

# If In This Life Only

July 10, 2005

## **1 Cor. 15:19 (NLT)**

And if we have hope in Christ only for this life, we are the most miserable people in the world.

## **1 Cor. 15:19 (NKJV)**

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

## **1 Cor. 15:19 (NIV)**

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

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This past week, I visited **Brother Bob Joyce** over at Bayshore Hospital. For several years now, Bob has had to be cared for in a nursing home because he can't take care of himself. He has Alzheimer's disease. This past week he was in the hospital because he was suffering from pneumonia.

Bob is wonderful person. He served his country during World War II in the United States Air Force. On one of his missions, his plane was shot down in enemy territory and he suddenly became a prisoner of war. Many of you who have been here at Elim for a while know Bob and have heard his testimony. For several years Bob was an elder here at Elim.

I remember when Bob came to church and served the communion and was full of life and was a joy to be around. He had a great sense of humor. He had a mischievous little smile.

But now, Bob is all bent over; His body is twisted; his mind is functioning the way it should; it's really sad.

I think Bob would say, "You know, I'm sure glad I have a hope beyond this life, because if this life is all there is, it's been tough."

### **Job 14:1-2 (NLT)**

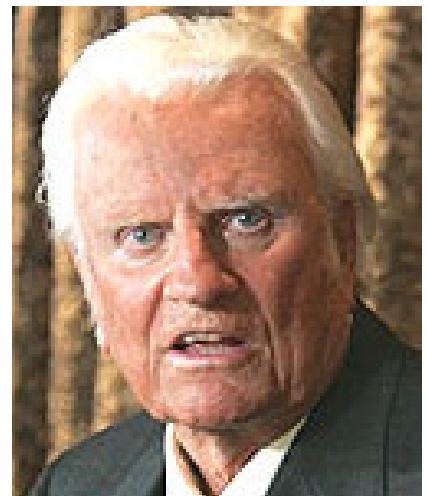
"How frail is humanity! How short is life, and how full of trouble! [2] Like a flower, we blossom for a moment and then wither. Like the shadow of a passing cloud, we quickly disappear.

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I was watching **Billy Graham** the other day on television and I couldn't help but notice how frail his body has become. He had to use a walker to help him get to the stage because a while back he fell and broke his hip and pelvis.

He looks a lot different now than he did in 1949 when he preached in a giant tent in Los Angeles, California in a revival that brought him national acclaim as an evangelist. He has held 417 crusades since that time. Millions of people have heard him preach and millions have come to Christ because of his preaching.

His message has not changed. He preaches that there is only one way to be saved and that is by receiving Jesus Christ as your Savior. He told those people in New York that flocked to hear him in what may have been his last crusade, "This may be the last day of your life. You never know."



The truth is, your life here on earth is temporary. The Bible calls your human body a tent. The body you were born with will not last forever. It is only good for a few years. If you are blessed, you may live 70, 80, 90, or even 100 years in that body. But the older you get, the more problems you are going to have.

That's why you need to take care of yourself and eat food that is good for you and exercise and do all those things because if you do it may help you to live a few years longer and have a better quality of life.

But the truth is, you can walk ten miles a day and eat nothing but health food and think only good thoughts and it will not cause the body you live in to last forever because the body you now have is temporary and it is going to grow old and die and return to dust.

### **2 Cor. 4:16-5:1 (NKJV)**

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. [17] For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, [18] while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

[5:1] For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

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The Apostle Paul said it very clearly, the outward man is perishing. He called our earthy house, this body we live in, a tent. Now a tent is better than nothing. If you happened to be outside in the cold or the rain, you would be thankful to have a tent to live in for a while. But you would realize that the tent was only a temporary dwelling place. A tent is not made to last forever.

Your body is the same as a tent. It is only temporary. It will not last forever. As your body gets older, it requires more and more upkeep.

Solomon described it this way.....

### **Eccles. 12:1-7 (NLT)**

Don't let the excitement of youth cause you to forget your Creator. Honor him in your youth before you grow old and no longer enjoy living. [2] It will be too late then to remember him, when the light of the sun and moon and stars is dim to your old eyes, and there is no silver lining left among the clouds. [3] Your limbs will tremble with age, and your strong legs will grow weak. Your teeth will be too few to do their work, and you will be blind, too.

[4] And when your teeth are gone, keep your lips tightly closed when you eat! Even the chirping of birds will wake you up. But you yourself will be deaf and tuneless, with a quavering voice. [5] You will be afraid of heights and of falling, white-haired and withered, dragging along without any sexual desire. You will be standing at death's door. And as you near your everlasting home, the mourners will walk along the streets.

[6] Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don't wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well. [7] For then the dust will return to the earth, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

That's not a very rosy picture.

If you are fortunate enough to live to an old age, chances are you will lose your teeth, become hard of hearing, your eyesight will become dim, you will become afraid of heights and there's a good chance someone else will have to take care of you.

That's why the Apostle Paul said.....

**1 Cor. 15:19 (NIV)**

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

**The future is bleak if our hope is only in this life.** The New Living Translation of the Bible puts it this way.....

**1 Cor. 15:19 (NLT)**

And if we have hope in Christ only for this life, we are **the most miserable people in the world.**

**O, but I have good news! Our hope is not only in this life. Our hope is in the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ!**

**John 3:16 (NKJV)**

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have **everlasting life.**

**Jesus came that we might have eternal life!**

## **The Greek word for eternal life is Zoe'.**

Jesus said...

### **John 10:10 (NKJV)**

....I have come that they may have life (Zoe'), and that they may have it more abundantly.

He said.....

### **John 11:25 (NKJV)**

...."I am the resurrection and the life (Zoe'). He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

He said....

### **John 14:6 (NKJV)**

...."I am the way, the truth, and the life (Zoe').....

### **John 6:48-50 (NKJV)**

I am the bread of life (Zoe'). [49] Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. [50] This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.

### **John 3:36 (NKJV)**

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life (Zoe'); and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

The good news is, when you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior you experience a new birth. It is not a new physical birth. It is a spiritual birth. You receive Zoe'. You receive eternal life!

### **John 3:1-6 (NKJV)**

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. [2] This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." [3] Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." [4] Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

[5] Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. [6] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

The flesh is flesh and it always will be flesh. It is temporary. As it gets older it starts to wear out. It is made out of dust. Eventually, it will die and go back to dust.

But within your body, if you have been born again, is something that is eternal. It is your spirit that has been reborn by the power of God's Spirit. It is eternal. It will never die!

The outward man is perishing but the inward man is being renewed day by day.

The good news for the Christian is, when the outward man dies, the inward man lives on. It goes to be with God. Your body is buried but your spirit will never be buried. Your spirit departs from your body the moment you take your last breath and goes immediately into the presence of the Lord.

Paul talked about it as a departure from this life and an entrance into the place where Christ is.

#### **Philip. 1:21-24 (NKJV)**

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. [22] But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. [23] For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire **to depart and be with Christ**, which is far better. [24] Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

Paul wrote these words to Timothy.....

#### **2 Tim. 4:6-7 (NKJV)**

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. [7] I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

When a Christian dies, the outward man is buried in the grave but the inward man departs to be with the Lord.

However, that is not the final state for those who have departed to be with the Lord. One of my most favorite passages of scripture is found in 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians. It says.....

**1 Thes. 4:13-18 (NKJV)**

But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. [14] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, **even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.** [15] For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. [16] For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. [17] Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. [18] Therefore comfort one another with these words.

The bodies of those who have died in faith are in the grave. Their spirits are alive in the presence of the Lord.

Jesus is going to return to this earth and establish His kingdom. When He does, He is going to bring with Him those who have died and are now with Him in spirit and He is going to resurrect their bodies. Actually, He is going to create brand new bodies for them that will never get sick, never get tired, never die!

**1 Cor. 15:42-44 (NKJV)**

So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. [43] It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. [44] It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

When that happens, those Christians who are alive will be changed. They will also get brand new glorified bodies.

### **1 Cor. 15:50-58 (NKJV)**

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. [51] Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. [53] For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. [54] So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

[55] "O Death, where is your sting?  
O Hades, where is your victory?"

[56] The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. [57] But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. [58] Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Praise God! That is our blessed hope! It is the assurance that even though the outward man is perishing, the inward man is eternal. And that Jesus is coming back to this earth and when He does, He is going to resurrect the bodies of those who have died in faith and give them brand new glorified bodies and He is going to instantly transform the bodies of those who are alive at His coming and give them the same kind of glorified bodies that those who are resurrected will receive.

Our hope is not in divine healing although I believe in divine healing. It is only temporary. It is just a taste of what is to come. It is just a slight touch of resurrection power.

But when Jesus returns and the trumpet sounds, every person who has received Zoe' life is going to get the full charge of resurrection power and will never ever be sick or grow old or die.

The question is, have you been born again? Do you have the life of Christ now living in you?

If not, I am going to give you the opportunity to be born again right now.

Give invitation!