

How do We Live in the Now?

In I John 1:4 it says, “These things I write to you that your joy may be full.” As I come before you tonight to share I pray that your joy may be full. Jesus is coming—and soon. Praise God for that!

When the brothers asked me to share, they asked me to give a word on how to practically live out this endurance to the end. As I was reading through devotionals a couple months ago, I came across this passage in Titus 2 and that is what I would like to open with.

Titus 2:11-15 (NKJV)—For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.

*I John 2:18 (NKJV)—*Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour.

Let’s have another word of prayer:

Dear Lord, as we come before You tonight, we want to place You on the highest place. You alone are worthy to be praised. We are so thankful that we can gather in Your presence, and we do look to You as our Head. We pray that in every way You will be Head over this time, that You will anoint the Word that You have here for us, and also for the speaking. May You give utterance to Your Word, and that all of us will have open hearts to hear what the Spirit has to say to us in this hour. So we say to You tonight: “Speak Lord, for Your servants are hearing.” In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

We are considering the practical reality on how to live out this endurance to the end. If you look at that passage, Paul says a few things to Titus. He says that the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. He says that it has taught us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age by looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. What I would like to share tonight are these three things. How do we live in the now, or how do we live between His first appearing and His glorious appearing? We live in these three ways: to deny, to live, and to look.

When I was younger, I never thought about the fact that we live in the last hour. It is not something that I really considered as a young person, being caught up in the things that just happen and life. This Scripture in I John says, “Little children, it is the last hour.” As we look at I John it was written at the end of the first century, about 95 AD. If he

thought it was the last hour then, how much more is it the last hour now! It is a sobering word when we think about it.

Denying Ungodliness

Let's look at this letter to Titus and think about the setting of where he was. This was written by Paul and he said to Titus: "I left you in Crete. "Let's think about this setting in which Paul was writing to.

He said of the Cretans in Titus 1:12: "One of them, a prophet of their own, said, 'Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.'"

It is a strong word that Paul said to Titus: "You need to pay attention to the day in which you live and to the people around you. They are liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons." Oftentimes, we think we live in a world that is quite dangerous and difficult to live in. Certainly Titus is one we can relate to because he was living among those who were not only liars, evil beasts, lazy and gluttons, but were lazy gluttons. I went to Crete on my honeymoon ten years ago. I am not sure that I can say the same about them being liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons, but they certainly were very aggressive drivers. But I live in New York City and this resonates with me. If we look around at the people around us, not only in New York City but everywhere we live, we live in a day in which the people in this world are liars, evil beasts, and lazy gluttons. We live in difficult days.

What does Paul say to Titus? He says, "To deny ungodliness, deny worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly."

Deny Ungodliness

Let's consider these two things that Paul shared with Titus, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. This is a word that we have heard before, but in this day we need to take up our cross and deny ourselves. Paul says in I Corinthians that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to us who are being saved" (see 1:18). So often we look at the cross and think of it in such a negative way, and it is such a difficult thing we have to take up. But the cross is there for our good and for our benefit because God knows us; He knows our nature and that we need to deny these things because we are prone to them.

What is ungodliness? I can define it in this simple way. Ungodliness is a lack of reverence towards God, a lack of what is pleasing to God, doing things my way. Today is a perfect time for me to share since today is Independence Day, something that we celebrate in the United States. A lot of times we live our lives in "Independence Day" which means we are living "my way." In fact Frank Sinatra had a song called "My Way" which you may remember, and it is all about "my way," and doing things "my way." He was celebrating "my way."

We can all appreciate the fact that "my way needs to be His way." This is evident even from the beginning of time when we look at the fall of man in Genesis 3 and see this struggle of my way versus God's way.

In Genesis 3:4-6 it says, "Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate."

We know that on the surface there was an outward disobedience. God said, "Do not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." Was it just an outward disobedience or was there something more? Was there an inner heart attitude in which they were choosing their way instead of God's way? In verse 6 it says, "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise." There was an inner heart attitude that wanted it; she wanted things her way. This is man's state. Our fallen nature is such that we love ourselves more than we love God.

I subscribe to National Geographic magazine, and last month's cover article talked about the state of man. It did not put it that way, but this is what it said, "Why do we lie?" That was the cover story in National Geographic magazine last month. I found it quite interesting that in this secular publication it recognized this issue with the fall of man. It gave a scale of why we lie. Eighty percent of the reason why we lie is either to protect ourselves or to promote ourselves. This is the nature of man to protect and to promote ourselves.

We can go on and on through the history of man. For instance, we can see with Cain how he decided to give an offering the way he wanted to give and not God's way. He wanted to do things his way, with his own self-effort and his own self-reliance, and we know what the end was for him.

We see this in Proverbs 14:12 as Solomon shares this reality of our way versus God's way: "There is a way that seems right to man but its end is the way of death." If that is not clear enough, in Proverbs 16:25, he says the same thing again, "There is a way that seems right to man, but its end is the way of death." Doing things our way, unless it is totally submitted and surrendered to the Lord, is ungodliness. We need to deny that because we have to recognize how much we are prone to doing things our way.

Deny Worldly Lusts

The second thing that Paul shares with Titus is to deny worldly lusts and desires. How can we put that in another way? Worldly lusts and desires are a craving and a longing for what is not pleasing to the Lord.

In I John he ends this letter with this verse, and it is almost a non-sequitur. He has been sharing on knowing God, about fellowship, seeing how God is righteous, and God is love, then he gets to the last verse and says, "Little children keep yourselves from idols. Amen."

A few of the brothers have shared in some part about technology. This is the time when everyone begins to squirm. I submit to you that technology is not neutral. It can certainly be used in positive ways when submitted to the Lord. There are many positive uses, so I am not recommending that we go back to horse and buggies and throw all of our cell phones away when we walk out of the door. But technology is not neutral. There is an issue with us being constantly connected because it refashions our brains. As a result of this constant connectedness, we have now developed an inability to abide, to just pause, to think, to consider, an inability to focus or to think deeply, an inability to hear the small still voice because we are so connected.

In China right now the number one public health issue is internet addiction or technology addiction. In fact, there are over four hundred addiction centers in China. You may laugh, but I think they are much further along than we are in the United States because we have not come to the reality that we have the same addiction. Surveys done in the United States say that ninety-one percent of the people say that their phone is an extension of their brain. I hope you see that in a sober way because this is a serious thing. This technology is designed to make us addicted. And for every bit of will power we have to disconnect, there are a thousand people on the other side of the screen whose job it is to keep you addicted. That is the state of technology.

I think we realize who our enemy is. We know he is certainly like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But in a more subtle way, our enemy is also like a fowler who sets a snare or a trap for us. I think we need to be on guard for this and deny worldly lusts. We need to consider whether technology has become an idol for us, and if it is, then it needs to go to the cross. I share with young people pretty often, and when this topic of technology comes up, I tell them two things. This is going to make the life of your parents a lot easier. You can ask for two gifts for Christmas this year; ask for a Bible and an alarm clock.

A lot of these small-print compact Bibles are going out of print which I think is quite tragic. One of the reasons for it is because of that iPhone in your hand right now. Another thing I have found to be revolutionary in the lives of young people, as I have shared with them over the years, is to get an alarm clock. Instead of starting your day with constant connectedness and being notified of something that happened, whether a news story or an Instagram post or a message from somebody, they can begin their day by spending time with the Lord. I had to purposely not bring my phone tonight because my friends have been texting me about a boxing match that happened, and I just did not want to see it or be distracted by it. Get an alarm clock. There you go, parents, I made your life a lot easier for gifts this year. We need to get disconnected so we can be real with God, to meet Him and hear His still small voice.

It is easy to get caught up in these denials and this reality of how we are to empty ourselves from these things, denying ourselves and letting these things go to the cross, but there has to be something on the other side of it. Our lives are like vacuums, and

they are always going to be filled with something. If we deny ourselves, if we deny this ungodliness, if we deny these worldly lusts, we have to be filled with something. And what Paul is saying to Titus is to fill your life with these things—live soberly, live righteously, live godly. This is how we are to live before He appears again.

Live Soberly

What does it mean to live soberly? There are different ways in which we can look at this word *sober*. We can think of it in a serious way, to be serious, to have a sound mind, to be temperate, to be discrete. Proverbs says, “To guard your heart with all diligence.” I think a better way to look at it is in Peter’s life. Sometimes we get to a place in our Christian lives where we think we are invincible—we have heard it all, we have seen it all, and we feel that we know it all. There are some things we can look at in Peter’s life.

In Mark 14:29-31: “Peter said to Him, ‘Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.’”

Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.’

But he spoke more vehemently, ‘If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!’

And they all said likewise.”

Then in verses 37-38 Jesus called Peter out to pray: “Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, ‘Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’”

We read this in I Peter 4:7, “But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be sober and watchful in your prayers.”

How much more insight we now have into the value and the power of that Word Peter had! He experienced what it was not to be sober. He could not even pray for one hour. He had made that emphatic statement that he would not deny Christ, but yet in such a short time he denied the Lord three times. The end of all things is at hand. Be serious and watchful in your prayers.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

It is such a treasure to be with you all this evening. I remember the first time I went to Harvey Cedars in the fall of 2005. I remember being at the Lord’s table which would have been on Sunday, the last main day of the conference. As we were worshipping around the Lord’s table, we sang Maranatha. At that point, I said, “This is it! It does not get any better than this. This is as close as you can get to heaven on earth, and then the next day we had to go home.

For some of us we appreciate that as we gather here this may be all we have outside the two or three where we gather. I think it is those people who have those

small gatherings that really treasure and know what it means to gather as the body of Christ. Too often we take it for granted and we forsake our assembling together. We often come to these conferences and have the experience of “this is it.” But we have to realize the treasure of our brothers and sisters when we go back home.

In the late 1840’s, there was a gold rush in California. Thousands upon thousands upon thousands of people rushed to California to make it big, to find gold. However, in order to find gold, you had to sift through a lot of sand and shake it out. Sand is very apparent, and you have to see the gold through the sand.

We know that all through God’s Word gold speaks of the divine nature. Sometimes we have to do the same with one another. It is so easy to see the sand in our brothers and sisters, but there is gold in there; there is the deposit of Christ in each one of our brothers and sisters. Are we willing to dig through the sand to see that gold and not forsake our assembling together? Our Lord dug through so much sand with His disciples. He dealt with doubting, denial, and betrayal. Through it all, He was merciful to them and to us. Let’s not forsake our assembling together and be sober about the value of gathering together in this day.

Live Righteously

Paul not only says to live soberly but also to live righteously. What does it mean to live righteously? It means to be just, proper, upright. We know God is righteous. It means He is right; He does right; He makes right. We are told in I John a couple of times “to practice righteousness,” and that is an interesting way to phrase it. We often talk about the practice of law or the practice of medicine. I certainly do not want any doctors practicing on me, but this is what we call it. As an attorney, I can appreciate this because I practice law. So what does that mean? It means to repeat something until you gain proficiency. You keep practicing until you gain proficiency. This is the way we are to be righteous. We practice righteousness by taking one step at a time to be righteous to one another.

In I John 3:16-17 he says, “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”

We are we to treat our brothers and sisters fairly, be complete in our giving, and that is way more than just financial needs. If I were to ask you what the most valuable resource that we have is, I wonder what you would say. The most valuable resource that we have is time. It is something we can never get back; it is something that we know is limited. Time is our most valuable resource; therefore, we must redeem the time. Redeeming the time does not mean to be busy. As I meet with brothers and sisters and fellowship with them from person to person, couple to couple, and family to family, I hear over and over again how busy they are. It is remarkable when I share with young people who are just in high school, and they share how busy they are. They do not have

to worry about putting food on the table and taking care of all the other cares of life. But it is amazing how busy they are even in that stage! How busy we are! Let me say this: *if we are too busy for the Lord, then we are too busy.*

There is a phenomenon that may have come up in this generation called multitasking. If you go on google, they can give you charts on how often words have been used in publication over the years. This phrase *multitasking* did not appear until recently. Multitasking is the buzzword of our generation. It plays into that connectedness we talked about. It is to always be connected, to take advantage and be efficient in everything. Too often multitasking becomes an impediment for us to live righteously. I live in New York and obviously there are constant distractions in every place we live. I know some people who are prone to have their devotional time on the subway because they multitask. If you have ridden the subway, I would have to say this is quite an impossible task. Not only do you have very unholy advertisement that covers the subway, there are unholy conversations next to you, people who may not have a very good scent emanating from them who are sitting next to you, it is packed and uncomfortable, the train is delayed and it is hot and sweaty—whatever it may be. Are we too busy for the Lord, too busy to live righteously?

I think about the Lord's own example of Himself. As we talk about endurance, we can look at the Lord Himself and His endurance even in a physical way. In the years of His public ministry, he travelled thousands of miles; He had a remarkable physical endurance. He was often going from point A to point B and was always interrupted along the way. But it was not an interruption for Him. He never said, "I will get back to you; I am on my way to Galilee and when I come back I will meet that need. That was never the case.

Matthew 20:29-34 is a picture of Jesus on His way from Jericho to Jerusalem for the triumphal entry, and it says, "Now as they went out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!'"

Then the multitude warned them that they should be quiet; but they cried out all the more, saying, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!'

So Jesus stood still and called them, and said, 'What do you want Me to do for you?'

They said to Him, 'Lord, that our eyes may be opened.' So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him."

Those blind men were as insignificant as it comes, people to be disregarded, blind men on the side of the road, yet Jesus took notice of them. If you want to talk about an example of living righteously, look at our Lord. He did not consider the request of these blind men as an interruption. He did not put them aside and say, "I have busier things to do. I am on My way to Jerusalem." He had compassion. What is compassion? Compassion is love in action; not just saying you will do something but following it up.

Pray for One Another

I think about how often in my life (I do not say this as a boast but I say this to be real with you), I have said I will pray for you and I never prayed. I have learned some great lessons over the years from precious brothers in New York in what it means to really pray for one another. If you want to live righteously, pray for one another. Let us not just talk about it; let's actually pray in action.

We shared this hymn *Soldiers of Christ, Arise* before we started. Ben and I had gone back and forth a few times about what to share as a hymn. Right before I was to start, he felt led to share this hymn. In fact, he asked for the last verse to be repeated again. Now he did not know that I was going to share on prayer tonight, unless the Lord really spoke to his heart in that way, but I think this is the Spirit's leading. If we are to live righteously in these days, we need to endure in prayer. When we think of the different situations we are in, it is so easy to lose heart and not endure in prayer. There may be a loved one who does not know the Lord, a loved one who has wandered from the Lord, an illness that seems unceasing, an impossible situation at work, an impossible family situation; we need to endure in prayer. It is so needed in this day.

I have been so humbled recently. When the announcement went out for the registration of this conference, I got an email from some brothers and sisters that said they were committing to pray for me every day until the conference. How humbling that is! Do you want to live righteously in this day? Pray for one another.

Share the Gospel

Another way that we can live righteously is by sharing the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ with one another. Too often we look at our workplaces as ungodly places. Outside of working for Christian Testimony Ministry or a publication that is fully redeemed for the Lord, you probably see your workplace as quite ungodly. But I wonder if we looked at our job and thought how this can be sanctified to the Lord, it would be different. Maybe I am sitting next to this one coworker in this season of my life to be the light of Christ to that person. Too often we shy away or are timid or we fall back into our self-consciousness and think about what this person may say. People around us are distressed, in debt, discontented, and they need the Lord. If you want to live righteously in this day, share the gospel, preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It does not have to be a long message that you give to them. You do not have to go through the four spiritual laws. It can be as easy as when they say to you: "How are you doing this morning?" And you say, "Great." And they say, "Really?" And what follows is the gospel. It is the simplicity of sharing your life. That is how we share the gospel.

The other thing I would say about living righteously is that we need to be careful as parents. Too often we model extreme busyness to our children and then expect them to abide and live a life that is fully committed and surrendered to the Lord, a life that is enduring to the end.

The Sabbath Rest is Needed

What happened to Sabbath? What does Jesus say about Sabbath? Sabbath was made for man, not man for Sabbath. He knows us. What a loving God that He knows that we need Sabbath. But what is directly connected to Sabbath? It means we have to trust Him, that we are not going to take that extra three hours, two hours or one hour in the morning to study, but say, "The Lord is going to redeem that and say, "You give Me that first part of the day and trust Me that I am going to take care of you on that test." It is so easy for us to get caught up and take matters in our own hands so much, but we need Sabbath. Sabbath was made for us.

Just last week, my family had quite a crazy month leading up to the conference with different ministry responsibility, and family responsibility. I had much blessing on all sides in being able to share the Word in different places, being able to have my family visit New York and being their tour guide which is an open offer to anyone here. There was an extreme extra responsibility at work where not only having my job which is a fulltime job, but having layer upon layer of extra responsibility. And in preparation for the conference, I have been preparing, preparing, and preparing, and my wife said to me last week, "You need to get out of the house. Do not take your phone or your notes. You need to have rest." The last thing I wanted to do on Wednesday night before the conference was to have the night off. The only thing I wanted to do was to dig into the Word, fiddle with my notes, research things and prepare.

I will tell you that that time, having that Sabbath, was so much more valuable than anything else I could have done. I needed that rest. It was as simple as sitting in the grass in a park which is difficult for me because we do not have a backyard. It was just simply looking at the clouds and the beauty of the color of the sky, listening to the birds, feeling the breeze as it ruffled the leaves, just to have that moment where I could just be at peace with the Lord, was so refreshing. We need Sabbath. How are we using our time? If we are to live righteously in this day, may we consider this.

Live Godly

Paul said to Titus, "Live godly." What does it mean to live godly? He is saying to pursue and to please God. Another way we might say it is to be conformed to His image. To be godly is to do things like God, to be conformed to His image.

God is Love

Then we read that God is love. I John 3:1 says: "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him."

There are several words in the Scriptures that peak our attention. One of them is this word *Behold*. Behold means to stop, contemplate, consider, pause, to look and say, "Wait a second, God is trying to get my attention in an even more powerful way." John says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us." When we behold

His love, we are arrested which means we are not free to leave; we are constrained. We have no choice but to be captured by His love once we see it.

I can only do a little to try to explain this love of God, so I will share a short story. In 1992 the Olympics were held in Barcelona. There was a 400 meters race which means one time around the track. If you can picture an Olympic athlete, they are more than 100% devoted to competition. Training is their life. They eat training; they live training. Everything they do is focused upon the goal.

There was a British sprinter by the name of Derek Redmond who made it to the semifinals of the 1992 Olympics in the 400 meters race which is about a forty-five seconds race. When the signal came to begin, he took off and began to run. About twenty-three seconds into the run, he pulled his hamstring. That meant the end of his race and the Olympics, and possibly the end of his career. When you are a sprinter, you are at the peak of your physical capability, and this could have been it for him. But he did not want to give up. So he hobbled a little bit, and then a little bit more, but he could not make it to the end. In such a powerful picture of love, Derek Redmond's father ran down from the stands, somehow jumped over security, got down to the track and picked up his son. He put his arms around him and he carried him all the way to the end. There were people who came to try and push him away and say, "You cannot be here. You are not allowed to be on the track." He pushed them aside and said, "This is my son. I am going to see him through all the way to the end."

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us. We sing the hymn, "The love of God," and the chorus talks about how measureless and strong His love is, but it is the third verse that really gets me.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

God is love. How does this apply to us? How are we to live godly? We know there is this eternal love between the Father and the Son which they share with each other. And because God is love, He poured out that love on us so that we can share in that love.

Love One Another

In I John 4:7-11: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we

loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

When we really behold His love, when we see how He so loved us, we ought to love one another. When Jesus was asked: “What is the first and greatest commandment,” He said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself.” All the law and prophets are summed up in loving God and loving one another.

How do we live in these days until His glorious appearing? How do we live practically in these days? We love one another. I could go on and on about the different ways in which I have experienced this love from the saints. I have been touched by so many people over the years in so many ways. I am so thankful for those who are sharing in unseen ways. There are brothers who come and we share in this place where we are seen in what we do, but I am so thankful for so many brothers and sisters who are behind the scenes sharing love; that brother and sister who fixed a meal and hooked it on our stroller at the meeting place right after we had a baby. That brother or sister who shoots you a call or an email and says, “I am praying for you, brother, for I know what is going on.” They come alongside you when you are having a difficult time. I had some difficult times in my own life recently. A brother was at my apartment and I was pouring my heart out to him, and he said, “Let me pray for you.” He just loved me. I will never forget that. How do we love one another in this day? It does not get more practical than that. We need to love one another.

Look to Our Savior Jesus Christ

We shared about denying ungodliness and denying worldliness, living soberly, living righteously, and living godly. The question is: How do we do it? How do we deny? How do we live this way? Paul gives us the secret here in Titus.

Titus 2:12-13 says: “Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

How do we deny? How do we live? We look to Him. We have to realize we cannot do this on our own. We cannot do it by our emotion. Some of us come out of this conference having experienced somewhat of a mountain top experience; I feel sure this resonates with many of us. We have this brilliant week of fellowship and hearing God’s Word; it is such a rich and full time. And for some of us that lasts for a day or a week, maybe a month, and we realize we cannot do it by our emotion. We cannot just feel it, get pumped up, and live this life of denial.

We cannot do it with our mind. We can try to come up with five points on how to live, write down a schedule and try to figure out in our minds how we can do it. But it is a matter of time before we fail again and realize we cannot do it. Maybe you are better; you are a will-power person. Maybe you are one who will just put your foot down and say, “This is it. I am taking my stand right now. I will deny and I will live righteously. This

is it from now on.” However, over time we will fall, we will falter, and we will make mistakes. Some of us have to learn the hard way. We have tried all of these different things, and we still fail. I think our anthem should be something different.

Many of us have read a children’s book called, “The Little Engine that Could.” This little engine was trying to get over a mountain and was unable to do it. He tried to seek out help from the other trains, but he could not get over the mountain. Finally, he thought of a way. He said over and over again, “I think I can. I think I can. I think I can,” and willed his way over the hill. But our anthem should be just the opposite. We are the little engines who cannot. What is the Biblical way of putting that? Paul says in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by [the] faith [of] the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” We can deny and we can live because of His overcoming life. It is only because of His overcoming life that we can take that stand today and endure to the end. The only way is to look to Him who is the One who gives us the strength to deny and live in this sober, righteous, and godly way.

Abiding in Christ Now

I think we appreciate the fact that endurance is not easy. There is so much daily training that is involved. Paul said that he died daily. So much of endurance is just in the step by step, day by day. There is this precious book called: “Abide in Christ.” I always thought that abiding in Christ was such a daunting thing, the idea that I would abide in Christ forever. But one of the treasures that I took from that book was that from now on every moment of my life I can abide in Christ. Andrew Murray said, “Abide in Christ right now.” That’s it! All we have to deal with is right now, so abide in Christ now. If we look to Him now, in this moment, that is how we deny and that is how we live.

I am so encouraged by so many saints in this room. I have only been coming to these conference for maybe eight years, but I know many of you have been walking with the Lord for thirty, forty, fifty or more years. I want to say how encouraging it is to see so many in this room who are enduring to the end, pressing on.

I wish I could thank everyone individually for how much of an encouragement you have been to me. Even when I look around the room and see faithful saints that gather year after year after year to seek the Lord’s mind, to draw together to prepare for His return, how encouraging it is to us. This is part of that great cloud of witnesses that we gather together with so that we can encourage each other in this way, step by step, day by day, and pressing on all the way to the end.

Our lives become as Paul shared in Acts: “In Him we live and move, and have our being.” That is looking to Him. That is how we live our lives in these days between His two appearances. In Him we live and move and have our being.

We Press on Together

We think of this in a kind of individual way, but there is a corporate element to this as well. We cannot take for granted the corporate element of what it means to live and

endure to the end in this day. I played baseball as a young man, and there is one thing I remember learning from my dad and coaches. When you run to first base, you do not slow down. You run all the way through the base. May we not lose heart in this day and run all the way through full speed to the end. So often we need one another to be able to press on to the end.

Even though the book of Titus was written from Paul to Titus, so often in this book the plural is used; the “we and us” are used over and over again. This word that Paul shared with Titus is a corporate word as well.

I think of different saints who had a band of brothers around them—Daniel and his friends, David and Jonathan, Paul and his companions. We think of one another in this room. I shared with the teens this morning about what friends we are to one another, the encouragement we are to one another. In these days, in this last hour we need each other even more. There is such a necessity to be thickly tied with one another, to be banded together in these days.

I share about New York, and see it as being such a difficult place, but it is just as difficult wherever you live. They all have their temptations, tribulations, and difficulties. Something I have been able to practice in New York over these recent months in going through this season of sharing about having a firm foundation, and the necessity to be built up with one another. How do we have this firm foundation? How do we endure to the end? We see how much we need one another. I have been able to gather with four other brothers every Thursday morning, and we share life with one another. We pray with one another. We study together. We encourage one another. One of the brothers was on a medical rotation at med school, and he came back after that month. He was unavailable for a month, and he said, “I just do not know how people live apart from fellowship.” It could not be more true! We need each other so much!

I want to leave you with one more example. It is the picture of how much we need each other to press on to the end looking to Him, and not just individually but looking to Him together. It is the picture of the sequoia tree. If you have ever been to Sequoia National Park, it is an awe-inspiring place. Often we overuse the word *awesome*, but if you go to Sequoia National Park, it is awesome. There are trees there that are three hundred feet tall, thirty-feet in diameter, and are as massive as you can imagine. They almost do not seem real, towering in the sky. You would probably think that because these trees are so tall and massive that they would have such deep and strong roots, but they do not. In fact they have shallow roots, but they derive their strength from being intertwined with one another. Their strength is derived from being built up with one another. That is how they stand strong.

We need each other in this day so much. When we go home from this conference, it will be difficult to remember the words that were shared. So often we are forgetful and we move right on and get caught up again in our lives. But I think we have a responsibility when we hear God’s Word to remind each other of these things so that

we can build each other up and be those who are so thickly tied together that we can press on in these days. Paul shared with Titus that some may despise him in these days but he said this: "Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you." We are to live for the Lord with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. We look to Him. May we be built up together. Let no one despise you. Press on, brothers and sisters, all the way to the end.

Lord, we are thankful as we come before You tonight for how merciful You are to us. So often we have not lived in the way you have called us to. We have fallen into ungodliness or worldly lusts. We have not lived in a sober, righteous, and godly way. We are thankful that You draw us together with Your cords of love, that Your mercy is new every morning and we can say great is Your faithfulness. We come before You and say how much we need You. We need You to be able to endure in these days. We look to Your example. We look to You, dear Lord, and we are so thankful that we can be built up with one another. We do pray that we may know how to encourage one another, how to build each other up, how to be edified and press on together all the way to the end. We are so thankful for Your living Word and we give it back to You and entrust it to You and pray that You will really speak to our hearts. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.