

Living for God

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Date: 25 June 2023

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I thought we'd start by looking at what is life all about? What is life all about?

What is the point of life? I thought we'd ask one of these big questions for a change. I mean, not that we don't not ask those questions in our church, but the church is a good place to ask those questions.

What is life all about? What are we doing here on planet Earth? We're going about our daily lives. What is the purpose of it all? Where do we find meaning? Now, of course, we want to ask these kinds of questions about ourselves, but it's a good place to ask it in a church setting because we can answer that better in a church setting than outside the church.

And the reason isn't because we're sitting in the pews, but because we've got God's Word, the Bible, and we can connect to the guy who wrote the Bible, to the Lord, to the person who wrote it. And it tells us so much about him. And it gives us meaning and reason to live. Now, if you had grown up in certain churches, you would have had a question asked for you, what is the chief end of man?

[1 : 1 7] Does anyone know that question? What is the chief end of man? Some of us know it. So it's to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

It's taken from one of the catechisms of the church, the Westminster Catechism. And it's a great question and answer. It's meant for children, but adults benefit from it as well.

And so we see that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever so that our purpose, our reason for being, the thing that gives us life or gives our life meaning is to be connected to God. And so that's why coming to church is a good place to ask these questions and have them answered. Last week we saw that aiming for the stuff of life, more money, nicer car, nicer house, nicer job, that doesn't really get you anywhere.

But for some reason we still think that the stuff of this world is a thing that gives us life, that promises life. We run after it. We run after things of this world thinking it's going to give us life, but actually when we run after it, it robs us of life.

[2 : 2 7] We saw that last week. But that's why Paul, in this section, includes this section to Timothy. So he pauses for a bit in talking about how the church should work and focuses attention on Timothy as a person.

And he wants to make absolutely sure that Timothy understands where real life is to be found and urges him to align his life so that he can get more of the real kind of life, not just into his life, but through him into others as well.

So although it's addressed to Timothy primarily, remember that Timothy is meant to be an example to the church as the leader of the church for the church people to follow, for others to follow.

So that although Paul is going to aim these things at Timothy himself personally, it's not just for Timothy. It's not just for church leaders, as if they're the ones that must do these things that Paul is going to say, and the rest of us don't have to do that.

Church leaders are meant to be an example of these things so that we, as a collective body, know how to act and live our lives, what to aim for, what to prioritize. And so if you're wondering where you are in life, what life is all about, we don't often stop and ask these questions because we're running after the things of life, we're trying to make life work the whole time.

[3 : 5 0] We're going to pause a bit and ask, what is the point of life? How can I get real life? And Paul starts a section by telling Timothy to live a certain way, but he ends it with this incredible doxology about God.

And I want to start there because it's this incalculable greatness of God that gives power to totally powerless creatures to live a life that God wants.

And by doing that, that's where real life is found. So have a look at verse 15 and verse 16. He says, God will display at the proper time, well, okay, actually this whole, this one section starts at verse 13.

Paul gives this incredible charge, this thing that Timothy's got to do in no uncertain terms, a very important thing that Timothy's got to do. I charge you, Timothy, in the presence of God, who gives life to all things.

So there's a source of life, of real life, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made a good confession. What is the charge? What has Timothy got to do to keep the commandment and stand in free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, I'll unpack that a bit later, which he will display at the proper time and he, God, who is the blessed and only sovereign, the only ruler, the king of kings and lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.

[5 : 31] To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. So Paul starts, well he ends the section there, but he wants us to think about how amazing God is.

The incalculable value and greatness of God. This person who lives in light that we can't reach, we can't get to.

It's pure blinding light. You know, often in the Bible, almost every time there's an epiphany of God, a description of how God, of what God looks like, very often, it's this light that just shines out.

They see a throne, they see some feet, they see a figure, but you can't see much more than that.

And then this light that shines out that you've got to cover your eyes. Light that you can't get to.

Light that draws you because you've never seen anything like this. It's this beautiful picture, this beauty streaming out from this being that these people see. We've seen it in Exodus, Moses saw it, you've got it in Ezekiel chapter 1, you've got it in Daniel chapter 9, and then in Revelation.

[6 : 44] There's a few other places as well. This ruler, this sovereign, when you walk into the presence of God, when you think about who God is, the first thing Paul wants Timothy to notice is that God is pure power, pure rule, pure authority, pure light.

the ruler of all rulers. You know, and he's the source of all these things, the source of life, he's immortal in and of himself.

Pure power, the source of power, the source of life, the source of light. You know, back in the day, we could visit Kubrick Power Station. I'm not sure they do that anymore.

It's still working. Ooh. It works. It's down for maintenance now, but you could still visit it. But you've got to stay away from the core.

You don't get to the power station. You go to an, not an outhouse, an outbuilding, not miles away, but far enough away from the core of Kubrick where the nuclear reaction is taking place.

[8 : 04] Because you, if you went there, you'd, you'd be burnt up to a crisp and you'd die. And that's it when it's working well as a, as a power station. When they dropped the nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the Second World War, that explosion burnt with the brightness of a thousand suns.

There's a, there's a book about how the Japanese experienced it and it's called The Thousand Suns. It's just this light that just overtook that whole area. God, the God of the Bible, the God who we worship, the God who calls us to serve him, is the person who makes these things.

He's a being of infinite age, of infinite life, who has never not been, who always will be, of infinite power and infinite might.

It's an incredible vision of God and it's one that we've got to recapture, or not recapture, but take hold of. Paul is going to talk about, tell Timothy to take hold of certain things and it's this vision of God that he wants Timothy and us to take hold of because he wants us to know who the source of our life is.

What is he like? So there's this God who's so amazing but there's a problem. He's so amazing that we can't get to him.

[9 : 42] Did you see in that verse, in verse 15 and verse 16, more in verse 16, he dwells in unapproachable light.

You can't actually get to him. He's made you, he's your creator, he's your God but there seems to be a gap, a distance whom no one has ever seen or can see.

We can't actually get to this being. Light speaks of God's utter purity, his holiness and his power and because of those things it's dangerous for us to be in his presence.

And that's why it's important to have God's representative bring him closer to us and that's why we need Jesus and that's why Paul talks about Jesus in this passage.

So he doesn't just charge Timothy in verse 13 in the presence of God who is this great being. Verse 13, I charge you in the presence of God who gives life to all things and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made a good confession which is to say that Christ acknowledged that he is the Christ, he is the Lord that God has sent into the world and not only that which he, God, will display at the proper time.

[11 : 16] Christ is coming back not just as the king of the Jews as he was back then but as the king of God's kingdom, the one who can bring us closer to God.

It is only Jesus who makes God approachable for us and that's why he is so, so, so important. Why does Paul talk about God like this here?

Well, it's because he knows that the only way for us to stop running after the glinty, goldy stuff of this world is to get a vision of something that is infinitely more valuable.

So there's this wonderful vision of who God is. But what's more amazing than God being like that, this God who can destroy, create and destroy entire universes, brings his life, gives life to his people.

So have a look in verse 13. I charge you in the presence of God who gives life to all things.

[12 : 40] This God that he speaks about in verse 15 and 16 is the one who gives life. Now that's not just a thing of Paul saying, oh, you know, God is the creator of life, which of course he is.

But he's talking specifically to Timothy and to Christians. This amazing being who we can't approach has actually approached us and given us life.

So that is where real life is to be found in relationship with this being. but as we've said, it's not a being that you can just approach on your own.

He is pure light, pure holiness, pure power. We're the opposite of those things. We don't have a lot of light and holiness shining out of us in and of ourselves.

And even when we do, when we do something good, compare that to the majesty and power of God, it's nothing. Every time in the Old Testament and the New Testament, when people catch this vision of God, they fall flat on their face thinking they're going to die.

[13 : 53] And it's only the mercy of God that says, no, don't worry. you're actually my child. That's a surprising thing in Deuteronomy chapter 10.

I just want to see if I've got it on the screen. Yep. To the Lord your God belongs the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the Lord sets his affection on your ancestors and loved them.

And he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations as it is today. So there's this being, the God of the highest heavens, the owner and Lord of earth and everything, the whole universe, and yet this amazing being, this God, sets his affection on his people and loves them and chose them as his descendants.

The problem in the Old Testament is that that relationship didn't work out because his people couldn't approach him.

Yes, through the sacrificial system, but that was only a temporary measure. Their hearts were never engaged. They never looked and searched for this life that God offered them.

[15 : 18] It's only available in Jesus Christ. He's the first person in history that has made this relationship, this working relationship with this being possible.

That's why Jesus in John 14 talks about being the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. Jesus is the only person in all of history that's been given that task and it's got to be given by God himself.

There's no human being that can decide I'm going to take you up and represent you to this God. You can't do that. He's not going to accept that. This person has to come from God himself, a person selected by God to make it possible to relate to him.

Jesus says, I am the way. It's only he that is the way to God. Only he is the truth about God, reveals the truth about God, and only he can give us this life that God has available to us.

[16 : 33] No one can go to the Father except through this one person, Christ. So I've got to ask, have you received this life from God?

Have you received this king as your ruler? Are you serving him? If so, how well are you serving him? Are you giving him everything you've got?

Are you giving him the little crummel kiss, the leftovers? What are you relying on to give you life? What do you trust in?

What do you think is going to help you when you face this being, and he asks you, but what have you done with your life? Most of us are waiting or hoping for something to happen in this life, to give us life, job, relationships, our next car, then I'll have what I need, then I'll have everything, then I'm really living.

But as we've seen, these things can't give you life. They're part of this world. They're not outside of this world, so they can't give you the life that God can give you. You're only really alive when you're living to serve this incredible being who made you, who's your creator.

[17 : 49] But more than that, who's your father, who loves you and is merciful towards you and then gives you this life that he's got so that you can really live.

if then God is this life-giving being that he says he is and he makes this life available to us through Christ, it makes sense that you'll want to do whatever it takes to get more of that source of life.

If we really understood who God is life, and Paul captures it in that doxology and he says I can give you life, life that will last forever.

You're going to, I would take it. I would take something that you want to hold on to. But if he says but if you do these things I'll give you more of it, I'll make it more available to you.

Yes Lord, tell me what that is so that I can hold on to those things. And Paul tells Timothy to do that in this next section. The first section is filled with imperatives. It's a construct in the Greek written in command form.

[19 : 05] It's telling him to do something and there's five of them and these are the things that we want to look at in this next section. So we're going to return first back to 11 and 12 and 13.

But as for you, O man, as for you, O man of God, here's the first imperative. It's a telling him what to do. Flee these things, the things we've been speaking about that we saw last week, running after money, running after things of the world, things that we think give us life.

Instead, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness. So flee and pursue. Fight the good fight of the faith.

That's another imperative. Take hold or grab hold of eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. And the last thing is keep the commandment and that's verse 14.

So if there's this God who can give us this life, he's offering it to us in Christ, how do we get more of it?

[20 : 16] Well, getting more of the life that God offers, real life, is about running flat out away from the dangers of sin and chasing after the things that God gives us in Jesus. Flee, pursue, fight, grab hold, and keep.

Now, when I say that we must do these things, I don't want us to be confused. I'm not saying we've got to work for our salvation. So it's not that at all. God has saved us, but he's offering us more of himself, more of this life, and these are the things that will make it real in our lives if we do these things more and more.

Run. The first thing you must do if you want more of the life of God in your life is to run from sin as from danger. And run means run, not walk.

Run to God as the only refuge of life in this world. Run from money. Flee from the love of money. We think money makes us happy.

We think money makes us alive. love. But all it does is make us greedy. It makes us want more of this, of stuff of this world.

[21 : 36] And it makes me honored and makes me comfortable and it puts me in a position of power. Loving money for the sake of money is actually about loving myself more.

It makes me the God of everything I am because everything I want is aimed at making me important. What kind of fleeing is Paul talking about? This is not running like your average Saturday morning jog.

It's running away from danger. You all know what that means if you've ever been chased by a dog or a wild animal. You don't stick around and try and talk to the animal and say, hey, don't worry about it.

Let's try and sort this out. If something is coming this way that can kill you, you're going to run as fast as you can the other way and not try and talk to it and pet it and see if it's actually going to be nice for you to have a relationship with this thing that's going to try and kill you.

You move. If something is coming in your way to get you, you move the other way as quickly as you can. I remember I was traveling on the trains one time with guys that I used to work with at U-Turn and very often we wouldn't have the train cards that we needed to be on the train.

[22 : 58] Remember third class? Of course, third class is full so you have to go somewhere else.

You're in first class with the wrong ticket. The conductor came in one morning and thought, oh, you do that search thing. Now, one thing you want to do is get away from that conductor. And so I'm just like, oh, okay, okay.

And I turned to the guy that worked with me, Jerome, from U-Turn, Jerome, boom, gone. The window is open and he's running ahead of the train, down the train tracks.

He knew this guy's going to put us in jail and he did. I had to pay 60, 80 bucks to get out of the little chookie that they put in the train on the platform. That was a long time ago.

I've learned my lesson. I run as fast as Jerome now. But now, so here's how we know if we're really running away from money, from the love of money and pursuing the stuff that God wants us to, which is really pursuing God.

[24 : 10] I'll unpack that in a minute. But here's how you know if you're actually doing that. Where are those money bags? Are they gone? Okay. If I had two bags that looked like the money bags that we just had, and in the one bag I said to you, I've got the winning lotto ticket for this week.

How much is it? I don't know, 30, 50, 60 million rand, in the one bag. And I said, in the other bag, I've got how you can be more gentle. And I throw the gentle bag down here.

If you get that little bag, you will learn to be more gentle. And I throw the lotto bag down into that hall. Which, what will happen?

I'll be speaking to an empty church. church. We're running after the wrong things when we're running after the things of this world, and we're not running after God.

God wants you to prize him above the things of this world, but we're running after baubles and trinkets, the shiny things of this world, instead of running after God. God we must chase after the things, we all chase after the things that we prize.

[25 : 36] We spend energy, we think about it, we want it. The trick is to prize to want the right thing in the way that God works. So what are the things that God wants us to run after?

So have a look at verse 11. Flee these things that are going to kill you, don't mess around, don't wait around, they're going to hurt you, stay away from them. Instead, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness.

So what is he saying here? Well, these are things that are connected to Jesus and the gospel. Yes, they're characteristics that we must have and develop, so pursue is to run after these things, which means to develop them, to grow in them, to get more of them, to chase them down and make them yours in your life.

Righteousness, to want to be told by God that you've got no faults, that your sins are forgiven, that you're 100% in right standing with him. It's to want God's stamp of approval in your life, not being worried about what others think, or to make up your own standards of behavior.

But this stamp of approval is only available through one man, Christ, who takes your sin, puts it on him, so that you can approach this God of unimaginable light without being killed.

[27 : 16] Godliness, putting God's priorities before my own. Godliness, in Timothy, in the book of Timothy, it's about caring for and being generous with the poor.

We've seen that a few weeks ago. Godliness, in general, in the New Testament, is also about how you worship God. In the book of Timothy, it's being part of God's church.

So you want to pursue Godliness. That means being consistent in church attendance and being generous with people who need it.

And then being joyful in doing both of those things. Because real life is found in these things.

Because God is there. And he's pouring his life into those things.

He's saying have that and then you'll have more of me. Pursue faith. Growing in trusting God and Jesus more. Learning more so that I can trust better.

[28 : 25] Learning more about God. Learning more about Jesus so that I can trust him better.

Relying on God for what's important. Trusting in his life-giving power that's sufficient for everything I

need in this world.

Not chasing after the things of this world thinking, then I'll have sufficient stuff. life. It's finding sufficiency. It's relying not on the stuff of this world but on the God who gives you ultimate life. Chase after love. Love for God, love for Jesus, but then love for others. In the same way that Jesus loved us.

A love that sacrifices and puts others first. Chase after steadfastness, perseverance, steadfast endurance.

Not being easily thrown by false teaching. Not being easily thrown by any temptation that comes your way. Not being easily thrown by any hardship that comes your way.

[29 : 34] It's about staying the course. And we need that because Christianity is not a short race. It's a long race. It's a marathon. And you need endurance to get through a marathon.

It'll be tough. You need to show character and grit if you're going to make it over the finish line as a Christian. So you need to, you're going to want to chase after these things because these are the things that are going to help you stay the course and receive the promised inheritance.

I don't have it on the screen but it's just a verse I want you to be aware of. Hebrews 10 verse 36.

The writer is writing a similar message to the Christians in the book of Hebrews.

And he says, you need to persevere. You need to remain, it's the same word, you need to remain steadfast so that when you have done the will of God, when you've lived a Christian life, you will receive what he has promised.

You receive it if you endure. And you endure by chasing after it. It's like training for a marathon.

There's one or two people I know that can just run a marathon.

[30 : 55] But not many. And they don't look good at the end of that marathon. The best way to run a marathon is to train, to chase after being able to do it.

So if you're chasing after these things, you're actually going to train yourself in doing it. You're going to practice doing it so you get better and better at doing it. Gentleness. Chase after gentleness might be a bit of a surprise in this list, but we need to run at being kind and gracious and forgiving, non-judgmental, being friendly and caring towards each other.

Now all these things are not coming out from ourselves as if we're the ones making it happen.

Because the way this works is there's this God who's amazing and unapproachable like, but who gives life to his people, you're really chasing after God.

And because the way you get to God is through Christ, by chasing after these things you're really chasing after Jesus as well. You're really pursuing Jesus.

That's important because Paul isn't saying you must do these things in order to be saved, but rather by chasing after these things they draw us closer to the one who shows us how these things work, what they're really like, so that we become more like him.

[32 : 32] So that's the running, you've got to run, if you want to run away from bad stuff, run towards these particular good things, and that's where life will be found, much more than in running after the things of this world.

You mustn't just run, you must fight. Fight the good fight of the faith, take hold or grab hold of the eternal life to which you were called. Fight the good fight of the faith.

Just have a look at verse 12. Fight the good fight of the faith. The, the, in that sentence is important.

It's not just your faith, fight for faith, your own personal faith, fight the good fight of the faith.

The faith is the body of established teachings that the church holds onto and proclaims about God and Jesus. We've got to be prepared to defend and argue for truth of God's word in a world that's increasingly hostile to it.

In fact, increasingly hostile to the very concept of truth and twist words so that truth is nearly impossible to find. Just think of the modern movements that are taking place in the world.

[33 : 46] So, the abortion movement. They're not just happy that we allow abortions to happen. It's, you can get arrested now for standing outside an abortion clinic and praying silently in your head.

Not saying anything, not doing anything, just praying for people silently in your head. And then they twist the truth of what happens.

So, abortion isn't murder, which of course it is because you're taking the life of a child. It's health care for the woman. It's women's health care. So, they take the truth of reality and twist it.

Think of the pride movement, for example. We've had to deal with it now with Wilworth's shopping centres promoting being an ally of the pride movement.

They take things and say, well, this is love. Love is allowing yourself to do whatever you want. love. And the truth is, you can't do whatever you want and call it love.

[34 : 58] There's things that hurt people, that damage people. If you just decide to do your own thing, it's going to cause chaos. So, the church has got to fight the good fight of the faith.

It's got to hold on to this body. How good are you at fighting? How good are you at grabbing? This is wrestling language. This is wrestling language.

The grabbing hold, it's a grabbing hold of something and not letting go. Grab hold of eternal life. Eternal life here is not simply waiting to die and go to heaven.

Eternal life here means living a life here that's empowered by the life of heaven. It's having something bigger and stronger and more lasting of value than anything this world can offer or anything I can drum up for myself.

It's this power that we've got available to us if we grab hold of it, if we know what it is, if we have it concretely in our mind.

[36 : 02] This is probably one of the most important things to grab hold of. You don't want to let this one slip. Eternal life. Take hold of the eternal life, verse 12, to which you were called.

It's like when you win a major tournament and you get the winning cup, they don't let that cup go because it's so important, it's so precious, and the guy falls asleep with it, and they try and take it away, and you're not getting it away because this thing is so important.

Friends, we've got eternal life available to us. That's real life, a life that can't be stopped, a life that can't be diminished, a life that can't be stolen.

We need to do everything we can to make sure that we get that life. make sure we have a good understanding of what God has promised us in our future.

I find that very often it's very vague in many Christians' understandings, this eternal life that we've been promised. They're not quite sure where it is, or how it's going to look, or what's going to happen. But you really want to understand it well, because the better you understand it, the more you want it.

[37 : 41] The more you want it, the more you chase after it. And the other stuff doesn't matter so much. Our problem, I find, is that we don't run, we don't chase, we don't keep, we don't grab hold of.

We're nostalgic. There's no action, we lack this grabbing hold of running and fighting thing to get these things.

My mom was a teacher, and she said how getting the kids, or teenagers in particular, to do anything was trying to get a giant squidge of chewing gum off her shoes. There was just this massive inertia to do anything.

It was just like, ah, very slow to get stuff done. So friends, we mustn't be like that. And the reason we're not going to be like that, the thing that stops you from being lethargic, from just trudging along in your Christian walk, waiting for life somewhere, somehow to happen to you, is to take these verses to heart, to capture this vision of this God, who is so amazing.

To understand that that's available to you in Christ, and to prize and to want that stuff much more than the stuff of this world. That's going to motivate and move you to want to grab more of the stuff, but you've got to see it for what it is, a prize, something exceptionally amazing, something that gives you real life.

[39 : 26] life. So if you feel like you're missing out on life, stop doing the same thing over and over, it's not going to fill you up.

If you want to live your life to the max, spend your energy on things that are going to pay off for eternity. Fill up on things that can give real, actual life, life that lasts, life that has meaning, life that means something, this life that comes from God and through Christ and that empowers us to serve him and live out our faiths that we can be assured that we will receive the things that he's promised to us.

But of course we need his help, so let's pray for that. Father God, when we realize who you are and what you've done for us in Jesus, we are so humbled and we realize we're squandering our time here on planet earth, running after the trinkets and the baubles that we think are nice and shiny and will give us life and we bypass you and your son and all these amazing things that we can be.

Lord, forgive us and fill us by your spirit and your word and your truth so that we are empowered, that we are energized to run after you, to grab hold of you, to fight for your truth and to search and pursue righteousness and godliness and faith and love and gentleness and ultimately, Lord, to trust

in Christ and to be more like him.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.