

## INTRODUCTION

When I was in seminary years ago, a professor discussed public reading. He gave us several rules in that regard, the first and most important of which was this. We must be **in** the word that we're reading.

Most people aren't you know. They aren't **in** the word that they **are** reading. Their minds are usually leaping ahead to the next word or words that they **will be** reading instead. They do that because it assures that they won't make any mistakes. The problem is that it also prevents them from putting any emotion and life into the word that they're reading.

To read well publicly, we must be **in** the word that we're reading. We must practice the material and become so familiar with it that we don't leap ahead. We focus on and involve ourselves with the word that we're reading instead. We treat it as if it were the most important word in the text and don't gloss over it. That in turn makes it come alive.

Well, what is true of public reading is also true, by way of analogy, of our lives. Just as we need to be **in** the present word to read well, so we need to be **in** the present moment to live well and that's what I'm going to preach about today.

## GOD IS ETERNAL

I do that by way of contrast. That contrast is between God and us.

In the verses I read today, He Himself speaks and reveals one of His most remarkable qualities. In Revelation 1:8, 21:6, and 22:13, He says that is the Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet. In 21:6 and 22:13, He says that He is the beginning and the end. And finally, in 22:13, He says that He is the first and the last.

Those are metaphors of course. God is saying about Himself that He is like the Alpha and Omega, like the beginning and the end, and like the first and last – *simultaneously*. That is a critical point - *simultaneously*. He is *at the same time* the first and last letters; *at the same time* the Alpha and Omega; and *at the same time* the first and the last.

That is the key to interpreting what He reveals about Himself in these verses. He is, as 1 Timothy 1:17 says it, eternal. Revelation 1:8 defines what that means. He was, is, and is to come. There has never been a time when He was not and there will never be a time when He will not be. He always has existed, exists now, and always will exist. He had no beginning and will never have an end. He is eternal.

That is a mind-boggling quality that implies several incredible things. One of those is this. God is not bound by time.

Let me ask you two questions. First, did time, defined as a succession of moments, always exist? No, it did not. Time had a beginning. It began. That leads to the second question. When did it begin? The answer is that it began in Genesis 1:1 when God created the material universe. Time did not exist. God created. Time then existed.

Time is a creation of His in other words. We absolutely must understand that in order to understand Him. He isn't a creature of time. He is the creator of it. Consequently, He transcends it, that is, isn't in it but apart from it. Time doesn't govern God. He governs it.

His life, therefore, does not come to Him moment by moment. There are no past and future for Him. There is only a never-ending present. There are no "before" and "after" for Him. There is only a never-ending "now." That means that He experiences July 15, 1907, July 15, 2007, and July 15, 2107 right now. July 15, 1907 is not past to Him but present. July 15, 2107 is not future to Him but present.

It's mind-blowing but true. God is eternal and because He is transcends and governs time.

## **IN THE MOMENT**

But we aren't and thus don't. Unlike God, we aren't eternal. We're temporal. We're creatures of time in other words. We're in it not apart from it. We're inseparably bound up with it. And because we are, we don't govern it. It governs us. We don't have the past because it's gone or the future because it's not yet here. All we have is the present.

But what is the present? Those high tech clocks that measure tenths of a second help us answer that. Let me ask you a question. What time is it. You can't really tell me can you? You can say that it's 30 minutes and 11.3 seconds after 11:00. But by the time that you say and I hear that, it's 11.4 seconds and not 11.3. 11.3 is "now" in the past.

My point is this. All we have as creatures of time is the present and that present isn't a minute. It's a moment. Our life comes to us moment by moment. One moment comes and quickly goes, and then another, and then another and so on. That is our experience as creatures in time. All that we have is the one moment that is present to us.

It only makes sense then that we should be **in** that moment. That's our call today and how we should live our lives. Going back to public reading, we should live the way that we read publicly. Just as we should be **in** the word that we're reading, so we should be **in** the moment that we're living. To be **in** that moment means to focus on and involve ourselves with it for an express purpose. That purpose is engaging God.

A 17<sup>th</sup> century French priest named Jean-Pierre de Caussade said it well in his classic little book titled The Sacrament of the Present Moment. The central tenet of de Caussade's life and book is this. Engaging God in the present moment is a holy sacrament. That is a profound statement. Engaging God in the present moment is a holy sacrament.

That means two things. First, engaging God in the present moment is the chief means of grace to us. It enables Him to consistently impart love, peace, and joy to us. Second, it is the chief means of glory to Him. It enables us to consistently honor and please Him.

Now, engaging God in the present moment is a definitive thing. It means that we do one or more of the following: obey Him, surrender to Him, talk to Him, hear Him, stand up for Him, suffer for Him, trust Him, partner with Him, laugh with Him, worship Him, thank Him, and more. We purposely do those things in as many of the moments that make up our days and lives as we can. We try to make each moment count by engaging God in one of those ways in it.

Several weeks ago, for instance, I was out running and got caught in a downpour. I mean it rained cats and dogs and I got drenched. But I made those moments sacramental by engaging God. Think of how exciting it would be if someone threw a pail of water on us. Rain is nothing more than God throwing many pails of water on us and I began laughing with Him as I thought about that. And those moments running home in the downpour were sacramental because I did. God got joy from them and so did I.

That illustrates what it means to be **in** the moment. It means that we focus on and involve ourselves with it for the express purpose of engaging God. Doing that in the ways that I mentioned is sacramental. It's a means of grace to us and of glory to Him.

Now, being **in** the moment as I just defined it is a profound experience. It's so profound in fact that it alters the very tone of our everyday and overall lives. It does so in two ways.

## **EVERYTHING SPIRITUAL**

First, it makes everything that we do spiritual.

In the minds of most Christians today, a dichotomy exists between the spiritual and the secular. It's what Richard Foster calls "the heresy of 5% spirituality." Most Christians view 95% of their activities as secular, that is, having nothing to do with God and His kingdom. They view the remaining 5% as spiritual, that is, having something to do with God and His kingdom. So, sitting down to pay the bills or going to the grocery store are secular. But reading the Bible or going to church are spiritual. Most Christians hold that kind of dichotomy in their minds.

But the sacrament of the present moment destroys it. Since we can engage God in every moment no matter what we're doing, there is in reality no dichotomy between the spiritual and secular. Nothing is secular. Everything is spiritual. It's the truth of 100% spirituality. Yes, reading the Bible is spiritual. But so is paying the bills. Yes, going to church is spiritual. But so is going to the grocery store.

De Caussade says something in his book that explains why that is so. He wisely warns us not to look *“for the holiness of things but only the holiness in things.”* The holiness **of** things versus the holiness **in** things. That is a penetrating distinction.

Take paying bills for instance. I don't know anyone who enjoys sitting down to do that. Certainly, there is no holiness **of** paying bills. It isn't inherently spiritual. There's nothing about its nature itself that necessarily involves God and His kingdom. But there is holiness **in** paying bills. We can make it spiritual by engaging God as we do it. Thus, as we're writing out the checks to pay the bills, we thank Him that we have the money to pay them. Or we ask Him for wisdom regarding which ones to make a priority. Or we renew our pledge to trust Him for our daily bread. Or we reassess our commitment to Biblical simplicity in light of the purchases we've made and so on. We don't look for the holiness **of** paying bills but for the holiness **in** paying them.

What is true of paying bills is true of everything we do – repairing the car, mowing the yard, changing the diapers, eating breakfast, going to a party, running, playing with grandchildren, and more. Being **in** the moment makes all of those things spiritual.

## **EVERYTHING SIGNIFICANT**

Being **in** the moment does alter the tone of our lives in a second way. It makes everything that we do significant.

Stop and think about what makes what we do significant. Most would say it's significant if it affects people in some meaningful way. And the more people it affects, the more significant it is. If the President of the United States signs a tax cut bill, therefore, that's a highly significant thing because it affects 300 million people.

But the reference point of significance isn't people. We need to grasp that. According to the Bible, it's God. The dominant reality in the universe isn't the six and one half billion people on earth. The dominant reality in the universe is the infinite triune God who made it and them.

That means anything that we do that affects Him in any way is significant.

But what can we do that affects Him? The answer is "anything."

Paul makes that clear in 1 Corinthians 10:31. He writes, "*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*" To glorify God, as I've said, means to honor or please Him. Now, notice how we can do that. It's by "*whatever we do.*" Question! Does "*whatever we do*" include brushing our teeth? Yes, it does or at least it can – if we're **in** the moment when we do it.

So, as I'm brushing my teeth, I think of what my life would be like without toothbrushes and toothpaste. That helps me recognize that they themselves are blessings from God that He gave me because He loves me. I then brush each tooth with a mind and heart full of gratitude to Him for that. I am **in** the moment, in other words. I'm engaging God.

And it glorifies Him because I am. It honors and pleases Him. Think of that. Something as simple as brushing my teeth actually affects the triune God who made the universe and everything in it.

Which makes it significant. Since the reference point of significance is God and since brushing my teeth that way affects God, then brushing my teeth that way is in reality significant.

What I'm saying is this. Being **in** the moment makes everything that we do not only spiritual but significant as well.

## **CONCLUSION**

Let me ask you a question in closing. Do you believe that? The fact is that many Christians don't. They'd probably never admit it but they think that's it just nice talk. Preachers tell us things like that because it makes us feel good. But that isn't it at all. What I've preached today isn't just nice talk. It's reality. It's reality that dramatically enhances the persons and lives of those who have ears that hear. So have ears that hear. Be **in** the moment. Your life and God's won't be the same if you do.