

Prepare for Eternity

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[0:00] As we enter upon a new year, we can look back and see the faithfulness of God. And we look forward now in faith to what God would have for us as He leads and guides us as a church.

We've seen a lot of changes, of course, this past year gone, some pretty weird things, viruses and what not, and all the impacts that come with that. Even while things have been changing, though, some things are still the same.

God is still sovereign. Jesus is still Lord. And the Holy Spirit is still convicting. And the devil is still deceiving. The glory of God is still our hearts cry. And though the governors of this world may not consider it so, when they judge what is essential and what is not, God says the church is essential. And we look forward in faith to look to God, to see those challenges that are yet future. We see perhaps more restrictions coming our way, more controls, increased uncertainty.

Some impositions seem quite harsh. And in Sydney presently, it's mandatory to wear a mask to worship. We look ahead and it is hard to plan completely, because we don't know what we do face.

[1:23] But yet we trust God. It seems some people are afraid to even come and worship Him. It's hard to know what lies ahead for us. But one thing's for sure, the Bible shows us those things that are yet to come.

Those certain things. And we can face the future with hope and with faith. If only we would just consider beyond the veil those things that are eternal. Eternal things. The eternal realm.

And consider at the start of this year our own spiritual condition. It's good for us to determine personally with our lives to plan what we will do with our remaining time on earth.

With eternity in view. The countdown to eternity has surely well and truly begun. And it's important that we heed the message of God. By message tonight is simply be prepared. Be prepared.

Now, that sounds alike to this morning's message. It's deliberately so. Today is a good day to prepare. The end is an eye. The birth pains as it were are increasing as we see the Lord's approaching.

[2:29] And the Bible urges a man with this straight out challenge. Get your house in order. Now, get this. When we speak out of the Word of God, we're not speaking on our own authority, but with the authority of God.

And that's what we stand upon. We prepare, as it were, for eternity with God's Word as our guide.

And we understand that it's in God's plan that we would trust Him and prepare, as the Bible says, to prepare to meet thy God.

That's what it says in Amos 4, verse 12 in part. It says, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. The Word says we should prepare to meet God. And surely we will all one day.

You will have that super important meeting. And sadly, many are unprepared for that critical meeting, that final journey. It can be a terrible shame when you consider you have a meeting and you're unprepared for it. How embarrassing it can be.

It's like that when, for example, the preacher leaves their sermon notes at home and they've left it all behind. And, oops, that's happened to me sometimes. How sad it is to be ill-prepared, to be unprepared, to leave this world and to not be ready for the world beyond the grave.

[3:51] When some hear of such an invitation, some make light of it. That's what they did in Matthew 22, verse 5. But they made light of it, it says, and went their ways, one to his farm, one to his merchandise.

The king invited them to the wedding feast, but other things were more important. Some are like that about salvation. They get the king's invitation, but they disregard it. They don't care.

Some give no regard for eternity. Like the certain rich man of Luke 12. He had all his earthly affairs just perfectly set out. Everything was all set.

He could just kick back and take it easy. But he had made no plans for heaven. That's in Luke 12, verse 20. And the Lord says to him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.

Then, who shall those things be which thou hast prepared? Some people will be caught unprepared. Some people have some knowledge of God, yet they forget God.

[4:53] God is not in all their thoughts. They do not know him and they are unprepared. Even believers, God's people, they can be unwise. We all have that battle with indwelling sin. We know God's will, yet we neglect it.

We all need to go to the cross to crucify ourselves, as Galatians 5, verse 24 says, And they that are Christ have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

It's saying, in other words, make some internal changes, spiritual changes. Get those things right. Get things right with God. Yet some Christians, it says, they will be ashamed before him at his coming.

They are not fully prepared. They are saved, but they've wasted their lives on vanities and have little or no fruit. They've neglected their lives spiritually.

Sometimes we can miss the eternal perspective. We can get all consumed with the things of earth and give scarcely a thought for heavenly things.

[5:56] And as Christians, we can be neglectful. That is a great reproach, a great mistake to make. We ought to rather take those eternal things very seriously.

Many people make no preparation at all. And in sometimes what can be a dreary world, many are left searching for hope yet lost.

Never finding the answer. Never saved. If only we would consider a life in the context of eternity. We must recognize the distractions of life and discern the real from the noise.

James 4 verse 8, it says, draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double minded. Ready or not, you will meet God.

And the call goes out, draw near to God. Life is short. James 4 verse 14 says, whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.

[7:11] The Bible urges us to prepare to meet God. That is my point. I urge to you, be aware of the passing nature of this life and consider the brevity of time.

And lay hold on eternal life. 1 Timothy 6 verse 12, it says, fight the good fights of the faith. Lay hold on eternal life.

Whereunto thou art called and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. Paul says to Timothy, lay hold on eternal life. Seize it. Get a hold of it. Take hold.

Can we recognize the eternal purposes of God and those things for which he has made us? He is preparing us. Surely our Lord is returning. And we will be facing him. Will we be ready to meet him? During one of his expeditions to the Antarctic, Sir Ernest Shackleton left some of his men on Elephant Island with the intent of returning for them and taking them back to England.

[8:15] He was delayed three times, over and over and over again, prevented by the ice which encroached and stopped them from reaching the island.

But finally on the fourth try he broke through and he found a narrow channel to the island. Much to his surprise he found the crewmen were waiting for him, supplies packed and ready to board. They were soon to be on their way to England. He asked the men how they knew, how they knew to be ready for him. They told him they didn't know when he would return but they were sure that he would.

And so every morning for four months the leader rolled up his bag and packed the gear and told the crew to do the same. And saying get your things ready because the boss may come today.

We should live expectantly with that sure hope that our Lord may come. And not to live carelessly but to be ready. Our life in the now is a preparation for eternity.

[9:22] And we must be mindful that our life on earth is temporary. So as the word says, set your affection on things above. That's those things which are forever.

In 2 Corinthians 4 verse 18 it says, While we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Our Lord will come for us and he wants us to make preparations. We're about to go on a journey and there's no returning from it. It's a journey into eternity. And for this journey we can take no baggage as it says in 1 Timothy 6 verse 7.

For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out of it. So what do we make then for the meantime for this present time? A time of much confusion and uncertainty of late. But it seems like many in such a time are in panic mode. They've hit the panic button. We enter a new year not knowing what lies ahead. What on earth is going to face us?

[10:27] Are the storms ahead? In Matthew's Gospel it tells of a storm and our Lord Jesus asleep in the boat during a time of storm. We read that in Matthew 8 verse 23 through 24.

When he was entered into a ship the disciples followed him. And behold there arose a great tempest in the sea. In so much as the ship was covered with the waves but he was asleep. Our Lord was sleeping and all the disciples in the time were fearful and panicking. Their eyes were fixed on the earthly elements as the storm raged.

We ought to know the peace of the Lord Jesus. To be like him at rest among the chaos of today. With our full assurance of faith and confidence in him our Saviour.

This is not a time to panic. But to trust, to rest, to know God's comfort and his overruling peace. If you are prepared in your soul then you have no reason for concern.

[11:25] If you are not prepared, that is different. We can have a false assurance. There was a time in April 1988 there was a cameraman who was also a skydiver. He jumped from a plane and he was filming all the others accompanying him in their descent.

And as they opened their chutes. And as it came time for his time to open his chute, having filmed all of the other skydivers, he reached for his ripcord.

It was then that he realised he had forgotten to put his parachute on. Up until then he was enjoying himself. He had been absorbed in what he was doing. But tragically he was unprepared for the jump.

It did not matter how many times he had done it before or what kind of skill that he had. By forgetting the parachute, he had made a foolish mistake. Nothing could save him.

His faith was in a parachute that he had foolishly forgotten to put on. And he plunged to his death because he was unprepared. What is your faith in?

[12:29] Are you prepared? Do you know God? We all have that meeting ahead of us as Job knew that. In Job 19, 25 he testified, For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.

And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself. Are you prepared to meet God?

The answer is have faith in God. Have faith in Him. We have need of faith. The faith that saves. Assuredly so. And we can more so also know God's enabling and empowering for action.

That faith moves us to undertake God-given responsibilities. Every one of us has this appointment to keep. And Romans 14, 12 it says, So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. You have a meeting. And this meeting is inevitable. There's no getting out of it. Hebrews 9, 27 it says, And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.

[13:37] You have an appointment with death and an appointment with judgment. There's no escaping this. Where is your trust? When uncertainty comes, sometimes people panic.

Or they can be brought to despair. Not knowing where to turn. Who has the answers? Who's able to help us? When confusion surrounds us, I would urge you to appeal to a higher authority.

That's what people can do when they need help. They take it to the highest level. We can take it to the top, friends. We can take our needs to the top. To the Almighty God. And we must prepare our soul.

There's a need to reckon ourselves. Consider eternal things. You are closer to your grave now than when I first began this message. That's a solemn thought.

And are you prepared? Are you ready to meet your Maker? There was once a college boy who failed all his college work. And he sent a message to his mother. Failed everything.

[14:37] Prepare Dad. He was on his way home. And his mother texted him back. She said, Dad prepared. Prepare yourself. Friends, are you prepared? Are you prepared?

Coming judgment is around the corner. We need to prepare ourselves. Things are going to get shaken. For sure. They're getting shaken already. And what solid will remain?

Are you solid? Solid in your faith? Hebrews 12, 26 through 29 in part it says, Yet once more I shall shake the earth. But not the earth only, but also heaven.

Those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

For our God is a consuming fire. Will you be shaken? Or are you in the kingdom that cannot be moved? There are some things we must do in 2021.

[15:36] Things we must assuredly do. Always do. What the Bible tells us to do. Always pray. Always thank him. Fear God always. Be zealously affected always in a good thing.

Good thing. Seek to always keep a conscience void of offence toward God and men. Be always ready with an answer. As a witness of your faith.

Always abounding in the work of the Lord. Psalm 16 verse 8 it says, I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

It is that which is eternal that should occupy our thinking. Determine our values. Dictate our priorities. Always. What is it that occupies us?

That fills our time? That we invest our energies and resources in? One day will be the last day of our life on earth. Be prepared in your soul.

[16:33] Good intentions won't save you. Trust in the Lord and grow. It's important we connect our Christian life to our walk. Our life, our service, our church.

When people were saved they were added to the church. We want to be a vibrant Christian. That means getting hooked in to the fellowship. It matters. It's vital. I want to tell you the day is approaching.

The day with a capital D. And what are we told to do in the light of that? What are we told to do? Hebrews 10, 25 it says fellowship.

It says not forsaking the assembly of ourselves as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another. And so much the more as you see the day approaching.

Prepare to meet God. Meet with God's people. Let Him have your devotion. Surrender to His control. We have to realize that that which hinders us to stop toying with sin.

[17:32] Forsake it. See it for what it is and renounce it. I had occasion to talk with someone who was playing around with drugs. And I told her straight out flush it down the toilet.

Flush the drugs down the toilet. There's no room for compromise. Get rid of it. She wouldn't because she said they were too valuable. What really is of value?

What is it that you value the most? Is it your precious Savior? Or sin? Make a decision. We ought to have zero tolerance to that which would hurt us.

To cut off the head of the snake as it were. Not to hold it to our bosom. But to shake it off. Into the fire like Paul did. Don't go looking for it again. Leave it alone.

Cut off the supply. Cut off the head of the snake. Close the door. Are you going to enter into eternity unprepared? I urge you to prepare yourself for what lies ahead. Spiritually prepare yourself.

[18:34] You cannot accidentally go to heaven. You need to deliberately trust in Christ. And heaven is a prepared place for prepared people. Christian today.

You can rekindle that holy fire. The fear of God. Today is a good day to make a commitment. To get back to God. It's time. We must prepare. Time is short. And death beds are coming.

You will have an encounter with God. Personally. Every one of us. It's time. Time to recalibrate. Take stock. Let go. It's a great error to fail to make preparations.

We need to leave some things behind. And move forward into this new year. With a personal spiritual preparation. Titus 2 verse 11 through 14. It says, For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.

Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.

[19:41] Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity. And purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.

Be prepared.