

What Is Your Life?

Sunday, July 15th, 1990

James 4:13-14

Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

The title of today's message is: "What Is Your Life?" I'm reading from the Book of James Chapter 4: verse 13. James writes, "*Go to now, you that say, today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and we'll continue there a year and we'll buy and we'll sell and we'll get gain. 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.*"

Instead of saying that we are going into the city today or tomorrow and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain, we ought to say, considering how frail your life is and how uncertain it is, "*If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or do that.*"

Here is the question, "What is your life?" Life is something that everyone has. You have life and I have life. All who are hearing me today have life. Secondly, life is something (unfortunately), that we all take for granted. I don't think there are many people listening to me that expect to die today. We take life for granted. We take this present time for granted. We expect to be around a long time. Thirdly, life is something that we are eventually going to have to give up. We are going to have to turn loose of this natural existence.

The Word of God has a lot to say on this subject, "What is your life?" If you have a pencil and paper, jot down these scriptures. I'm not going to give you time to turn to them. I would like for you to write them down and go back and study them again.

Here is the first thing that I want to mention: The Bible talks about the swiftness of life and how quickly it goes by. Job says in Job Chapter 9:25, "*My days are swifter than a post, they flee away.*" What is a post? Well, this means mail delivery. We have the postal service and postage delivery. This is what Job is talking about when he says, "*My life, my days, are swifter than the post.*"

How did they deliver mail when Job wrote this? Well, fast horses delivered mail, letters and messages. Men would ride swift horses. We had something like this in the west in the olden days. We had the Pony Express. The rider would take the mail, letters or messages, the post, and get on a fast horse and ride it to the relay station. There, the horse would be worn out and he would get off that horse. They would saddle a fresh

horse and he would ride it. This is what Job is saying when he says, “My life goes by so quickly, so swiftly, that is as fast as a horse, delivering mail.”

In Job 9:26, he says; “*My days pass away as a swift ship.*” This is not a ship in a harbor. I’ve been on a ship when I was in the Navy a long time. Sometimes, we would sit in the harbor and some times we would anchor or we would be in dry-docking. This is not a ship in the harbor. This is not a ship anchored. This is a ship under full sail. This ship is hurrying for the port and home. In those days, it was driven by the wind and had nothing to stop it. “*My days are swifter than a ship under full sail.*”

In Job 9:26, again, Job is still talking and says; “*My days, (speaking of the swiftness of life and how quickly it passes), are as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.*” Did you ever watch an eagle fly about the sky? The eagle glides smoothly, sailing about and suddenly; the eagle spots its prey. The prey may be on the ground or in a tree. The eagle eye spots the prey far away and that eagle dives to catch that animal or whatever it is. He speeds like a falling airplane. That is what Job is saying here, “*My days go by so swiftly.*” This is not like the eagle sitting on its nest or floating in the sky. “*My days are swiftly passing by.*”

In Job 7:6, Job says; “*My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle.*” Not many of you have seen people weave blankets and rugs. I have, down in Mexico. I go down there every year. We stopped this past year at a little gift shop where they made blankets and rugs out of the wool and thread. I watched a young lady sit there and work a weaver’s shuttle; it is faster than the eye as it makes that blanket or rug. It goes back and forth. That is what Job is saying here, “*My days are passing by as swiftly, (quickly) as a weaver’s shuttle.*” They are just gone, faster than the eye!

In Job 7:7, it says; “*My days are swifter than the wind.*” I know you are all familiar with how the wind can suddenly come up. You’re outside and it is calm and clear. There may be no breezes blowing. This is like what our Lord said to Nicodemus, “*You can’t tell from whence it cometh or whether it goeth.*”

The wind suddenly comes up. The wind is felt and it is heard. It stirs up the dust and everything around it. There is a lot of commotion. Then, just as suddenly as it came, it is calm again. Where did it go? Where did life go? What is my life? This I know, from the scripture; “*My days go by more swiftly than a fast horse, than a speeding ship, than a diving eagle, than a weaver’s shuttle. And, like the wind, it passes by so swiftly and so quickly.*”

The Bible talks about something else. It talks about the uncertainty of life. Life is not only swift, but it is uncertain. David said, *“Lord, make me to know how frail I am.”* David said, *“How wonderfully I am made.”* Someone else said, “It’s marvelous that a harp, (the old fashioned harp that they played with their hands) with so many strings stays in tune as long as it does.” This is a frail, frail, body. The hand of God wonderfully makes this body, but yet it is so frail. Just like in my text, James says; *“What is your life?”*

We talk today about going to town. You might say tomorrow or next month I’m going on a trip and I’m going to buy and sell. You may be going to stay there a certain length of time and will be back. What is your life? Your life is even a vapor. Talk about frail and uncertainty! *“Your life is a vapor that appeareth for a little while and vanisheth away.”*

What is a vapor? Did you ever go outside on a cold morning? You can blow your breath in the air. That is vapor. My life is that frail vapor. Did you ever watch a kettle on a stove while it is boiling water? The vapor comes out and it goes somewhere quickly and it is gone. Did you ever rise early in the morning and go outside by the lake and look over the lake and see the vapor rise? Then, in a few moments, the sun comes out and the vapor is gone. Life is like that. Life is frail and uncertain. Life is here today and gone tomorrow.

Then, Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 6:12, *“All the days of a man’s life he spends as a shadow,”* a vapor. There is nothing with less substance than a shadow. The tree has substance, the wall has substance, but a shadow has no substance. That is what God says about this natural life. This life is so frail and so uncertain. Our life is like a shadow.

Not only that, Isaiah said in Chapter 38; in this country. You can read about them in the old countries. A shepherd, taking care of his flock, would lead the flock out to hunt grass and pasture. The shepherd would find a place on the side of a mountain where there was plenty of grass and green leaves, or whatever sheep eat.

What he would do is turn his sheep loose and then he would put up a little tent to protect himself from the sun and the weather. The tent may have been like a lean-to. He may have put it beside a tree. It may have been a small tent to crawl into out of the sunshine and weather. He didn’t expect to be there long. He didn’t build a fence around it. He didn’t plant a garden. He just put his lean-to up and stayed there a little while and grazed his sheep. He would fold his tent up and would go on. That is what Isaiah said, *“My life is like in its removal and its departure. When this tent is folded up, it is like a shepherd’s tent.”* We are just briefly here.

Then, in Isaiah 40, listen to this as the uncertainty of life, *“All flesh is as grass and as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, and the flower fadeth.”* This is your life. What is my life? God tells us, *“This is your life and it is a vapor, a shadow or a tent, and a blade of grass or a flower.”*

The Bible not only talks about the swiftness of life and the uncertainty of this earthly existence, but it talks about life being a changing thing. Our life is always changing. The hymn writer put it this way:

Swift to its close
Ebbs out life's little day.
Its joys grow dim
Its glories fade away.

Change and decay
In all around me I see.
O Thou that changeth not
Abide with me.

God doesn't change. Our Lord never changes. *“He's the same yesterday, today and forever.”* Lord, abide with me because I am changing. Jacob said this about life being a changing thing. He said in Genesis 47:9, *“My days are as a pilgrimage.”*

What is a pilgrimage? A pilgrimage is a journey. When a person takes a journey, especially here, on foot, horseback, camel or a wagon, depending on how they traveled, journeys took a while. Sometimes they would go through a valley or sometimes over a mountain. Sometimes they would walk in the day and sometimes at night. Sometimes the journey would take them through hot, dry, dusty, desert. Sometimes the journey would take them by the still waters. Sometimes they would walk a rough road and sometimes a smooth road.

But, the journey was always changing. Sometimes they were in the shade, and sometimes they were in the sun. Sometimes they were in the light and sometimes in the night. Life's journey is that way and is always changing. The people, who walk with us, walk a while and then they are gone. Someone else starts walking with us and then we are gone. Someone walks along with them. Life is always changing. Our whole conditions and environment are changing. Our hair is growing gray and we're getting wrinkled. We're getting older and weaker. Everything is changing.

In Psalm 90 it says this about how our life changes, it says; *“We spend our years as a tale that is told.”* A tale is a story. A story has many chapters. My life is a story with many chapters. My childhood chapter is finished. My teenage chapter is finished. My Navy service is finished. I’ve raised my children and that one is over. My life’s work, the ministry, is almost over. I’m writing the last chapter. It is a tale that is told. Many of you are; we are writing our last chapters. The events have come and gone and they will never be relived. The chapter is closed and now we are in the last chapter of the book.

Job says this, in Job 20: verses 7 and 8; *“Man shall perish forever as his own dung.”* That is really worthless isn’t it? *“They which have seen Him shall say one day, “Where is he?”* He was here, where is he? *“He shall fly away as a dream and be forgotten as a dream.”* What is your life? Well, your life is a pilgrimage. Your life is a tale that is told and it is forgotten as a dream.

You know, dreams seem so real at the time you have them. You can be awakened or wake up in a cold sweat with a bad dream. A dream is so real at the time. It doesn’t last long does it? It is even forgotten. Even so, our lives are so real. Everything is so real as they’re lived. But, then it is asked; *“Where is he?”* What is your life? Life is as swift as a weaver’s shuttle, a streaking eagle, and a speeding ship. Life is as uncertain as a shadow or a vapor. Life is changing as a journey. Life is soon forgotten as a dream.

You know, these things being so and they are so, it seems to me that men and women would be more interested in laying hold on eternal life. Wouldn’t you think so? I’m appalled at the lack of interest in matters of the soul. I’m amazed that more people aren’t interested in pursuing or seeking eternal life. This life is so swiftly going by and is so uncertain and so changeable. It is soon to be forgotten.

The apostle Paul, twice, exhorted people; *“Lay hold on eternal life. The fashion of this world fadeth away.”* Many times the question was asked of our Lord, *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”* What must I do? Our Lord said in Matthew 25:46, listen to the finality of this matter; *“These shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into eternal life.”* Oh my! Paul said, *“If by any means, I might attain to the resurrection of the dead, if by any means, I might attain unto eternal life.”*

I took the scripture a moment ago and asked, “What is your life?” I took the scripture and tried to show you what it says about this life, “What is your life and what life is?” It wasn’t very encouraging, was it? Now let’s take the scripture and see what they have to say about eternal life. What is eternal life?

Eternal life is not swift and it is not uncertain and is not changing. Eternal life is the gift of God. That is the first thing I know about eternal life. That is the first thing that I would establish in the reply of "What is eternal life?" Eternal life comes from God; it is the life of God. Eternal life is not so much the length of it, though it is eternal, but it is spiritual life and divine life. This is the life that Adam lost when he died and when he sinned.

This eternal life is not earned and it is not merited, *"It is the gift of God."* The Bible is clear on that. Listen to Romans 6:23, *"The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* The gift of God is eternal life. In First John 5:11, it says; *"This is the record, (write it down), God hath given us eternal life; it is the gift of God."* Also, in John 10:28, the scripture says; *"My sheep hear My voice and they follow Me and I know them and I give them eternal life."* In John 17, in His priestly prayer, the message I preached last Sunday, our Lord said this; *"Thou hast given Me authority over all flesh that I should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Me. For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."* So, that I know. What is eternal life? Eternal life is the gift of God. My mother and father, of course, by God's purpose, gave me physical life. But, spiritual life and eternal life is the gift of God.

Secondly, eternal life is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Listen to that scripture again, *"The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Christ said, *"I am come that they might have life."* He also said, *"I'm the way, the truth and the life. God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son of God hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life."*

John, writing in First John 1:2, says this; *"Life was manifested."* What is manifested? The word, manifested, means revealed, or set forth. Life is manifested. *"I've seen it, he said. I've touched it and I show it to you. That eternal life which was with the Father has been manifested to us."*

Eternal life is in a person; it is not in a church. Eternal life is not in a standard, but in a person. Listen to First John 5:20, *"We know that the Son of God has come and given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."* Eternal life is not in a profession it is in a possession of a person. What is eternal life? It is the gift of God. Do you want it? Seek the Lord. Cry unto Him. Don't come to me, I don't have it. Go to Him because eternal life is in Christ, from Christ, through Christ and by Christ.

Thirdly: Christ purchased eternal life in a life of obedience and in a sacrificial death. Listen to our Lord, *“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life.”* That’s right! John 6:54 says, *“Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life.”* Hebrews 9:11 says, *“But, Christ being come, a High Priest, of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, entered into the Holy place not made with hands, but heaven itself, to obtain eternal life and redemption for us.”*

Eternal life is the gift of God. Eternal life is in a person. It is Christ, who is my life. *“When Christ, who is my life shall appear, I’m crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the Son of God.”* He purchased that by His death.

Now, watch this; *“Eternal life comes by hearing the Word of God and believing on Christ.”* Our Lord said to the disciples, after the people had walked away, He said; *“Will you go away?”* And they said, *“To whom shall we go, Thou hast the Words of eternal life?”* Listen, He says this; *“Verily I say unto you; He that heareth My Word and believeth on Him that sent Me hath eternal life.”* It comes by the preaching of the gospel and the hearing of the gospel, the receiving of the gospel and the believing of the gospel. That is what I have been reading to you. *“These Words are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing you might have eternal life through His Name.”*

Paul preached this gospel to a bunch of Gentiles and the scripture says, *“When they heard it, they were glad. They glorified God and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. I’m not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God unto eternal life and unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed.”*

All right, in closing, eternal life is to know God. *“This is eternal life that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”* Eternal life is to believe God. *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”* Eternal life is to continue to walk with God in faith. *“Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”* There’s not much to this life but that eternal life is forever and ever. Seek it in Christ!