How would your life change right now if you knew that, shortly:

+ You will not own anything that you own at the moment?

+ You will become rich, literally beyond your wildest imagination?

+ You will never again have a moment of regret?

What would you do differently if you knew that, very soon:

+ You will never feel alone or lost ever again?

+ Every sickness, sorrow, and pain you have will be done away?

+ The limited, defective love you know will be replaced by perfect, limitless, never-ending love?

How would your daily decision-making be transformed:

+ If you knew that you will soon begin to experience a state of ultimate satisfaction, joy, and fulfillment?

+ If you knew that, shortly, every threat or enemy in your life will be removed?

+ If you knew that most people you know are in imminent danger of missing all of this?

These things are, in fact, true. And because of that, everything must change. If it doesn’t, it means we have not appreciated what is about to happen in this world. Jesus Christ is coming back, and his return means that believers must do the following six things:

RE-EVALUATE EVERYTHING

If Christ is coming back in glory, we must re-evaluate everything we think, do, and say. Paul wrote the following to Timothy, no doubt to give him the same boost we need today: “I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which He will bring about at the proper time-- He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen” (1 Timothy 6:13-16).
Paul says to “keep the commandment.” Which one? This phrase, in context, is a reference to every kind of obedience laid upon us by the word of God and the nature of Christ. It’s everything! And that comprehensive command impacts everything about us.

But how can we do that? We live in a world which influences believers far more than we want to admit. The power of our sin nature is broken, but it still affects us greatly. The world system with all of its false ideas slams into our minds through every display screen we own. And haven’t we all, in the face of this command for total obedience, been disappointed in our apparent lack of success? We want to follow Jesus with our all, but it never seems to come to pass the way we want.

It will help us all a great deal to focus on who is coming and what that means. If the package delivery person is coming, that is often good. If we think a king is coming, we will find a powerful motivation to re-evaluate everything we are saying and doing.

Who is this King who is coming? He is the one who is in control of history and who comes at the “proper time,” a time known only to him and solely of his choosing. He is the “blessed” One, which also means happy in the profound sense of the word. He does whatever he pleases, and whatever pleases him is right. He is the only Sovereign, the Potentate or Ruler of all things. And to make his point, Paul pounds the idea two more times: “King of kings and Lord of lords.” He is the One King to rule them all, and he brooks no competitors.

This King who is coming is the only being in the universe who “possesses immortality,” literally “deathlessness” in the Greek. That’s because he is life itself and, as Paul said in verse thirteen, he “gives life to all.” His normal dwelling is “unapproachable light,” which is not merely a brightness, but the radiance of his every attribute. This radiance is the direct expression of his holiness. That is why “no [human being] has seen” him, because death would be the outcome of contact between God’s holiness and the fallenness of every person. And beyond that, no one “can see” him because God is spirit in his essential being. All attempts to depict this God are impossible, fundamentally mistaken, and therefore sin. God took care of making himself visible by sending his Son, “And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature…” (Hebrews 1:3a).

And so we await the epiphany—the appearing—of this One, the One who changes everything. To this One is due all “honor and eternal dominion.” If this is the One who is coming, then everything we think, do, and say must change.

PREPARE TO LEAVE

This was apparently all in Paul’s head as he wrote the following words from earlier in the passage: “But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content” (1 Timothy 6:6-8). Our King is coming back to get us at a time of his own choosing, and so we must prepare to leave.

That is a spiritual work which takes place primarily in our hearts. We are not of the world, but we are in the world, so we must have stuff to live here. But we can bring none of it with us when Christ comes to take us home. And beyond that, preparing to leave means demoting all earthly desires, even
the best ones, to a lesser place than our desire to meet our Lord as he comes in glory. Watchman Nee famously said that believers must live with open hands, and not grip the stuff and desires of this life, because those things will all be in the way of our Lord. We must choose to live with the deep knowledge that the things of God dwarf everything else.

When and if we actually succeed at this, we will have contentment. In the Greek this word spans both the feeling of having enough, and also actually having that sufficiency. The King who is coming is himself our sufficiency. And so we can go through this life in a settled, peaceful state, not fighting and scrabbling all the time to get what we need, but resting in him. It is a key part of our testimony to the world. If we say that Christ is enough, people will look to see if we live like that is true. Contentment in the sufficiency of Christ is the one true means of great gain in this life.

Paul seems to have been concerned that we understand the seriousness of this battle, so he added these warnings: “But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs” (1 Timothy 6:9-10). Greed and coveting in general are self-inflicted wounds. In Christ, we are given the capacity to live a better way. By holding all the things of this world lightly, we prepare ourselves to leave it when our King comes for us. And, of course, the only way to be certain that we are holding things lightly is to let something go.

COMMIT EVERY ENERGY

A key outcome of this re-evaluation is that we commit every energy to the walk of faith in this world. Paul wrote: “But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness” (1 Timothy 6:11).

Our energies are limited and can get burned away by a million things. I have found that I can burn energy so intensely all day that, at the end of the day, I have not run out of time, I have run out of me. As Dr. Sally Fry, a leadership development specialist, puts it, the challenge is not so much time management as self-management.

So Paul wrote, in light of Christ’s return, that we should dump every energy into walking with him. First, we energize ourselves to flee false, sinful, and merely earthly desires. This is a major effort! We are surrounded by temptations of every kind, the devil keeps offering us deadly deals, and our defeated sin nature keeps lying to us about how great it would be to sin in various ways. We are not told to stare these things down, but to run away from them.

Second, Paul tells us to invest our energies into every good thing in Christ: “….righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.” By so doing we are storing up treasures in heaven and becoming true sons and daughters of the living God. And we are readying ourselves for Christ’s return. If we were going to a wedding—and we are—we would wash our face and put on our wedding clothes. Because of Christ’s worthiness, this effort is worth our every energy.
KEEP A GRIP

Paul also tells us to remember the battle we are in: “Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called…” (1 Timothy 6:12a). Our eyes keep telling us that seeing is believing, but this battle is invisible. It is a fight to keep our grip on the eternal things.

Faith has a personal object. How well do you know the object of your faith? What means are you using to go deeper into him? Bible study materials can be helpful, but some take you more into yourself than him. You don’t need to go deeper into you! That’s the core of New Age teaching and many false religions. Your desperate need is to get out of yourself by fighting to be focused on God and all heavenly things.

Our eyes say things like: “Look at how nice our building, videos, music, web site, programs, finances, and attendance are!” By contrast, our coming King says things like: “Come and spend time with me. Have you seen all the riches in my word? Look at the repentances which happened in church today! How precious are my sons and daughters who are suffering for my name all around this world!”

A heavenly, eternal focus will not come by accident. We must “take hold” of it. And let us not skip over the reason Paul gave us. God has called us to this. It is his intention that we be so heavenly-minded that we become a massive earthly good!

MAKE THE GOOD CONFESSION

What else should be part of our re-evaluation of everything in light of Christ’s glorious reappearing? In speaking to Timothy Paul stated it in the past tense: “…You made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6:12b). To turn it to the present tense, we need to make the good confession of our faith, and not let anyone shut us up!

In so doing, we will be like our Lord, “…Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate” (1 Timothy 6:13). Jesus said, in effect: “Yes, I am a king, but not of this world.” Our confession is the same, but also that “…He…is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen” (1 Timothy 6:15-16).

A key to making this good confession is found by understanding what the word “confession” means. Literally, it means “to say the same thing.” It is important, when we are confessing our sins, to say the same thing as God says about them. It is not a confession to say: “God, sorry about the thing.” Instead we should say: “Lord, I admit and repent of the sin of stealing, hating, lusting,” or whatever it is.

So when we make the good confession about Christ, it should start as a personal testimony, but it must not stop there. It must go beyond: “I went to church and I felt really good!” By the way, if that is all your testimony means, what will you do when you go to church and you do not feel really good? Your shallow faith will become a shipwreck. No, confessing faith may start with our personal trust in Christ, but must include saying about Christ what God’s word says about Christ, and also what God’s word says about you and me.
In preparation for the return of Christ in glory, we all become messengers of the gospel. That is why Paul calls Timothy “you man of God” in verse eleven. This is the only place in the New Testament that this phrase occurs, and it is not a general reference to godliness. “Man of God” appears some seventy times in the Old Testament, and specifically refers to a man sent with the message of God.

And who is sent with the message of God in the church age? Every man, woman, and child who believes in Christ. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted…” (1 Corinthians 14:31). Jesus also spoke these words to the whole group of disciples: “And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you…” (Luke 24:49).

The world, the flesh, and the devil want us to just shut up. If we speak God’s truth the way we should we will be ridiculed, threatened, and even physically attacked. Jesus made the good confession in the face of his executioners. Saying what is true is that important, and we should follow the example of our Master.

**GUARD WHAT CHRIST HAS GIVEN**

Finally, we need to guard what Christ has given us with all our might. That thought is found in verse fourteen with the charge Paul gave to Timothy to “…keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ…” (1 Timothy 6:14). The Greek word for “keep” has the idea of “keep watch over” or “guard” (Moulton Milligan). So if the singular “keep the commandment” refers to obedience to everything Christ taught, then this is what we must guard.

Why? Because the devil is a liar, murderer, and a thief. Jesus explained the devil’s agenda: “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy…” (John 10:10).

In this lost world which lies in the power of the Evil One, anything we don’t guard we lose. Doctrine is one of the key things we protect. Our families, other believers, Christ’s church, and our own minds and souls must be guarded. We live in spiritual wartime, not peacetime. Ignoring the enemy and his work may make us feel better in the short term, but it welcomes disastrous losses in the long term.

To conclude, why must everything we think, say, and do change in light of Christ’s coming? Because this is who is coming on the clouds, as reported by John the apostle: “I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades’” (Revelation 1:13-18).
In view of that:

1. We submit every thought, word, and action to our Lord, and change whatever he says to change.
2. We reorganize our lives in preparation to leave with our King.
3. We commit every energy to the walk of faith while we are still here.
4. We fight to keep our grip on heavenly and eternal things by which to direct our lives.
5. We make the good confession of Christ and his gospel by our lips and by our lives. And
6. We embrace the watchfulness of a good soldier to guard everything Christ has given us.

Men and women, I invite you to join me in refreshing the totality of your commitment to your coming glorious Lord. I invite you to join me in being done with lesser things, and especially with temptations and sins. I invite you to renew with me your sense of urgency to preach the good news.

As we do this, everything in the world will keep telling us how important worldly things are. We have to decide if we are going to listen to our Lord Jesus who says: “No, the things I am telling you are the important things.”

This is not a game. He really is coming back—just as he said.