

Day One

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul quotes a familiar Greek phrase: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." The focus of that phrase is on this time and space – on the present – with no thought of future consequences. It is indicative of a philosophy that believes there is nothing beyond this world.

That same philosophy has had a great impact on our world today – particularly in the way society views life. If there is no life after death, then this is your one shot. Make the most of it. For many that means eat, drink and be merry. Don't miss the party.

Consequently, when one is no longer able to party – when the quality of one's life erodes to the point where physically and mentally they are no longer able to live life to the fullest. If the quality of life is defined by what I am able to do in the present and is lost when I am no longer able to do those things, then living becomes an exercise in hopelessness. Paul says that if Jesus has not risen from the grave, then that's where we are. The only future we have is to despair.

But the good news is that Jesus has indeed risen from the dead. The tomb is empty. That's an historical fact. That the tomb is empty because Jesus rose from the dead is a matter of faith. We live by faith in Jesus Christ and His work done for us and given to us. We live by faith trusting that Jesus, who is the YES to every promise of God, will complete in us all that He has promised.

And so, when we encounter bumps on the highway and detours in our lives, we look to Jesus. We look to a future that is certain and secure. Jesus has prepared a place for us so that we can be where He is. That is our future. That is our hope. And it is as good as done.

Day Two

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"Seek the Lord while He may be found; call on Him while He is near (Isaiah 55:6)." Those are good words, but they raise some questions. Does God can or want to be found? How do I know God is near? Those are questions that man has struggled with for a long time.

It has been a struggle not because they are hard to answer or because there are so many options. It's hard because man, by his nature, has a great difficulty accepting the obvious. The obvious answer is that God is near because He wants to be found. He is near because He says so.

The Son of God came into this world for the sole purpose of being near His creation. He came to make Himself known – He came to be found (actually, He came to do the finding). He came to rescue His creation from the chains of sin and death and set us free to be people of God.

So He calls us to turn to Him because He will have mercy and freely pardon us. He comes to lift the sentence from us by taking it upon Himself. He suffered the penalty that we deserve so that we could be forgiven and set free from the prison of sin.

Day Three

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Here in Isaiah 55:1-5, God speaks an important word to us. He tells us to "Listen, carefully to Me." He calls us to listen to His voice – to listen to His Word. He tells us that because there are many voices that call to us – many voices that would turn us away from God.

That's why God says: "Why do you spend money for what is not bread and your wages for what does not satisfy?" Don't listen to those other voices no matter what they may promise. Don't listen because they are false and they can't satisfy. You will still be thirsty.

He tells us to listen to Him because of His love for us – because He wants to make an everlasting covenant with us. He wants us to be part of His family – joined together with Him in a relationship that will endure forever. In that union, in that covenant, our thirst for righteousness will be satisfied.

Day Four

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Here in 1 Peter, we are told to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand so that He may lift us up in due time. What that might mean from a practical point of view is every circumstance is hard to nail down. We don't want to be like the man during a flood who refused every offer of help because God would deliver him. When he finally drowned and went to heaven, he asked God why He didn't deliver him from the flood. God's reply was that he sent a man in a row boat and rescuers in a helicopter.

A lack of humility got in the way there. His pride got in the way and prevented him from seeing God's hand at work in the ordinary. At the same time, we don't want to be one who exhausts every option and strength before we call on God. We don't want to be like the disciples who labored through the night to keep the boat from sinking during a storm. They finally went to Jesus and asked, "Don't care that we are drowning?"

Jesus got up and calmed the storm. He marveled at their little faith. They should not have been concerned when the Lord of life was with them in the boat. And maybe that's what we need to cling to at times of trial. We trust that the Lord of life is with us in the midst of the storms and floods. We trust that He will care for our every need.

Day Five

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"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another (Proverbs 27:17). I was watching the movie "As Good as it Gets." At one point in that movie, the Jack Nicholson character complements the Helen character by saying, "You make me want to be a better man."

That is what iron sharpens iron means here. We live in a community – in relationship with others – so that we can become better. We rub shoulders with one another so that our rough edges are made smooth. That is especially true in family relationships. Husband and wife – parents and children – brothers and sisters – those are all relationships where we are sharpened – where our rough edges are made smooth.

And most often that involves some pain. The degree of pain may vary considerably, but there will always be pain. And for that reason, many will walk away from relationships. They don't want to be sharpened. They don't want to change or deal with the pain of growth.

Where God and His relationship with us is concerned, you can run but you can't hide. God's purpose for calling us into a relationship with Himself is so that He can conform us to the image of His Son. He loves us just as we are, but He loves us too much to leave us there. So He will continue to sharpen us until He completes in our flesh all that is ours now by faith in Jesus Christ.