

# Today!

Russell Kemp—February 24, 2024

You know, tomorrow many of us have a lot of plans. I don't know, you may plan on taking your family somewhere, some activity. Maybe you plan on working on your property, like I do a lot on the day after the Sabbath. So, we have a lot of plans for those things.

But today is a little bit different, because what we plan for tomorrow is tomorrow. But today is today. I mean, we're all here at a Sabbath meeting.

Because of the recent deaths of several people that I know have given me cause to consider this message. We have three phases to our life:

## 1. yesterday, or the past

It's all those events that have taken place in our life to this point.

## 2. today, or current events, things taking place right now

All those things that are happening as I speak right now.

## 3. tomorrow, or the future

That's all those things that could happen to us throughout the rest of our life in the future.

When we consider yesterday, or our past, we may have many very pleasant thoughts. Perhaps some regrets, I know that I do. Or things that we did or just did not do. I have many of those, many of those sorts of things that I should have done that I didn't get done. However, the past is just that. ***It's the past! It's gone!***

There's nothing we can ever do about the past, regardless of what you think. There's nothing you can do to change the events that have already taken place in your life.

When we look at tomorrow, and the events that we will plan on doing tomorrow, we may look forward to a lot of those things that we're going to do with our family, with our friends, whatever.

However, do you have any guarantee, any guarantee, that you will be there for that event tomorrow, whatever it was that you had planned, will you be there for that event? Today, and what is happening right here and now, is the only thing that guarantees our participation.

As I speak, as you listen, these are things that are taking place right now, and we have control over those things.

Several years ago, when I was driving, I heard the story about that tremendous earthquake in

Nepal. When I heard that, I thought about a discussion that I had with my brother concerning his trip to Katmandu. I mentioned that my brother was a very senior executive in the CIA. He did a lot of traveling, and one of the places he did travel was Katmandu.

Anyway, when I thought about that, then I thought about this earthquake in Nepal. That one event, in just a short period of time, 6,500 people were dead, *gone!*

We recently, in one of the other Churches of God, a man driving with his daughter died, both of them died in an automobile accident, leaving a wife and three children. ***They had no tomorrow!***

Now, don't misunderstand me; I realize these people will be resurrected at a later date. But right now here, I am referring to the physical time that we have here on Earth.

They had ***today***, but they did not have a ***tomorrow***. Then we could go through, and I thought about all:

- the multiple bombings that we've had
- the multiple shootings in our cities that we've had in our schools
- train wrecks
- airplane disasters

There's a multitude of many other things that stop our life short of tomorrow!

That's when I got to thinking what I would do today, ***if I had no tomorrow!*** What would you do today ***if you had no tomorrow?***

We're fortunate because we know God's Plan. We read the last chapter of the book. We know God's Plan, and we do have a very sincere hope for our future. But are we convinced that we have done all that we could possibly do, and should have done, if there is no tomorrow?

I truly believe that we live in a rat race. I've been in this rat race for a long time, and I'm telling you, it's getting worse and scarier. So many things that keep us from doing all the things that we should be doing; it's a rat race.

I once saw a graduation card from school that read, 'Welcome to the rat race!' How true that describes the life that we live today. It's like a regular rat race. How busy are we just trying to maintain what we refer to as 'our standard living'?

I remember many a times wishing I could stop the world and get off. For a long period of time,

I overindulged in work. I worked two full-time jobs for a while, every day. Sometimes I thought it would be nice to get off this world and take a breather. Have any of you ever felt that way?

I believe I've read the book of Ecclesiastes probably more time than any of the other books in the Bible. Don't know why; it's probably because I spent much of my life, like Solomon, searching for answers to life as a natural man. Let me refer for you to:

Ecclesiastes 1:3: "What profit does a man have in all his labor, which he labors under the sun?"

Notice his whole search was for physical things of labor under the sun, *physical things of labor!* Solomon was so wrapped up in the nature of life and he tries to understand why things happen as they do. But notice that what he finds in frustration:

Verse 14: "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all *is* vanity and striving after wind. What *is* crooked cannot be made straight; and *what is* lacking cannot be numbered" (vs 14-15).

Understand that Solomon intensifies his search, and tries using pleasure and things that make him feel good. He tries mirth and what he thought to be the fun things in life, that he went after. But instead, what does he find?

- he finds misery
- he tries comedy
- he finds chaos
- he tries wine

*but finds it wanting and lacking the satisfaction that he really desires!* He tries many diversions, many different diversions, but finds them disappointing. Then he tries to find meaning in the great projects that he got involved in:

- he tries architecture
- he tries agriculture

Ecclesiastes 2:4: "I made great works for myself... [notice here he's trying to please himself] ...I built houses for myself; I planted vineyards for myself. I made gardens and orchards for myself, and I planted trees in them, of all fruit. I made pools of water for myself, to irrigate groves of growing trees" (vs 4-6).

- he tried mansions
- he tried music

Verse 8: "I also gathered silver and gold to myself, and the treasure of kings and of the provinces. I got men singers and women singers for myself, even the sensual delights of the sons of men, and many women."

- he then tries power and position

Verse 9: "So, I was great and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom remained with me... [talk about vanity] ...And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure; for my heart rejoiced in all my labor, and this was my portion of all my labor" (vs 9-10).

Notice the outcome of all this searching; after all these physical pleasures that he was searching after:

Verse 11: "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done, and on the labor that I had labored to do... [What was the final result?] ...and on the labor that I had labored to do; and, behold, all *is* vanity and a striving after the wind; **and there is no profit under the sun.**"

- What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world?
  - What shall it profit a man?
  - How do you know when you're in the rat race?
1. ***if you're exhausting yourself*** to gain material possessions, if that your sole purpose
  2. ***if you work night and day*** to keep up with others
  3. ***if your life centers around yourself*** instead of others like we just read

*Solomon focused his life on the physical pleasures of life!*

He took none of what he labored for to his death. He took none with him when he died.

If you knew you had no tomorrow, would you use today to pursue the physical pleasures of life? You know there are important things that we need to do today in the event that there is no tomorrow.

I am a father of several children, and I not only love them, I also want their love in return. We have a heavenly Father, and He not only loves us, He also wants our love.

I'm kind of hurt sometimes when I don't hear from my children for long periods of time, and God has the same reaction to us. Notice that all the commandments ***hinge on just two!*** We're familiar with those!

Mark 12:28: "And one of the scribes who had come up *to Him*, after hearing them reasoning together *and* perceiving that He answered them well, asked Him, 'Which is *the* first commandment of all?' Then Jesus answered him, '*The* first of all the commandments *is*, "Hear, O Israel. Our one God is *the* Lord, *the* Lord'"'"' (vs 28-29)—*reflecting on*

*Deut. 6:4!*

Verse 30: “And you shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This *is the* first commandment.”

If there were no tomorrow:

- Would you not want to let God know that you love Him and that you appreciate Him?
- Would you not want to thank Him for all that He’s done for you and let Him know how grateful you are for all the food and the clothing and the housing and the other things He provides to you, your family, and our nation?

***If there were no tomorrow, it would be too late!***

- Have you ever gotten so busy that you’re halfway through the day and you realize, ‘I haven’t taken time to pray today.’

Verse 31—*Jesus continues*: “And *the* second *is* like this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

***If there is no tomorrow:***

- Would you not want to let your parents know how much you appreciate and love them?
- How about your wife or your husband?
- How about letting your children know that you love them?

***If you still harbored any bitterness toward others:***

- Would you not want to resolve these issues and leave with a clear conscience?

*Jesus taught that we are to love even our enemies*; Luke 6:35: “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and you shall be *the* children of the Highest; for He is good to the unthankful and *the* wicked.”

Brethren, we do indeed live in a busy world with plenty of things to grab and keep our attention. There is no doubt about that. I know personally that I have the propensity to procrastinate and put off things for another day. I don’t know if any of you deal with that, but I do sometimes. *But we never know when there will not be another day!*

Showing our love to God and our fellow man is something that cannot wait until there is no tomorrow. *We can’t put off!* Our trip to the grave is something that is going to happen. We don’t know the day, the hour, the minute, but it is going to happen.

However, sometimes I think man has swallowed the lie of Satan the devil. Remember, in the Garden of Eden, he told Eve that ‘you shall not surely die!’ Well, *we are all going to die!*

It surely appears that millions of people live as if that lie were the truth. Too many of us store up riches as if we are never going to leave them. You know, I live in a fairly decent home, but it’s just brick and mortar. One of these days, just like all the buildings of history, they will eventually die, collapse.

Maybe we just need a little better house. Maybe we just need a little better car to drive and a boat, a really nice boat would be nice, wouldn’t it? And how about a nice fat bank account? Can’t say I have one that fat, I’ll be honest with you, but what about that?

But we do know that Satan did lie, and we’re told in:

Hebrews 9:27: “And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this, *the* judgment.”

The grave awaits the rich and the poor, both alike. Solomon didn’t take anything with him, with all that he had gained in life. How often are we stopped for a funeral in a procession? *We each have an appointment with death!* We all reach a day when there will be no tomorrow. And of course, physically speaking is what I’m speaking of. Are you prepared for that day?

I wonder how many of those 6,500 people in Nepal were prepared and ready for that death. I think about the husband that I mentioned and his daughter that died in that automobile accident. They didn’t plan for it. They didn’t, they thought they had a tomorrow.

Do you suppose the rich and highly educated of the world are better prepared? *I don’t care how many degrees you have behind your name from whatever university or how much wealth you’ve accumulated in a lifetime!*

Psa. 49 paints a pretty clear picture of the path for mankind:

Psalm 49:6: “Those who trust in their wealth and in their many riches boast themselves. No man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is costly, and no payment is ever enough. That he should live forever and never see corruption” (vs 6-9).

So much for the accumulation of wealth; continuing on for the educated:

Verse 10: “For he sees wise men die;

likewise the fool and the brutish person perish together, and leave their wealth to others.”

Wealth and things of comfort by themselves are not evil, but they won't prepare you for anything beyond this physical life.

Verse 11: “Their inward thought is that their houses shall go on forever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.” *This does not prepare them for meeting their Maker!*

Verse 12: “Nevertheless, man, though high in honor, does not remain; he is like the beasts that perish. This is the way of the foolish, and of their followers who delight in their sayings. Selah. Like sheep they are appointed to the grave; death shall be their shepherd and the upright shall have the rule over them in the morning; and their form shall decay in the grave *far from their home*” (vs 12-14).

Brethren, we cannot place our trust in the physical things of the world. The smartest people in the world haven't found a solution for death. We're all taught about healthy living, and it can certainly enhance our physical being. There's no doubt about it. We should eat healthy. We should remain healthy. ***But it won't prepare us for eternal life!***

Medical science comes up short in its efforts to find the pill that will give us eternal life. Miracle drugs help. There are certain drugs out there that are probably good, *but only for a season!* Science had conquered many fatal diseases. We've had in the past things that have taken some of them away. But life still ultimately ends in spite of all our efforts.

We still have an appointed time. We all have an appointed time. In spite of all this, brethren, we do have hope. ***The only preparation we can make for the grave is through our faith in Christ!*** That's the only hope.

Notice that even Job knew his Redeemer would provide victory over the grave.

Job 19:25: “For I know *that* my Redeemer lives, and *that* He shall stand upon the earth in the latter days.”

Brethren, there is indeed hope, but it's not in the physical things of life. I think we've often been told to live every day as if it were your last day, but plan for the future as if you are going to live forever.

We have the story of King Hezekiah when he was sick, and he was told he was going to die.

2-Kings 20:1: “In those days Hezekiah was sick to death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.”’” *Get ready, you're not going to live!*

He was given no hope to live and to set his house in order. Death is inevitable for all, and as we were told in Hebrews 9:27<sup>[transcriber's correction]</sup>: “...it is appointed unto men once to die...” *Simply a plain fact of life!*

- Adam, who was never born, *but he did die!*
- Methuselah lived 969 years, *but he died!*
- Samson was one of the strongest men who ever lived, *but he died!*
- Solomon was wiser than all, *but he died!*

We know that death is the result of sin, and we've all sinned, and we all fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 5:12: “Therefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and by means of sin *came* death; and in this way death passed into all mankind; *and it is* for this reason that all have sinned.”

We also know that Jesus came to die and to pay the penalty for the sins of the world. Even though He was sinless, He paid the ultimate penalty and died as a substitute for all sinners, us.

Now we read this frequently at Passover, but as a means of encouragement, let's read Isa. 53 just as a reminder.

Isaiah 53:5: “But He *was* wounded for our transgressions; *He was* crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace *was* upon Him; and with His stripes we ourselves are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray... [what a true statement] ...we have turned each one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (vs 5-6).

*All must physically die, but we have hope in eternal life through the death of Christ, He paid for our sins!*

2-Kings 20:1: “...Thus says the LORD, ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.’”

Like Hezekiah, *we ought to be prepared for death, and we should set our house in order.*

Preparation of family members should be done, and especially if we have young children. Loved ones should never be left with debt. My wife and I have a trust that we've set up, and everything we own belongs in a trust, and we have executors that will take over the trust.

By providing for our families in the event of death *should bring us peace of mind now!* ***Having faith in Christ prepares us both to live and to die!***

Jesus makes life worth living as we're told in John 10:10: “The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life, and may have *it* more abundantly.”

Jesus Christ takes the sting out of dying.

1-Corinthians 15:55: “O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is in the Law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice that the Apostle Paul considers; Philippians 1:21<sup>[transcriber's correction]</sup>: “**For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.** Now if I live in *the* flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labor. But I do not know what I should choose. For I am hard pressed to choose between the two. I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, *which is* far better” (vs 21-23).

Hezekiah learned the power of prayer and was given an additional time to live. He was actually given another 15 years. But he still had to face the common end to mankind.

- Is your house in order?
- Are you prepared for life or for death?

Psalms 90:12: “So, teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.”

We don't know the exact number. Some die young, some die much older. I had a grandmother that died in Shelbyville, Tennessee, at the age of 98-years-old, and she was able to stay out of a nursing home until she was 98 and she didn't live very long in the nursing home.

I also saw my brother's son at the age of eight died of leukemia. So, what would I say if this were my last sermon and there was no tomorrow?

I would speak first to those whom I love. We all have responsibilities to those closest to us. I believe I should start by assuring my family of my faith in Christ, which gives me the insurance of eternal life.

How often do we see loved ones that are left behind that wonder if they will ever see them again? I would assure them that through God's love, we would walk together again. I would tell them how God called me to the Truth of His Kingdom and the transformation it made in my life.

I would want them to know how I gave thanks for all those that helped me share this life of faith in Christ. I would share with them a few Scriptures to assure them of my future, such as:

John 6:37: “All whom the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Or perhaps remind them:

1-John 5:11: “And this is the witness: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has *eternal* life; the

one who does not have the Son of God does not have *eternal* life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the Son of God” (vs 11-13).

I would want them to know this was not the end, ***but the beginning!*** Finally, I would assure them that I love them and God loves them.

The second part of my sermon would be to tell them where I will be going and that I must first sleep, referring to:

1-Corinthians 15:51: “Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in *the* twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for *the* trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal must put on immortality” (vs 51-53). *Or perhaps I would refer them to:*

1-Thessalonians 4:14: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, in exactly the same way also, those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.”

The third part of my sermon I would tell them when I wake up from this sleep I will be in a much better place. John describes this new world that God intends for all mankind if they do come to repentance. I love this and I've used this at a funeral.

Revelation 21:1: “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the Holy City, *the* New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from heaven say, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men; and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people; and God Himself shall be with them *and be* their God’” (vs 1-3).

*What a wonderful spectacular news we get in v 4 when he says:*

Verse 4: “And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and *there* shall not be anymore death, or sorrow, or crying; neither shall *there* be any more pain, because the former things have passed away.”

Who would want to trade that opportunity for what we see in the world today? I would tell them that this is the world I hope to share with my loved ones: my wife, my mother, my father, my brothers, my sister, my children, and all those who share my faith in Christ.

I think of all those people that died in Nepal without having the chance to prepare for death. My wife reminded me that after the second major quake in days, that number exceeded 8,000. What a tragedy! This event had a tremendous impact on me. We are not guaranteed that life will last until tomorrow. But there are things that we can and should do to be prepared. We can be ready.

2-Corinthians 6:2: “(For He says, ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now *is* an acceptable time. **Behold, now is a day of salvation.**)”

How many tomorrows do we have?  
*Physically, we’re only guaranteed today!*

But we have hope, ***because Christ has promised us a much better world to come!***

We need to pray for the people of all these terrible tragedies. I’ll tell you the world’s getting worse day-by-day:

- bombings
- school shootings
- accidents

*and the multitude of other incidents that prevent someone from having a tomorrow! What we do have is **today!***

Have we done all that we should do in the event that there is no tomorrow?

Those that died will eventually have a tomorrow, but the survivors must deal with the aftermath of these horrific events. We recently had a daughter-in-law’s brother that killed himself just before Thanksgiving.

***Brethren, we need to be grateful and thank God for all the blessings that He has poured out on us as individuals and as a nation.***

#### Scriptural References:

- 1) Ecclesiastes 1:3, 14-15
- 2) Ecclesiastes 2:4-6, 8-11
- 3) Mark 12:28-31
- 4) Luke 6:35
- 5) Hebrews 9:27
- 6) Psalm 49:6-14
- 7) Job 19:25
- 8) 2 Kings 20:1
- 9) Hebrews 9:27
- 10) Romans 5:12
- 11) Isaiah 53:5-6
- 12) 2 Kings 20:1
- 13) John 10:10
- 14) 1 Corinthians 15:55
- 15) Philippians 1:21-23

- 16) Psalm 90:12
- 17) John 6:37
- 18) 1 John 5:11-13
- 19) 1 Corinthians 15:51-53
- 20) 1 Thessalonians 4:14
- 21) Revelation 21:1-4
- 22) 2 Corinthians 6:2

Scripture referenced, not quoted: Deuteronomy 6:4

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