 children starving per day in this world. Three hundred and fifty-five children will die before I’m done speaking today—in this world. Now remember this figure is for 2014. When you look back over human history, starvation and malnutrition were much higher because they didn’t have the sanitation, they didn’t have the food production, and they didn’t have the distribution of food capability; those things were much less then. There were millions if not billions of human beings who woke up every day and their singular focus that day was finding enough food to eat for them and their children. That’s how they spent their lives and we don’t appreciate that today. All of them are going to come up on this day and we should want to be there to change that, to make sure it never happens again, to make sure they’re taken care of, that they’re fed, they’re clothed, and their needs are met.

What about the billions who had died in war? I’ve covered this before. The New York Times had an article on June 6, 2003 titled “What Every Person Should Know about War.” They defined war as this, “*an active conflict that killed a thousand or more people.*” That The New York Times definition of war: *Active fighting that killed a thousand or more people.* With that definition, they went back 3,400 years in human history and calculated the amount of time there was war and the amount of time there was peace. In 3,400 years how many days/years were there no wars killing over 1,000 people? They calculated 268—you probably think I’m going to say “years”; it wasn’t—268 days in 3,400 years where there wasn’t a war killing over 1,000 people. What a condemnation of Satan’s way and what happened in the Garden of Eden.

Now if you ask the question: How many have died in war?" In the twentieth century we have a pretty good idea. It was over 108 million who died in the twentieth century, the two great wars plus many other wars. But what about since creation began? That's a hard number to come up with but it's easily over one billion. It could be 5 or 6 billion. We will someday find out. Today we just don't know.

The fact is all who died violently in war will come up this day. Now you think you're last thought was a sword coming down right to split your head in two, and the next thing you know, you wake up. What's your attitude going to be? And what are you going to need? They're going to need calm and comfort. They're going to need somebody to reveal God to them. They're going to need somebody to educate them on the meaning of life and they're going to need to know that war isn't the answer. They're going to need a lot of help because there are billions of traumatized people who are going to come up this day.

And what about those who die from disease? Think of the billions of people who die from disease, horrible deaths, sick. When we get the flu, sometime with the fever, the aches, the chills, and the snot running out, you think "I'm going to have to get better to die. I am so miserable."

Well, that's nothing to what most people have experienced. Think of the Black Plague in Europe in the 1300s. It was in Europe and Asia. We have some sort of statistics about Europe; we're not so certain of the statistics on Asia, but they estimate that the Black Plague within a fairly short period of time killed 75 to 200 million people. It decimated 45 to 50 percent of Europe's population.

It started with a swelling in the armpit or in the groin and grew to be about the size of an egg. Then it began to spread to other parts of the body. When you got the black or purple spots, you knew your days were done. You were going to die. It was certain death.

Social order at that time broke down. People avoided one another because they didn't have a clue what caused the plague so they started avoiding each other. Fathers avoided children. Mothers avoided children. They left the children to die. Husbands and wives avoided each other. The whole social fabric was breaking down and people treated each other as though "We don't belong to you. We're not part of this town. We're not part of this clan. We're not part of this family."

That's just one little thing but think of all the illnesses in world history and how people died in misery, suffering. They're all going to come up; everybody that I've mentioned so far; they're all going to come up on this Last Great Day. And what they will need on the Last Great Day when they come up is order not chaos. They ended their lives in chaos, most of them regardless of how they died. They need order and not chaos. They need calmness. They need comfort. They need education. And above all, they need to know that somebody cares about them, somebody loves, them and somebody will help them and take care of them.

Let's go to Isaiah 25 and look at verse 7. We're closing out the point now that we need to persevere because of the billions of people that we can help.

Isaiah 25:7. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. (KJV)

The "veil" of ignorance, suffering, misery.

8) He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off [their] faces; ... (KJV)

If that doesn't motivate us to be there that day, I don't know what will. And those people that are resurrected on this day need to see the fruits of God's spirit in their leaders. We will be spirit and have those fruits. But to get there, we need the fruits of God's spirit today so that we will have the fruits of His spirit as spirit-beings then. And this knowledge should motivate us to persevere as never before.

4. We need to persevere, to personally learn, to grow and to develop for an eternity.

I'm talking now individually. We've talked about everyone else except ourselves so to speak—we need to persevere to personally learn, grow, develop for an eternity.

I personally want to grow and we want to learn new things. We want to have new experiences. Yes, that's selfish, but that's part of life. We want to expand our lives. God's way is dynamic. God's way is ever growing, ever developing, ever improving. That's God's way. We want to be part of that—growing, improving, knowing more, being more like God and Christ.

God has lived forever. We know that, but we don't comprehend that. We can't get our arms around that. God has lived forever. We are going to live forever, those of us who make it, yes. Luke 1:33, we won't turn there. It says "Of His kingdom there shall be no end." We understand that. We have a finite beginning but no end. God never had a finite beginning. He has existed—you can't describe it. He's just existed.

Because of that fact, we will never be able to catch up with the Father as far as knowledge, learning, and experience. I believe it is a huge error for people to think that once we're resurrected we will have all knowledge, all wisdom, all experience and it will just be funneled into our brains and it will all be there. I think that is a huge fallacy. John 17:3, let go there. This explains it. I've thought about this for years. When I first read it coming into the church fifty years ago, it didn't mean much, but as I get older, it kind of makes more sense now.

John 17:3. And this is life eternal, ... (KJV)

What is life eternal?

3b) ... that they might know ... (KJV)

The Greek can also mean in addition *to know, understand or perceive.*

3b) ... that they might know [understand or perceive] [You] the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom [You have] sent. (KJV)

The point I'm making is: To truly know and perceive God will take an eternity. It will take an eternity. Because God is so great, it's going to take an eternity to know Him and to know Jesus Christ. We'll get a little closer every, I'll use the term "year" which is a human term; we'll get a little closer, but we'll never get there. We will never get there.

When we're resurrected, we will begin learning and we will continue learning for an eternity. Otherwise we would get bored to death if it was just dumped in your head all at once. We will always learn from the Father. We will always be following His example and His instruction. And over an eternity, we will continue to grow and continue to develop because that's exciting when you grow and develop, but we're always going to be a step behind the Father and the Son because they've existed forever. We'll never catch up. And that's a good thing because we will realize we can never be equal with them and we won't try to exalt ourselves because they always know more. They've always had more experience, and we will be perfectly content with that. "Dad knows more than I do. Mom knows more than I do."

Now are we motivated to spend an eternity with God and Christ to learn about them and become like them? If we're not, then we're in the wrong place. That leads us to the fifth and final point, which is probably the greatest in some ways.

5. We want to be there, we want to persevere, we want to endure to show God and Christ our love and our appreciation for what they have done for us already.

It's our way of showing our love and appreciation to them.

There is no greater sacrifice that can be made than to give your child for a just cause. That is greater than giving yourself. I think all of us who are parents would gladly give ourselves if our children could live. But the Father had to give His Son and watch it happen. There is no greater sacrifice than that. And guess what the cause of the sacrifice was? Us. We caused that sacrifice. We caused the agony and the pain and the suffering. And the Father had to watch that and He did so willingly and Christ, our older Brother died willingly.

Let's go to Philippians 2:5. We normally read verse 5, but I want to concentrate for a second on the verse that follows. Philippians 2:5 is a very familiar scripture.

Philippians 2:5. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: (KJV)

This is something we should all strive for. But notice verse 6, which refers to Christ.

6) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: (KJV)

That is one of the places where the King James does not hit the mark. The New Living Translation says:

6) Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. (NLT)

Why? Because He became a human. So, Christ willingly gave up His divinity to be our sacrifice for us. And only when we see God and Christ in spirit, can we begin to grasp what “shedding of divinity” means. And the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we will only appreciate that when we ourselves are spirit and Christ said, “I’m going to give this up and go and I’m going to go be a stinky, sweaty, smelly human being. And I’m going to sacrifice myself for all of mankind.” He did it for us so that we could be His children and the Father had to watch. If you can imagine what that would be like as a parent!

In closing out this fifth point, I think there’s two ways we can show our love and appreciation to God right now while we’re on this earth. Two ways we can show our love and appreciation to them for what they’ve done for us. The first, obviously, is by loving God with all our heart and loving our brother as ourselves.

Let’s go to 1 John 4 and we’ll begin in verse 8. I’ll read this out of the NIV. This is about loving God and loving our brother.

1 John 4:8. *Whoever does not love does not know God, ... (NIV)*

How true!

8b) ... because God is love. (NIV)

It’s not that God “has” love. God is love.

9) This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

10) This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

11) Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (NIV)

We can’t forget that. We are here. We show our love and appreciation for God by loving one another and loving God above all. It’s so simple, but it’s hard to do sometimes.

The second way that we show our love and appreciation to God is by having unity with God and unity with our brothers and sisters in the church. If we have unity with God, we will automatically have unity with our true brothers and sisters. I say “true brothers and sisters” because there are false brothers and sisters out there. There are brothers and sisters who are tares, who are not converted. But if we have unity with God, we will have true fellowship, true unity with our true brothers and sisters. Because why? Because we’re like-minded. If we have the mind of God, we’re going to have an attraction with other people who have the mind of God and we will be together in that sense.

Look at John 17:20. This is Christ’s last night on this earth. He was giving incredibly important instructions to His disciples, incredibly important. This was His last chance to instruct them face-to-face as a human being. In John 17:20, Christ is praying about us here today.

John 17:20. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; (KJV)*

And we are the ones who have descended down through two thousand years since these words were uttered. Christ is referring to us.

21) That they all may be one; as [You], Father, [are] in me, and I in [You], that they also may be one in us: ... (KJV)

But, it takes work—prayer, study, fasting, crushing human nature.

Now think about how close God and Christ are. It boggles the mind. Never an argument. Never a disagreement. They are just tied together. And here is the astounding reality: They want that type of closeness—the closeness that the two of them have—they want that type of closeness with you and me. That boggles the mind. As close as the two of them are, they want to have that same closeness with you and me for an eternity. What joy!

That ends this fifth point. Would this desire, this closeness be a motivation to persevere and hang in? You bet!

Now we’re going to conclude. When we come back here a year from now—let’s hope everybody is here—will some people have fallen by the wayside? Given up? Maybe in bitterness? Maybe in discouragement? Maybe in lukewarmness? Or maybe just being worn out, as we talked about in the beginning? I’m afraid so because not everybody is going to be in the Kingdom of God.

That’s a fact, but it doesn’t have to be us. It does not have to be us. Remember Christ said that all things are possible to him that believes? (Mark 9:23) All things are possible. We can overcome any obstacle, any problem, any shortcoming, any character flaw. Christ also said “With men it is impossible but not with God. With God

all things are possible.” (Mark 10:27) So, my point is: If we rely on God, all things are possible—overcoming our shortcomings, our faults, trials that come our way no matter how bad they are. If we put God first in our lives—we have to because it won’t work if we don’t. If we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, if we strive for unity with like-minded brothers and sisters and if we exercise God’s holy spirit in the coming year, guess what? We’ll be here. We’ll be back—stronger Christians, stronger in the holy spirit, have more love for one another. We will be back next year.

So let’s close where we began. Let’s go back to Daniel 7:21, talking about this little horn. Bad times are coming, but we have to focus on the end and we have to focus on the help we have.

Daniel 7:21. *I beheld, and the same horn [this horrible evil system] made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; (KJV)*

Having done so down through the centuries; many saints are in the grave because of this system. Verse 22 and now here’s the key.

22) Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. (KJV)

That’s what we look for. Now let’s go back to verse 18.

Daniel 7:18. *But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever. (KJV)*

Now this is permanence. This is eternal that we will possess the kingdom forever and ever. So, we have to remember that the saints persevere. If—and there’s always a big “IF”—if God is at the center of our lives, we will persevere if we put God at the center of our lives. If we do that, we cannot fail—if we put God at the center of our lives. So we don’t need to have knots going home.

I remember that first year I was an officer in the Air Force. I went home with a gigantic knot in my stomach because I didn’t know if I was going to be in jail or not. But we don’t have to go back home with any knots in our stomachs as we face trials because God promises to take us by the hand as His little children and get us through any trial that comes our way.

Now it will take all the fruits of God’s holy spirit to take care of the people that come up on this day. And we want to be there. I want to be there so bad when these people are resurrected. I want to help the ones that have suffered and agonized. You want to take them and comfort them and you want to show them a better way of life.

So, let’s make sure that we develop the fruits of God’s holy spirit over this coming year. And, if we do that and if we stay close to God—we don’t know what lies ahead—but if we stay close to God and if we develop His fruits, one thing I can guarantee you is we’ll

be here next year. We'll be back together again next year. So, let's keep that in mind and work very hard this coming year to stay close to God, close to Jesus Christ, to exercise the holy spirit so we can be together this beautiful place next year.