



“What is Your Life?”

Kevin Presley

What is life? Where does it come from? What does it mean? While science searches for the answers, the word of God has already provided them. I suppose about all of us, at some point in our lives, ask the question *what is my life all about? Why am I here?* Perhaps as we near the sunset of life, we look back and think *what was it all about? Did I really make the most out of this life?* The apostle James asked a similar sobering question.

James 4:14 “...For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.”

James’ rhetorical question is a challenging one. It should provoke a great deal of reflection and introspection. Perhaps it’s a question that seems easy to answer, on paper. It’s a question that the great sages, theologians and philosophers have waxed eloquent while trying to answer, but it is certainly a very personal and very real, sobering question. *What is your life?*

A few days ago, I conducted a funeral for a man who wasn’t that old, and like many other funerals I have preached, it caused me to pause and consider that very question. Sometimes I struggle for appropriate words at a funeral because I wonder *what did that person really make of his/her life?* Here I am, trying to summarize however many years that person lived upon this earth, and how do I do that? Did the things that he/she chose to spend time on earth for, and the things that he/she invested in really matter? Do they matter NOW?

When we lose someone young, strong and vital, we suddenly come face to face with our own mortality. When we say goodbye to someone who has lived a long life, we’re prompted to step back and evaluate what life amounts to. What is its meaning and purpose? We’re going to take a look at a few answers to that question today because it will tell us some important things about ourselves.

- I. Your life is a brief and uncertain existence.

James 4:14 “...For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.”

What James is talking about is like the morning fog: it appears nestled down in the valley in the early dawn, and just as the sun begins its westward and upward climb, it's gone. Like a handful of steam that you might try to catch in your hand, or a cloud that forms in the sky and then scatters away. James says that's what your life is. He says that because he wants us to remember that life is far from a permanent thing. In fact, he begins that verse by saying “*whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow...*” Here we are, laying plans, thinking that we have a long, long time to live and many dreams to pursue and goals to accomplish. James says that when it is all said and done, no matter how long we spend on this earth, it was but a vapor.

When Job was languishing in his suffering and sorrow after death had come and taken his loved ones, life became such a mystery to him.

Job 7:6 “My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle...”

In the scriptures, we also find life compared to taking a journey, or a frail and fragile flower. Life has been referred to as a dream, likened to a tale that is told, compared to a handbreadth, suggesting it has very limited dimensions. Actually those are only a few of the many figures of speech used in the Bible and beyond to remind us of the brevity and fragile nature of life. It is a precious gift from God, but it is also a very brittle thread that can break at any moment. As we get caught up in living our lives, we forget about that.

Psalms 39:4-5 “LORD, make me to know my end, And what is the measure of my days, That I may know how frail I am. Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, And my age is as nothing before You; Certainly every man at his best state is but vapor. Selah”

Psalms 144:4 “Man is like a breath; His days are like a passing shadow.”

Proverbs 27:1 “Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.”

Just as James tells us that life is a vapor, all of these passages remind us not to place much confidence in the future and in our earthly lives. One of my favorite little poems reads as such:

“The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop
At late or early hour...”

The present only is our own,
So live, love, toil with a will,
Place no faith in “Tomorrow,”
For the Clock may then be still.”

– **Robert H. Smith**

For many years, I worked in television news. One of my duties, besides anchoring nightly newscasts, was to go out sometimes and cover ‘spot news.’ There were many times, especially late at night, when I would be sent to the scene of a tragedy; maybe a house fire; many, many car accidents; occasionally a murder. After a time, you become a little bit jaded, a little hardened to the scene of it all. You get to the point where it’s just another story and you don’t give it a whole lot of thought. But I’ll tell you a thought that I was never able to escape no matter how many times I saw the coroner come and take a victim away: *here was a person who, an hour or two ago, was just as alive as I am. Here was a person who woke up this morning and went about his daily tasks, and if he stopped to think about it, had every confidence that he would be home tonight with his family, but he didn’t come home.* Life is fragile. You see, those people that I’m thinking about weren’t all seventy-, eighty- or ninety-years old. Many of them were forty, thirty, twenty, high school students, and even children. Life is a brief and uncertain existence. It is a vapor and we need to remember that.

II. Your life is a precious gift and a sacred trust.

Acts 17:25 “...since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.”

There is an axiom in science that says that *life only comes from life*. That tells me that the idea that somehow life just accidentally or spontaneously emerged in the universe is preposterous. Life comes from other life. The apostle Paul said in the above scripture that God gives life to all. The eternal, self-existent God has given to all temporal and mortal beings life.

Genesis 2:7 “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

Not from an animal, through evolution, but He formed man from the dust.

Genesis 1:27 “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.”

In other words, man is different from all of God’s other creation. Life is precious, period. But human life in particular--because human beings are made *in the image of God*. That is, He made man a *rational being*. He made human beings not with merely a body, not with merely the breath of life, but *with an eternal soul*. We ARE a living soul.

Have you ever thought about the fact that there was a time when you were NOT? It has been said that when the Caesars conquered the ancient world, you were not; but there will never come a time when you will not BE. When the founding fathers signed the Constitution of the United States, you were not; but there will never come a time when you will not BE. We are not only *rational* beings, but we are *eternal* beings. God made man *above* the animals. In fact, He made the animals below man and gave man dominion over them. There is a difference.

Ecclesiastes 3:21 “Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?”

You see, life is precious. The atheist, Darwinian evolutionist wants you to believe that you are really just a mass of molecules. That you are a series of chemical reactions and electrical impulses and nothing more than that. Surely we can see that that is such a depressing philosophy that would mean that life has no purpose. Now I know that its proponents try to gloss over it, saying that life has whatever purpose you give it, but seriously step back and think about the idea that if we are merely an accident, if we were not created but just “happened to be,” life has no real purpose. The universe has no meaning. We certainly as human beings have no meaning for our existence. It’s merely a random accident, a happenstance. Friend, I don’t have enough faith to believe that. From this godless philosophy is born the notion that life is cheap and without any real meaning. This philosophy is what allows men and women to murder millions of babies per year inside mother’s wombs with clear consciences.

Psalms 139:13,16 “For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb...Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”

Yet today, we’re told that it’s just a fetus, just a mass of tissue with the potential for life. We worry about the many ramifications for people here who are already born. I’m going to tell you that EVERY life is precious. Every life is significant and matters in the eyes of God. Every life is recognized and loved by God. Every life is permitted of God, sustained of God and is a sacred trust from God. Don’t cheapen your life. Your life matters. Don’t cheapen anyone else’s lives because theirs do, too. God placed you on this earth for a purpose, and it is a divine purpose. You were born for His good pleasure and for His glory. In other words, you were born to serve the Lord. Did you ever stop to realize that? But our pride causes us to take away that which is for God’s use and turn around and give it to ourselves.

The Bible teaches that one day we will be judged for how we spend our precious time here. Why? because our lives are a gift from God. Our lives are given to us by God. God forms our bodies and allows us to live, therefore we are accountable for how we use that life that God graciously gave us.

Acts 17:28 “For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.”

Romans 14:10-12 “or we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”

That day is coming. When every single person is going to stand before the Lord and give an account for the life, the time, the years that God allotted us here upon this earth. Therefore, we will answer for how we spent our time, for who we served, what we loved, what we invested in, what we devoted our time to. Paul is reminding us that we are each a steward of the life that God gave us and we will give an account to Him.

But we’re told by a lot of people *oh no, your life is about YOU. Life is short and you shouldn’t let it pass you by without doing what makes you happy.* Why do they say that? Whether they realize it or not, what they are really saying and what they really think is this: *this life is all there is. There is no life after this. You’re just an accident, a series of chemical reactions. You’re only here for a little*

while, so you'd better grab it while you can because you're going to be gone and there's nothing more after that. The Bible says that God has set eternity in our hearts. Life is not all about YOU. Life is not all about ME. Life is not all about fleeting temporal pleasures.

When you boil it down to life's most simple terms, there are two duties that I have as a human being entrusted with life from God. When we hold a newborn baby, we often look at that child, close our eyes and dream of what life will be for him or her, what they will accomplish, what career will they choose, will they be famous or rich, or have some great achievement that the world will applaud...But when God breathes into a body the breath of life and sets a heart to beating, He has one major purpose. Solomon told the young man what that purpose is:

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Solomon is telling us that life is a sacred trust and we will answer for how we use it. Jesus broke that down into two very important commandments when He talked with the rich young man.

Mark 12:30-31 "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."

What the Lord is telling us is, this isn't rocket science. There are two great, foundational principles that a faithful and obedient Christ-serving life is built upon: loving God supremely--more than ourselves or anyone else--and loving other people. Love the Lord with all that you are and all that you have, obey His word, devote your life to Him, serve Him here upon the earth. And if we don't do that, we have missed the whole purpose of life. If we spend our lives living for self or living to please others, or to living to achieve the fleeting things of earth, we've missed the point. Jesus also said that the second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself. Sometimes a person's love for God is more difficult to assess. People's devotion to God can be seen in their deeds and in the lives they live, but their hearts are up to God to judge. It's often more clearly seen how the person keeps the second commandment that Jesus talks about. Our relationships with other people, which comprise a great deal of the Lord's commandments for our lives, are very telling as to how we esteem, how we value and what we think the purpose of life is.

What is your life? It is a trust from God, a sacred trust for which we are accountable to Him.

III. Your life is a short window of opportunity.

Even Jesus saw His own life that way.

John 9:4 "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

Jesus had just over thirty years to accomplish His purpose on earth. To some, thirty years may seem like a long time, but not to anyone who has lived thirty years, I can tell you that from experience--and then some. Those years fly by. They're like a dream. They are gone forever. You look up one day

and say *where did it all go? Life has passed by*. Jesus felt a great burden to use the golden hours and precious moments to do what God had sent Him to do.

Psalms 90:10 “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”

Life, at its longest, is still short. And it is precious. It’s an opportunity to bring glory to God who created us. I want you to think seriously right now. What are you doing with your life? What does your life consist of? How are you spending its fleeting moments? Let us all pause today and reflect on that important question *what is your life?*

On every tombstone, there are two dates etched. I like to walk through cemeteries. It may seem a little morbid, but I enjoy walking through graveyards, especially old graveyards, and I like to read the headstones. Perhaps you find some interest in that, too. It’s interesting to me to think about the time span and the eras in which those people lived. Those dates seem very significant to us: the day we entered the world and the day we left the world. We’re careful to note those dates and we place a lot of significance on them. We make sure those dates are not forgotten. In reality though, God is not concerned about those two dates. He’s concerned about the dash in between them. How did we spend our lives? To what did we dedicate it? What was its aim and purpose? Somebody wrote about that subject and I want to read the little poem to you. It’s called The Dash:

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend.
 He referred to the dates on his tombstone, from the beginning to the end.
 He noted that first came the date of his birth, and spoke the following date with tears.
 But he said that what mattered the most of all was the dash between those years.
 For the dash represents all the time that he spent alive on earth.
 And now, only those who loved him know what that little line is worth.
 For it matters not how much we own—the cars, the house, the cash.
 What matters is how we live and love, and how we spend our dash.
 If we could just slow down enough to consider what’s true and real,
 And try to always understand the way other people feel,
 And be less quick to anger and show appreciation more,
 And love the people in our lives like we’ve never loved before,
 If we treat one another with respect and more often wear a smile,
 Remembering that this special dash might only last awhile.
 So, when your eulogy is being read with your life’s actions to rehash,
 Would you be proud of the things they say about how you spent your dash?

-Linda Ellis

When you stand before the Lord Jesus Christ in judgment, will you be glad for how the Lord looks at how you spent your dash? I do hope you’ll spend some time reflecting on this question. What is your life? Are you spending it for the glory of God?

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