

Proverbs 29:18 (James (Jim) Hyland) 210921

Pella Conference: 2008, Our Responsibility in the Path of Faith and Service (29:18)

YP Address—J. Hyland

Again this afternoon with hymn #30 in the appendix. Rest of the Saints in glory, the laborers bright reward how constant sounds before me forever with the Lord rest through the toil of Jesus. For Saints their death remain an endless rest and precious a rest from sin and pain. I'm going to suggest we stand up to sing this hymn #30 in the appendix and if someone will please start it. Saints and glory. The laborers bride. Reward. How constant sounds? Before me. For the war, granddad's freedom and our lives. Four Saints there does screaming. I was rather. All the rest from sin. Whatever, you want to be harder. Oh my God. We're in the air. What all the new? Creation of God and let's Rush will share. Before we turn to some New Testament portions that are on my heart this afternoon, I'd like to introduce our subject by reading a verse in the book of Proverbs, Proverbs, Chapter 29. Proverbs, chapter 29. And I'm just going to read the first part of verse 18, and I'm going to read it in Mr. Darby's translation. Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint. We're going to go in a few moments and we're going to speak of our responsibility in the path of faith and service in light of the hope that has been set before us, the hope of the Lord's coming. But I thought it might be helpful to begin with this verse where there is no vision. The people cast off restraint. I was having lunch with a brother today and he told me that he appreciated people who had vision, people who have vision in the workplace. People who have vision and practical things as well as spiritual, because this verse that we read together applies to every aspect of our lives. It applies to our personal lives. It applies to our family life. It applies to our business life, our assembly life, our spiritual life, every aspect of life. I was impressed one time to look up in Webster's dictionary the meaning of the word circumspect, because the New Testament tells us that we're to walk circumspectly, and Webster's dictionary tells us that the meaning of the word circumspect is careful to consider.

All circumstances and consequences. That is, to walk through this world with vision, realizing that what we do today has an impact on tomorrow. Everything we do today is going to have some consequence in our life down the road. It may have a consequence for a little time just in connection with time, but it also may have a consequence in connection with eternity. Any of us who do business in a Third World country know that in those countries, one reason the country doesn't prosper. Get ahead. Is because there is no vision. They only live for the moment. And brethren, if we live for the moment, young people, if we're only living for today, where there's going to be consequences down the road, not only for time, but there's going to be eternal loss, not lost as far as our salvation. If you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, that's been settled once and for all. But there's going to be loss as far as the judgment seat of Christ when things are manifest and is brought out what was for his glory and what was not. Because it tells us that when we stand there, we're going to suffer loss. There's going to be that which was not for his glory, which is going to be burned up, and we're going to be glad to see it gone. But how sad it is to think of that day when there's going to be lost, no regrets and fullness of joy in heaven, but loss as far as that which he can say. Well done, thou good and faithful servant. And so I'd like to look at this in view of the Lord's coming. Let's go to the first of all to the 14th chapter of the book of John. John chapter 14 and I want to read an expression just about the middle of verse 3. I will come again and then a part of a verse in Luke 19. Luke 19 and justice the last clause of verse 13. Occupy till I come well in John 14, where we read we know the context here. Here were the disciples gathered around the Lord Jesus in the upper room for the last time before he went to the cross, and He gives them this wonderful ministry in preparation for his departure from them. He was going to leave them in the world. He was going to go to Calvary, accomplish the work of atonement, and then return to the Father. He was going to return to heaven. But he makes full provision for them in his absence, and one of the wonderful promises and provisions that he gives them is the promise that he's going to come again. And young people I know sometimes when we're younger, it's hard to get a hold in our souls of the promise of the Lord's coming as a living reality. I realize we have plans and goals and aspirations connected with this life. And it's not wrong to have plans connected with this life. We're going to speak of that for a moment. But, you know, I've been impressed to realize that everything in the New Testament in connection with Christianity is in view of the coming of the Lord Jesus. That's the pivotal point. That's the point for which we are waiting. That's the culmination, so to speak. And my exercise this afternoon is to encourage us not only to the fact that the Lord Jesus is coming. And that he's coming very soon. But to encourage us to live in view of that day, to have a vision of the coming glory. Because you know, if you don't have an eye to the future, you're not going to give up present advantage. Why is it so often that our hearts are set on things down here? Why is it so often we place such great value on the temporal and material things of this life? Oh, it's because we don't have the future before us. Now don't misunderstand me. God has given us many mercies to enjoy in a land like this, and He's given us these things to richly enjoy. And we want to be careful that we never despise the mercies and the opportunities that God has given us in North America and the Western world. But by the same token, we want to keep in view that these things are temporal and transient at best. I guess it was driven home to my own soul in a very real way a few years ago when my father went home to be with the Lord, and we had the arduous task of cleaning out 51 years of accumulation from his home. And to put it very diplomatically, it was just stuff. But I realized the import of that verse that says.

We came into this world with nothing, and it is sure that we can take nothing out. And how thankful we were as we went through my father's stuff to realize that he had eternal riches and that he had something beyond this life that he was looking forward to, that he had a portion with Christ. And my father, I believe, especially as he got older, was living in the daily enjoyment and expectation of the Lord's coming. But young people, we don't have to realize. Wait till we're that old to realize. That the truth of the Lord's coming is a reality, that the Lord Jesus may come and that he may come today. You know, it's often been pointed out that the value that the children of Israel placed on the temporal possessions that they had was in relationship to the nearness of the year of Jubilee, because when the Jubilee came, everything had to be returned to its original owner. In other words, if a man bought a field in the 49th year. Why? He obviously didn't pay much for it because he knew in one year it had to be returned to its original owner. And if we could just realize how near our jubilee is, I say it would place the proper value on the things that we have down here. And here we find again this little company of disciples around the Lord Jesus. And their hearts were troubled. They were afraid. And I know you young people, you face real difficulties and young people. The only reason I'm talking to you is because this meeting was scheduled especially for you. But it isn't that we who are older don't need these reminders and

exhortations too. But you know, especially when we're younger, perhaps we face real decisions in our lives. Decisions that we face with real trepidation, sometimes with real fear, because we know that these decisions are going to have an import and an impact on our lives for the rest of our time down here. But isn't it wonderful that we can look beyond the decisions, beyond the circumstances? Beyond what we face when we leave this place after this weekend is over and realize that there's something far better. And so, for their comfort here, he gives them this promise. I will come again. Now, I realize it's 2000 years or so since the Lord Jesus made this promise, but we're just on the eve of the fulfillment of this promise. And one thing is sure, we've never been closer to the fulfillment of this promise than we are right now. And I suggest that it's about to be fulfilled as we see things in this world ripening for the judgment of God and the abounding of iniquity and sin not only practiced today, but preached and glorified in human rights. Glorified in this world, can we doubt that we're not just on the eve of the Lord's return? Has he ever made a promise that he can't or won't fulfill? All the promises of God in him are yea and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us. And so, just to stop and to meditate on these few words, I will come again. What consolation and comfort that gives to the soul. Because before this meeting is over, we may indeed hear the Lord Jesus give that shout. And call us home, I've often said. But I enjoyed reading about a young man who had a little motto on his bathroom mirror. It simply said, perhaps today because he wanted to be reminded every morning when he got up and looked in the mirror, that this might be the day of the Lord's return. I thought that was a good exercise, and so I will come again. But you know, we're still here, and God has set before us a path of faith and service through this world. And we often speak of our walk for God. We often speak of our service. And that's why I read the little expression in Luke 19, because here he says. Occupy till I come Now again, we're going to notice as we look at some further scriptures that everything is in view of the Lord's return and here we're to occupy in view of His return. This is in connection with the parable told by the Lord Jesus of the noble man who took his journey into a far country.

Expecting to return for his Kingdom at a future date and in his absence he gives responsibility to his servants. This is just a little bit aside, but when you have the same parable in Matthew's gospel, you have a difference in the responsibility and the same reward when he returns. Because in Matthew's gospel it's a question of God's sovereignty and every man is going to have praise of God and everyone of us are responsible. God has committed the truth to us and we're responsible with what we do with it. But here we're in Luke's gospel, it's man's responsibility. We find that there is the same responsibility and a difference of rewards because when the Lord Jesus returns and we stand to the judgment seat of Christ. He's going to reward for faithfulness in that day, and I think it ought to exercise us and encourage us to realize that there's a day when he's going to reward for any faithfulness. Anything that's been committed to our hands, he's going to reward. And we are responsible. It tells us it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful. In a moment we're going to go on and look at some scriptures that bring before us. Some of the things that we are to be occupied with in view of the Lord's return. But let me just say this before we turn to those scriptures that often in our Christian pathway, we take a step, we make a decision. Maybe it's in connection with school or some vocation that we feel exercised to follow in life or whatever it might be somewhere to live what a partner in life and so on. And as we take that step, we have to, in the fear of the Lord, say, well, we trust we had the Lord's mind in this. When we look back in retrospect, often it's confirmed to us. We say, Oh yes, I see, thank God I had the Lord's mind. Sometimes perhaps we look back and we say, well, maybe we didn't really have the Lord's mind in doing this or that. But what I want to point out is that in the scriptures we're going to look at, it's not a question of should we do this. But it's a question of are we doing it? Because we're going to find that these exhortations are direct commands, so to speak, direct exhortations as to some of the things that we need to be occupied with in view of the Lord's coming. And when we have a direct scripture, then the only happy thing is to carry it out, we're told in James where he takes up the subject of practical faith. It says be doers of the Word and not hearers. Only in John 13. And I know it refers to something very specific there, but I believe there's a broad application when it says if you know these things, happy are ye if you do them. And so, as we look at these scriptures, may they exercise each of our hearts. Are we really carrying out these things that the Lord Jesus has asked us in His word to do in view of his soon return? Let's go first of all to 1st Corinthians Chapter 11. One Corinthians Chapter 11 and verse 26. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Well, just to get the context of this verse, we find that in the chapter before he has taken up the subject of the Lord's table, in the 11th chapter He takes up the subject of the Lord's Supper. And into my own soul at least, everything that has gone before in connection with the Lord's table and the Lord's Supper is summed up in this precious verse. As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come. I like this little word often. I'm glad that the Spirit of God has inserted it in this verse. And you know, as you read through the book of the Acts in the early history of the brethren, you find that very quickly it became the exercise and joy of the early believers to meet on the first day of the week to break bread.

In Acts 20, when they came together, that was why they came together on the first day of the week. I've sometimes said that in that portion, in connection with the Saints in Troas, they didn't come together on that particular Lord's day to simply have happy fellowship one with another, although they did. They didn't come together simply to hear the ministry of the Apostle Paul, although they had that privilege on that occasion too. Paul and those who were with him were visiting there on that occasion, but know the Spirit of God is very careful to tell us. Their purpose in coming together, they came together on the first day of the week to break bread. And was that our joy this morning? As we got up this morning, was it with the joy in our souls to realize that we were going to have one more privilege of sitting down at the Lord's table to partake of the Lord's Supper? You know, we need this reminder, and we need it often. And so it says as often, not just once a month or twice a year or on a special occasion. No, the Spirit of God knew, and the Lord Jesus knew that we were going to not only need a reminder. But that we were going to need it often, again and again and again. But you know, I'm saddened when I sit during the breaking of bread and the loaf and the cup passed from one to another. And I sometimes see young people and, sad to say, some who are not so young. Past the loaf and the cup by Does it mean no more to your soul and mine? But to sit there on Lord's Day morning and hear those good Christ exalting hymns sung together, hymns that bring before us in such a precious way the person and work of the Lord Jesus. Bring before us his sufferings and his exaltation, as we read scriptures concerning the person and work of Christ, as we hear expressed in praise and worship from the brothers who stand up to give a little word in that way. Does it mean no more to our souls than to let the loaf and the cup pass by, and not remember him in the breaking of bread? And where is the heart so hardened, And who is so vile as he that sees at the Savior suffer? And Seth? It is nothing to me, and I often think of that question raised in the Book of Lamentations on Lord's Day morning. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Is it nothing to you? Is it nothing to me? And then I hear people say, well, I can remember the Lord Jesus in my heart. Well, that's wonderful, because it always ought to be in our hearts, and we ought to remember the Lord Jesus in our hearts every day. I trust, every day of our lives, there's some remembrance in our souls of what the Lord Jesus has done for us. But there's something physical that he has asked us to do, to give expression to what is in our hearts. And so it says as often as ye, I want you to notice this. Eat and as often as ye drink. I've sometimes said, I wish those words were printed in capital letters in our Bibles. Eat and drink. You know, it would do us all well to highlight or underline those two words in this verse, because he has asked us not only to remember him in our hearts, but he has asked us to

eat and to drink. Young person, did you enjoy that privilege? No privilege like it on the face of the earth. But to sit down at his table, to feast at his table, and to partake of those emblems, to at least be able to say in some measure the desire of our souls was to thy name and to the remembrance of thee. Because if it brings joy to our hearts, think of what it brings to his soul. We heard this morning in Sunday school of Mephibosheth. What would you think? If Mephibosheth had come to the palace and he had refused to eat at the King's table, would that have satisfied the heart of David? Not for one moment. David's desire was not only to bring him from Lodi bar into the palace to live there, but David's desire was to sit down in fellowship and communion with Mephibosheth. At his table every day, and the desire of the Lord Jesus is to have you there. And if you don't partake of the Lord's supper at the Lord's table, not only do you lose in your own soul, but you rob the Lord Jesus of what he desires so very much. He doesn't want to have to wait for till that coming day to have you around himself collectively with all the people of God. Wonderful that's going to be. No, He wants you now with the people of God to sit down and to remember him in the breaking of bread as often as Yeats this bread. And drink this cup you do show the Lord's death.

Till he come. Because, brethren, we're not going to need this privilege when we get home to glory. The breaking of bread in the way that the Lord Jesus instituted it in the upper room is something that's only given to us for this life. And when you look into the face of the Lord Jesus in that coming day, are you going to be able to have the joy of knowing that while you were here in this world, you remembered him in the breaking of bread? And what excuse will you give him at the judgment seat of Christ? What excuse will you give him that you didn't remember him? That you didn't eat and drink while you were here in this world, that cast him out? You'll have nothing to say. You'll have no excuse. This is perhaps just a little aside. But you know, I've often wondered why the Lord Jesus chose a loaf of bread and fruit of the vine. Now we understand, I trust, the significance of the loaf of bread and the glass of wine. That bread this morning, in its unbroken state, represented to us every member of the Lord's body, every believer alive on the face of the earth this morning, whether they knew it or not. Or whether they practically express it in the breaking of bread or not is seen in that loaf, and we need to keep that before our souls, lest we become narrow and sectarian in our view. Every believer is represented in that loaf. There is one body, but you know, when we break it, then it speaks to us of the Lord's body given in death for us. The cup, of course, speaks to us of His precious blood. You notice it's given separate the separation of the blood from the body. Was the proof of death. And so it's not all combined in one it's given separate. The Lord instituted it that way, and that's the way we often we always celebrate it. But again, why did the Lord choose a loaf and a cup? Well, you know, the Lord chose something that was universal. And though the ages have ruled on since the institution of this precious feast, you know you can go almost anywhere in the world today and with very little difficulty. And at very little cost, in some form may not always be the form that we think of it in. But in some form you can obtain a loaf of bread and fruit of the vine. To me it's just as if the Lord said, I want to make this accessible to my own in any age, so that they have the privilege of remembering until I come. And how long is it till, brethren? It's till I come. You do show the Lord's death till he come. And, brethren, he wouldn't ask us to do something that he isn't going to provide a scriptural basis on which to do it. If he's asked us to remember him, to partake of his supper at his table until he comes, he's going to maintain a place where we can do it on a scriptural ground. I find that a great comfort. But all I say, the day's coming when we won't need a loaf in a cup on the table. No, we'll sit down in his presence, have those wounds in his hands and in his feet and his side as a fresh reminder. We'll praise him for all eternity. But until then, may each of us be exercised that we would sit down at his table each week to eat and drink in the way that he has asked us to do. He has said this do in remembrance of me. Now let's go to First Timothy. Chapter 4. One Timothy, Chapter 4. And verse 13. Till I come give attendance to reading. To exhortation to doctrine. Now, I'm going to take this verse a little bit out of its context. In its context, Paul was writing to this young man, Timothy, and Paul was anticipating the time when he would see Timothy face to face and he would be able to communicate further with him the truth of God. But he says, until that time, give attendance to reading. But I think there's something very good for us to consider in light of the line of things that we're taking up this afternoon.

Because we can apply this as a direct exhortation from the Lord Jesus himself. We've spoken of the Lord's return and how everything in Christianity is in view of that. That's the focal point. And so until he comes, brethren, young people, we need to give attendance to reading. To give attendance to something is to be diligent in it, to really pay attention, not just casual. And I want to encourage our hearts the so afternoon. To more than just casual reading of the word of God, I want to encourage us and just briefly, without turning to other scriptures, go over some scriptures that would encourage us as to the importance of giving attendance to reading in every aspect of our Christian lives. We need the word of God first of all in our personal lives. Young people, did you take time today before these meetings began? To read something of the word of God in your busy schedule when you get home next week. And I know life is busy. I know life is pressured. It is for all of us. And if you think as you get older it's going to get any easier. It's not. Life is pressured. Today. Life is busy. But I want to encourage you to take time to read God's precious word. If you have no time to read God's precious word, you're busier than God ever intended an individual to be. And I know it takes discipline. I know it takes discipline to get up a little earlier in the morning or schedule some time in the evening to really get into God's Word. But, you know, we're told to search the scriptures again, that's more than just reading a few verses and not really searching God's word, not really giving attendance to reading. Do you search the scriptures? Do you get out your concordance or some other helps on some scriptural commentaries that are helps to you? And really search things out, follow out lines of truth. You know, young people, God doesn't encourage laziness in any aspect of our lives, whether it's our practical lives or whether it's our spiritual lives. And God has woven the truth in a way that we have to search it out. It is the glory of God to conceal the thing. The honor of kings is to search out the matter. It speaks of the slothful man not roasting that which he took in hunting. And so we need to give attendance to reading first of all in our personal lives. Then I want to just say a word to fathers here. Those of us who are heads of our homes. Some of us were considering this past week how that the children of Israel, when they went out to gather the manna. It wasn't everyone that went out to gather the manna, it was the heads of the homes. Every man was to gather for himself and those that were in his tent, responsibility of the head of the home. And I'm thankful again for the memory of a father. Who sat at the breakfast table every morning to read something of the word of God to his children and young people as they trickled out to the breakfast table and hurried off to school. It took real diligence and energy to do that. But there was a man who gathered for himself and for his household, and I want to encourage fathers. Maybe it isn't always in the morning that you're able to do it, but set aside a time when you bring the family together and you read a portion of God's word to them. How well you'll be repaid for that time and for that energy. Then we need to avail ourselves of ministry in the assembly. And that's really the context of this when he was told to give attendance to reading. And so it's really public reading of the word of God, because in the days of Timothy in the early, there were very few who could read or had a Bible of their own, a copy of the word of God themselves, certainly probably no one in the early assembly with a master's or a PhD. And there were perhaps only few that could read. And so when the assembly came together, Timothy, who had a gift from the Lord in ministry, he was to give attendance to that. But again, I want to encourage each of us to avail ourselves of ministry in the assembly. You know, it's wonderful to be at a conference like this, but we're going to go back to our little assemblies from which we came. Are we going to be exercised to be there on Bible study night? Are we going to be exercised even

though it might be? In ever so much weakness, maybe you say, well you know they read a portion and doesn't seem to be any gift or much exposition of the portion.

But the Lord is there. You're there. The Spirit of God is able. The word of God hasn't changed. And let's be careful. One of the great sins of Israel in the wilderness was that they despised the simple manner that God gave them. And we need to be careful that we don't despise the simple manner that God gives us in the local assembly. And God is able to feed us and meet our need in that way. And we need to meditate on the word of God too, it says. Oh, how love I thy law. It is my meditation all the day. Have you learned to meditate on God's word? It's light, an instruction for your pathway. It's food for the new man. I say we need to give attendance to reading this precious book we hold in our hands. Young People is more up to date than the daily newspaper. It fits what's happening today, just as it did with our parents and grandparents. And it'll do the same tomorrow. We need it each day. And we used to sing a little chorus when we were boys. Oh, cling to the Bible, my boy. We used to sing another little chorus in Sunday school. Feed on God's word in the morning. Feed on God's Word at noon. Feed on God's Word in the evening. To keep your heart in tune. Let's learn to value the word of God. Avail ourselves of it that we might have power and strength in our Christian pathway. You know, the young men in John's day were strong and John commended them, but they weren't strong because. They went down to the gym and worked out twice a week. Nothing wrong with that. Bodily exercise profits for a little time. But they were strong because the Word of God was abiding in them. They had taken in the word of God. It was a part of them, and it was what gave them power and strength to overcome the enemy and to walk through this world for God's glory. I can't overemphasize enough the power and the importance of God's Word in every aspect of your life and mine. Now let's turn to Revelation Chapter 2. Revelation Chapter 2. And verse 25. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And then notice verse 11 of the third chapter. Behold, I come quickly hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Well, notice again it's in view of the coming of the Lord Jesus. And here he says that in view of his coming we're to hold fast. But maybe I hear someone say when I read this verse. Well, Jim. You don't understand what it's like out there. You don't understand what it's like in school or college or university. You don't understand what it's like in the workforce and the opposition of the enemy and how dark the day is. Well, perhaps I don't. I realize that the moral and spiritual cloud that hangs over the Western world is darkening every hour, But perhaps I really don't realize how dark it is out there. But one thing I do realize is that the resources that you and I have in Christ to hold fast to the precious truth of God. Are the same as they've always been. And he wouldn't ask us to hold fast young people if he isn't going to give us the resources to do it, because they'll never be such a thing as saying the day is so dark that we can't hold fast. There'll never be an excuse for compromise or giving up some aspect of the truth in your life and mine. No, we can live soberly, righteously and godly when in this present age. Right where we are today, if the day ever gets so dark that we don't have the resources to live for God's glory. The Lord will take us out, but until He comes, we can hold fast. And holding fast to something denotes energy put forth. Because I'm not going to tell you that it's easy to live for the Lord, especially in days like this. It does take exercise. We talk about exercise, and we're told to exercise ourselves unto godliness. And exercise takes discipline. It takes energy. It takes hard work it takes. Putting forth of ourselves And is it any different in spiritual things as it is in natural things? No. But I say where no man goeth to warfare at his own charges. Everything's provided to hold fast till he come. And when it says that which he have, what is it? It's the truth of God we've been given.

Jude wrote of appalling days of apostasy and giving up of the truth. But he says, he says there, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me that I write unto you and exhort you that she earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the Saints. I want to encourage you not to give up. It seems easier sometimes to give up. It seems like the path of least resistance. But there's a joy and a blessing. Withholding fast, Barnabas went down and encouraged the early brethren that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. They'd hold fast to what they had in himself. But you say, I don't know how much longer I can hold on, How much longer can we go on? Things are getting so bad and so difficult. Well, that's why I read the Exhortation to the Saints in Philadelphia, because in Thyatira they're simply told to hold fast till he comes. But in the exhortation of the encouragement to Philadelphia, there's an extra little encouragement added. He doesn't just tell them to hold fast till he comes, he says, Behold, I come quickly, hold fast. Not wonderful. I'm going to repeat an illustration that I've sometimes used in speaking on this verse. Suppose you're up on a roof working and you're working there and you slip and as you're going over the side you grab hold of the gutter and you're holding fast and after a while you feel your fingers begin to slip and you say, I can't hold on any longer and someone on the ground says the ladder's almost here. Not only is help coming, but it's coming fast and it's almost here. What does that encouragement, why it gives you that fresh burst of energy just to re grip that bar for a few moments because you know it can't be long. Young people, brethren, that's what he's telling us. I'm not just coming, but I'm coming quickly. Just hold fast a little bit longer. I know there's opposition, he says. Is that where I see the breakdown of everything? But you know, I think of Timothy again, because in the second epistle of Timothy, Timothy saw the breakdown and the ruin of everything. But he's told, Continue thou, Timothy, go on, continue in the things that thou hast learned and been assured of. He says, Timothy, You can go on even in difficult times, and we can, brethren, we can. So he says, Behold, I come quickly, hold that fast, which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Now nobody, even the devil himself, can take our salvation from us, but another man can take our crown. Maybe I'll repeat an illustration again that I've often used, but let's picture 20 runners going out to run a race, and they run the race, and one of those runners comes in ahead of all the other runners, maybe a whole lot ahead of the runners. And he's brought to the winner's circle and the wreath is being placed upon him. He's being given the medal, and all of a sudden there's a replay. And the replay shows that this athlete broke one of the rules. Now what happens? Well, the runner who came in second but kept the rules is brought to the winner's circle. And the crown is taken off the 1st and another man takes his crown. Another man gets the reward. And, brethren, it's true that every man will have praise of God at the judgment seat of Christ. But as I said earlier, there will be loss. And if I'm not faithful in what God has committed to me, God's going to have someone else to step in and take my place. Just as that second athlete stepped in and took that first man's place, so God will have those, I believe who are faithful and seek by the grace of God to hold fast to his truth until he comes. Oh, it's only by grace. But may you and I seek grace to hold fast, not only in light of the fact that he's coming, but that he has also promised. Behold, I come quickly now let's go to John's Gospel, chapter 21. John's Gospel chapter 21 and verse 22. Jesus saith unto him, If I will, that he tarry, till I come. What is that to thee? Follow thou Me. Well, just to get the context. Here we find that Peter, who had denied the Lord three times with oaths and curses, he's been restored to the Lord. He's been restored in his own soul. He's been restored publicly in front of his brethren. And now the Lord Jesus is speaking to Peter and telling Peter something of the pathway.

That Peter was going to have in following the Lord. And as is so characteristic of Peter, Peter sees John standing by. And as the Lord is telling him these things, he points to John. And he says, But, Lord, what will this man do? In other words, he said, Lord, what about John? What kind of path do you have for John? And the Lord gave him this answer, if I will, that he tarry till I come. What is that to thee? Follow thou me. Let me illustrate it this way. When we were children at home, particularly my sister, who's next to me and myself, we would often be given a task

to do. It might involve, after the evening meal, cleaning off the table and doing up the dishes. And Mother would leave us to that task. And after she had given us what she felt was ample time to complete that task, she would come into the room and she'd find that we had not done what she asked us to do. And she would say to me, Jim, you're not doing what I asked you to do. And I would always point to my sister and say, but Jennifer's not doing her part. And Mother would always say, you do what I asked you to do and I'll take care of your sister. Now in a sense, that was what the Lord was telling Peter, Peter, I have a path for John, and I'll take care of John. But you're responsible to follow in the path that I'm laying before you. Because I think sometimes even in our path of faith, we may justify some compromise in our lives by saying, well, you know. It's just accepted now amongst the Lord's people and everybody's doing it. No God has set before us a path of faith and service, and I know there's a collective side of things and we're to bear one another's burden and have a exercise one for another. If I see a brother or sister is not going on in the path of faith in a way that I feel is a detriment to them. I've got a responsibility, and you do too, to go and with love, speak to that brother or sister, seek to warn them of the course that they're on. But in the final analysis, who are we going to answer for? Am I going to have to answer for you? No, I'm going to have to answer for myself. Was Peter going to have to answer for John? No, Peter was going to have to answer for Peter, if I will, that he tarry till I come. What is that to thee? And notice how individual it becomes. Follow thou me. Is that difficult? You know, the Lord Jesus has not just set the truth before us, but he says follow me. He puts his own sheep forth and he goes before. And the sheep follow him. You know, it's a lot easier to follow someone than just have them give you directions, isn't it? We like to be able to follow someone. If I'm in a strange city or area, I like to have someone to follow rather than them. Just give me directions I remember one time. My wife and girls were with me and we got into a city I wasn't familiar with and we were trying to find a certain home. And we drove around and around and around. And finally I swallowed my pride and I stopped and I asked directions and a lady came out of the gas station and she said not exactly, but something like this. She said, well, you go down and you turn right at the first corner and then you'll come to AY and take the left fork of the Y and go about half a mile and then it'll curve around. And when you curve around you watch. And by that time she knew by the look on my face. That I wasn't taking all that in. She said that's OK, I'm going that way, Just follow me. And it was a lot easier to follow her. And so the Lord Jesus, he puts us forth in the path of faith and then he simply says follow me. But it's intensely individual. Are you and I willing to leave these meetings to follow the Lord Jesus with a fresh exercise? Maybe there's someone here and you say, well, I haven't followed the Lord Jesus the way I ought to have. I haven't been as faithful. In my Christian pathway. But you have the rest of your time. If the Lord Jesus leaves us here, a few more moments, a few more days, perhaps you can follow him in the path of faith and service, in view of the fact that we're just going to take that last step and be safe home. Now let's go to 1st Corinthians chapter 4. First Corinthians chapter 4. And verse five, Therefore judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. And then shall every man have praise of God. Well here, in view of the Lord's return, we're told to judge nothing before the time. Now before I bring out what is particularly on my heart in reading this portion, I want to set it again in its proper context.

Because if we were to go on to the next chapter, the 5th chapter, we would find that there was something that needed to be judged at Corinth. There was an action, there was a sin, it was a very serious sin, and it needed to be judged for the Lord's glory and for the clearing of sin from the assembly and the eventual restoration of the individual involved. And sometimes we do have to take up and judge matters in that regard. But it's interesting that before he tells them of this action, that needs to be judged in the 4th chapter, its motives. In the 5th chapter it's actions. In the 4th chapter it's motives. It's the hidden things of darkness and the counsels of the heart. In other words, brethren, while we need to judge actions for the Lord's glory, we can't judge motives. We've often heard it said we can't judge the motive of the heart. The Lord does, but we can't. And so here he says judge nothing before the time until the Lord comes. Because there are some things are never going to be straightened out this side of glory. Perhaps someone here, and you say, well you know that person did something against me, that person said something and the Lord never came in to straighten it out. Well, you know, it may never be straightened out this side of the judgment seat of Christ, but it will when we get home. I know it takes faith to count on that. You know, Paul loved these Corinthian brethren. He sought to minister to them and it said he had to say the more he loved them, the less he was loved. But he said that's okay. He said we labor that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. He was looking not for man's approval, but he was looking for the Lord's approval. Whose approval do we really want? I know when we're younger particularly, we want to fit in. We want to be part of the crowd. We want the approval of our peers and of our friends. But what we really need to seek first and foremost is the Lord, the Lord's approval, and to just leave things, Paul said. I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I've committed unto him against that day, he said. I just leave those things with the Lord. Lord Jesus himself, who suffered so much in the path of faith, how could he do such a thing? He committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. He just left those things Mary when she poured out her ointment at the feet of the Lord. You know, not only did Judas speak up against her, but one of the gospels tells us that all the disciples spoke against her. But God had the record down properly and the Lord Jesus placed a proper value on what was done. You know, John the Baptist, his ministry wasn't for the most part appreciated, but the Lord Jesus said of those born among women. There hath not risen of greater than John the Baptist. And so can we just leave those things. I say there's many tangles in our lives that are never going to be straightened out. Things we don't understand in the circumstances of life and what the Lord allows others to say to us. Maybe even in the assembly. You say, Jim, there's so many problems in our local assembly and we just hate to go back to it next week. But the Lord knows he's able to tangles of life to undo. And you know, I say we're not always going to see it straightened out this side of heaven. We need to leave certain things with the Lord. You know, Solomon looked at things just from a natural standpoint, and he said that which is crooked cannot be made straight, and the rough places cannot be made plain. Isn't that the way we feel about things sometimes? But you know, there's a glorious answer to that in Isaiah 40, where there the prophet looks on to a future day of glory. He says the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough place is plain, and all flesh shall see it together. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Can't you and I count on that day? When all things are going to be made plain, and when we see it all from his perspective, we're going to praise him for all his ways there. When the children of Israel's history in the wilderness is rehearsed in the Psalms, it says he led them by the right way. You know, that's not what they said in the wilderness. They said to Moses, why did you bring us this way and that way to kill us with hunger and we're thirsty and so on. But when it's all viewed in retrospect, he led them by the right way. We don't always see it now, but we're going to look back and we're going to say he led us by the right way.

We're just going to praise him for all his ways with us. Oh, I want to encourage you. Is somebody offended you? Some circumstance arise in your personal life, maybe in the family or even in the assembly. You say the Lord just doesn't seem to come in and straighten it out. Oh, just leave it. There's a day coming when it will be straightened out, not as to our sense of how it should be done, but to his sense of how it should be done in that day. Well, we won't take time to turn to it, but I would just say in closing that on the last page of God's word. He gives three last confirmations that he's coming. I think that's so precious. He doesn't close the book without saying behold or surely. I come quickly and

the last recorded words of the Lord Jesus in the word of God are surely. I come quickly. And the last recorded words of the Saints of God in Scripture are Amen even. So come Lord Jesus, Is that the response of your heart and mind this afternoon? Do we look up and say Amen even? So come Lord Jesus. And the last provision of the book is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. If I can just summarize it this way, the last promise of the word of God is surely I come quickly, The last prayer of Scripture is Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus. And the last provision of Scripture is the grace of our Lord Jesus. Christ be with you all. Amen. Well, may our hearts be encouraged to live in view of eternity, in view of the coming of the Lord Jesus. That we might be occupied with those things that he would have us to be occupied with. And young people, those of us who are older. Won't it be wonderful in that day to look into his face, and to have a sense of his commendation and approval, and to hear him say, Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou in to the joy of thy Lord, let's pray.

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