

What's Really Going On?

'God made all people to seek him and find him.' (Acts 17:27)

Peter Walker

www.1peter1three.weebly.com

To Joe Blake, fighting the good fight!
(1 Timothy 6:12)

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. What a Relief!**
- 3. Fire Within**
- 4. It's Just Not Here**
- 5. Heaven's Waiting Room**
- 6. Things Are Breaking**
- 7. Marinate (To Feel Zeal)**
- 8. Dust off Your Feet**
- 9. Why Look Back?**

1. Introduction:

Let's start by talking about 'groups' in life. And when I say groups, I mean friend groups, working groups, gangs, sororities, frats, Freemasons, book clubs, committees, church groups, tennis clubs, country clubs, etc.

Groups don't really exist.

I mean, they are a thing, of course, but a fabricated thing. Held together by people's notions. Take for example that friend group you had a few years ago, where is it now? Or that BFF from school? Or that project group that were *'so close'*?

I don't mean to be cynical here. Not at all. Just trying to get back to those elements in life that are *not* fabricated. Let's dig even a little deeper...

How about your spouse? We like to think of our love relationship as cosmic destiny, but did he or she really come forth from the Cosmos, or from your hometown? From your city or school or mutual friend? In this case not fabricated, but incidental.

How about your citizenship and national loyalty? I mean, if your mom had taken a different path, you might have been born in a country that is at war with the one you now say you defend. A

mere twist in the road and everything you say you are, you love, and the people you know, would be different. You might even 'hate' people you now say you love.

Does this render our lives and our connections and 'groups' meaningless? No. But it does – or should – make us dive deeper. And in this deep dive, as a matter of truth we avoid the cynical, and hold to the spiritual. But yes, we decide to seek and find what's actually 'real', what in life is not incidental or fabricated, and what's really going on...

2. What a Relief!

Ever worked with toxic people?

People and their beliefs are a spiritual reality. People are made by God and in his image, and he has **'set eternity in their hearts.'**¹ People are spiritual beings and do affect the spirit around them.

That is why there is powerful 'vibe' or spirit in a place when people are holding to specific sets of beliefs or values, or rather are being held by them. It can be thick in the air, weigh heavy.

I remember sitting back in my office chair one day and just feeling so deeply relieved that this too would pass. That all people would pass. That this building one day would unplug, crumble, and just be a shell of the past. The spirit in the air, in the office, by a group of people against a group of people, was hostile and almost palpable. It felt more than cold, almost hateful. And that is a dark, dangerous spirit. According to Jesus, that hate towards another is in the same judgment seat as murder:

'You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in

¹ Genesis 1:27; Ecclesiastes 3:11

danger of the fire of hell.' (Matthew 5:21-22)

3. Fire Within

I feel like a pinball in life most of the time, bouncing back and forth off other people's priorities and the fear in my own soul. My mind goes from one worry to another, usually someone else's small shack of concern. Round and round and round.

Can you imagine if I had a cause that was high and above all others? An identity and purpose and history that eclipsed day-to-day worries, and other people's opinions? Freedom! Release! It would be like walking on water. Rising above life's decay, and stepping outside life's terms, and owning it. Dragging life to its redemption, rather than sinking in its saddest of rivers.

Look at these shocking words of Jesus:

'The Pharisees said to Jesus, 'Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.' Jesus answered, 'I am the Lord of the Sabbath.' (Matthew 12:1-8)

Can you imagine stepping into that Spirit of Christ? He holds life and Law in the palm of his hand, with words and actions that are above both. Instead of sinking in water you would breathe fire and consume raging waves. You would still the storms with a word, quiet the winds.

Jeremiah had a fire inside him that incinerated even his own will, his own despair. It burned white to walk with God. When he was even angry at God, wanting to resist the prophetic Spirit and wind of God through his own soul, he could not stay in that place.

'You deceived me, Lord; everyone mocks me. The word of the Lord has brought me insult all day long. But if I say, 'I will not speak anymore in his name,' his word is a fire in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot!' (Jeremiah 20:7-9)

This is why I love ruins, buildings and homes that have been long abandoned. It reminds me that people's hold on other people, and people's rejection of God, will finally fade.

4. It's Just Not Here.

Have you said, or heard said, '*It's more the buildup that's fun!*'

I think of the buildup to a trip, to Christmas day, to that getaway, to the party, the meeting, the meet-up, the relationship, the new thing...

The idea of a thing is perfect. It flits through our mind, even our soul, in a fraction of a second. It's a hope, a dream and a feeling. In the idea it's ideal.

Then we pursue it. But it never (ever!) fits the idea.

This is not pessimistic thinking. This is to look for a moment, an honest moment, at the difference between what we hope for and what we experience here in life.

In a sense, this lesson, this truth of '**life that is truly life**'² not being here, not within our reach here, is key in being prepared to die. It is when we realize, and experience, that there is a great chasm between our ideals and our reality here, that we begin to long for that world where the two are one, where perfection in our world and our relationships is the actual experience. We will be ready to die when we truly know and feel

² 1 Timothy 6:19

that on the other side is everything we have longed for – especially love and relationships.

'Here we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears... Now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.'

(1 Corinthians 13:9-12)

Let's press in a little more on this...

Think of the sheer effort it takes to create a nice moment. I mean, why so much effort just to achieve that? We put aside time, money and energy to get a few people together and experience something special, like a meal together. So much effort! There's the prep' time, which may or may not go smoothly, the weather, someone gets sick and can't come, some food doesn't turn out right, someone's stressed and irritable... Or let's say the event actually does go well. Great! Then there's clean-up, exhaustion at work the next day or two, etc. Moments of peace or enjoyment or escape in life are so costly.

Let me just say it, I find one of the most exhausting things in life is to go on vacation. The pressure to have a good time, to get value for money, to feel all things (*rested, happy, replenished, de-stressed*) And then that trip home! - unpacking, washing, reorganizing, and

turning to face back into the mundane...

There is treasure in this reflection. When we look carefully at what is real, and just hang our heads for a minute and lament what is real, God meets us here.

'It is better to go to a house of mourning than a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.' (Ecclesiastes 7:2)

The good times in life do mean something. We're not taking away from that. Goodness and good things have spiritual significance. But so also does the truth, the reality, of how much striving it takes to squeeze out a moment of peace. Why the striving? Why the hard work in order to rest from work?

When we stop and ask this question, our feet are finally resting on a floor of truth. We see goodness and joy. But we see ache and pain to touch it. Why? What's really going on?

Here is a trap door, an entry point to God's reality – which is the ultimate 'Real'. We must enter here. The reality we access here – the Spirit, the sphere, the purposes, the future – is the only one. Everything will one day be shaken, and what is not built on this Rock will fall and disappear like smoke out a window. Buildings will fall around us, and structures will fall within

us.

'We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.' (Hebrews 12:28)

Men and women of God throughout Scripture lived life here on earth, but walking paths in the Spirit. Paul puts it this way:

'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body I live by faith...'

(Galatians 2:20)

Abraham, we're old, was living life ***'looking forward to the kingdom with foundations whose architect and builder is God.'***

(Hebrews 11:10)

Again, the writer of Hebrews says to us all: ***'Here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.'***

(Hebrews 13:14)

Let's get back to the trap door, the entry point to God's reality. Let's look at what God told us about life, why the striving, why the ache for simple goodness. The story is, in fact, very simple. And the 'door' is open to us all.

In the beginning of time God made the world and people in it. He made them in his image – with a living soul, a mind, a choice – so that a

relationship with God could be true, real, chosen.³

We chose otherwise. We chose our own way. This should not surprise us, because we do this all the time in our relationships with one another. We are competitive, suspicious, jealous, insecure. In our relationships with one another we choose our own way every day. And we have done this with God.

In doing this, choosing self over God, we ushered death into the world. We ushered death into everything – our hearts, minds, and even nature. We see death, so to speak, in our own dying. That is a tangible experience of it. But what we don't often see with our eyes is the spirit of death blowing through all aspects of this world.

God said the consequence of letting sin into the fabric of this life, was that peace and rest would no longer come easy. Food, provision, satisfaction, once free and in reach all day long, was now only going to come forth by the sweat of our brow. We would toil to eat. We would toil to rest. We would toil to stay safe. This explains the toil we go through just to ward off decay for a moment, ward off fatigue, and experience a little satisfaction.

³ Genesis 1-3

Now, skip forward a few thousand years, and skip over many powerful prophecies in word and deed, God steps down. He puts his feet on our ground. Jesus is born, and called, **'God with us.'**⁴ We are told his name means **'God saves'**, because he would save us from our sin.⁵ Jesus would do this by sacrificing himself in death for our sin, like a sacrifice on an altar. Same thing. Except when Jesus died for sin, he was the real sacrifice, what all other ones only symbolized. He was it. And for this reason, while on the cross and dying, he said, **'It is finished.'** (John 19:30)

Jesus rose from the dead. His words before he died, while he died, and after he rose again, all now ring out for the rest of eternity. He defeated death and the decay of time.

Jesus said – and says to you and me now – **'I am the door. Anyone who enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find new life.'** (John 10:9)

⁴ Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23

⁵ Matthew 1:21

5. Heaven's Waiting Room

'Be still and know that I am God.'

(Psalm 46:10)

Right where you are, right now. You can stop. You can sit with the Lord as true as if sitting with a friend. If you met a friend today for coffee, and sat together, you would meet them in a new moment, a fresh encounter. Your time together would be 'current', in the present, alive. This is the same for you now, if you stop and sit with the Lord a while.

'Jesus said, 'I stand at your door and knock. If you open the door I will come in and dine with you.' (Revelation 3:20)

I often make way too much of trying to experience God's presence. I 'go' rather than 'stop'. I walk, I think, I read the Bible, I pray, I meet with other believers and talk talk talk. I go to a conference, a men's retreat, a small group. Or I drive to the seaside or walk a mountain. All good, but really necessary? *'Be still and know...'*

I'm trying to grow in this. Right here, right now. When I do, I feel like I'm already in heaven. In being still with the Lord for a while, just letting my mind go like a child's, I feel I am stepping into that ***'life that is truly life.'*** (1 Timothy 6:19) For a moment I am stepping out of the temporal – worries and money and people and work – and

standing on the shores of heaven. I'm there.

'You died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.' (Colossians 3:3)

And this is what's real. This is ultimate reality. The world passed away and eternity in the presence and peace of the Lord.

'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. Jesus, who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'' (Revelation 21:4-5)

When I come out of these times with the Lord, move on, take up a pen to write or pick up the phone, well, I'm chipping away again on that temporal project called life. There is meaning here, of course! Jesus came to restore and redeem that meaning. But there is also a powerful truth of just passing through here. Jesus was clear about that, and even moved through this life with eyes on another: **'For the joy set before him he endured the cross.'** (Hebrews 12:2)

Jesus came here, redeemed here, and set us here to call heaven down. (**'Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.'**)⁶ We have

⁶ Matthew 6:9-13

mission here, to haul heaven down. However, we are citizens of heaven, not here.⁷ And we ***‘fix our eyes not on what is seen but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary but what is unseen is eternal.’*** (2 Corinthians 4:18)

Those moments I do stop and step into God’s Spirit, I sometimes picture myself in Heaven’s Waiting Room. Like, life is done, behind me, I’ve run the race, kept the faith, and now I rest. No more work to do. Just rest. Wait. Peace like a river in my soul.

⁷ Philippians 3:20

6. Things Are Breaking

Paul tells Christians that we have power to demolish strongholds, and anything that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.

‘For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.’ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

Our mission is to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth. In other words, we work to see Jesus crowned King here on earth – in people’s hearts and minds, and therefore in the outworking of their lives and spirits and homes and communities. Where Jesus is King, his kingdom reigns.

Strongholds that we need to pray into, believe over, are those spirit forces that are cold to Christ.

‘Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.’ (Ephesians 6:12)

You know that feeling of a cold front coming in. Where people have a hard heart towards God and his truth revealed. Someone in work or school may sense that you are a Christian, that Christ is King inside you, and they resist this. You can feel it. Their face changed towards you ever since that became clear. This rejection is not personal. It is a rejection of the Spirit of God in you. It is a rejection of Jesus.

‘The Lord said to Samuel, ‘Listen to the people; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.’

(1 Samuel 8:7)

And in a workplace or school or city or culture, there can be a swell of resistance to Christians. There can be a group dynamic against faith. However, remember this: *There are no groups.* Every man, woman and child is a unique creation of God, and stands one-on-one, face-to-face with God. Any agreement between two people is really just a fabricated thing, destined to weaken, fade and disappear. There is no strength in numbers when it comes to people rejecting God. Everyone stands alone. And everyone will stand alone in the courts of Jesus one day.

‘We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.’ (2 Corinthians 5:10)

So even in a hostile workplace or school or city

or country, be at peace! You are not outnumbered at all! Look at this account when Elisha's servant thought they were surrounded and outnumbered:

'When the servant got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked.

"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered.

"Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.'

(2 Kings 6:15-17)

For a little while here on earth, you may feel that you are outnumbered by a group of unbelievers around you. You may feel that the air is thick with a spirit of immorality or anti-Christian sentiment. In this place, just whisper a prayer. Ask – each day – that the blood of Jesus would drop into this place like dish detergent drops on the surface of greasy water.

Pray the Lord would isolate people one from another, and get them alone with God. Pray the Lord breathes and breaks unholy bonds, and breaks the spirit that *'sets itself up against the knowledge of God.'*

Pray. Wait. Worship. Be at peace. Listen to the cracks in the dark spirit walls. Watch for them. They will appear, and the Holy Spirit will flow in like mist, and you will see victory taking souls one at a time.

7. Marinate (To Feel Zeal)

I often use a vinegarette salad dressing to marinate meat before grilling. I'm no chef, but this is my method. Just meat in a container, dressing on it, stir it a little, and then close the container and let it soak.

I've been challenged recently to just soak in the Lord's presence. To be still and know that he is Lord. To rest my mind and heart, even allow my thoughts to drift like a child.

'Unless you change and become like a child you cannot enter the kingdom of God.'

(Matthew 18:3)

I think back to my earliest 'senses' of God's voice to me. They go back to when I was four or five years old. One of them was a dream I had. The details really are not important, but what has often struck me is that I was very young at the time, and was not actively pursuing God. I was not meditating on his Word, memorizing Scripture, or striving to be a good disciple. And yet in that childlike state of mind God chose to speak to me, call me. So why now do I think I will only hear from God, feel him, when I am thinking about him, in the Word, talking and listening to other Christians and messages and podcasts? Kids' minds wander. Kids wander. And yet Jesus calls us to be like them to enter his kingdom. Just being still with the Lord. Sitting with him.

Quiet. Thoughts meander, that's OK. So do the thoughts of children.

Another time I felt the Lord call me was when a person called me. I was about five years old, and was at a day camp. I was one of the youngest kids there. At the end of the day the leaders had all the kids in a room to get them ready to be dismissed or picked up. They had a table at the front of the room with fruit on it, and the leader said:

'OK, everyone sit very quietly. When we see you sitting quietly, we will call names, one at a time, and you come up here and pick a piece of fruit and then go out the side door to go home.'

I remember sitting very quietly. I was looking down at the floor. I honestly did not think my name would be called soon because there were a lot of kids. Then suddenly the kids around me were actually grabbing my arm and shaking me a little, calling my name. Then I heard the leader calling out my name, '*Peter!*' I had actually zoned out. I remember as if coming back through a long tunnel or something, as their voices got louder and I actually heard them. I have no idea where I had gone deep inside myself for a few seconds, but I was out of touch, out of hearing.

This experience has often come to mind as a prophetic experience. Being a very little person

at the time, and one of many in a crowd, I felt unseen in that space. No jostling for attention, my head down. But I was seen, and my name called out. Again, what stands out to me in this experience is what I was *not* doing at the time. I was somewhere deep in my own thoughts, even out of connection, in a sense, to the people around me. And yet there I was seen and called.

When Nathanael was told about Jesus by his brother, and came to see him, Jesus said:

'Nathanael, a genuine person in character! I saw you under the tree before your brother called you.' (John 1:47)

Nathanael acknowledged to Jesus that this was impossible, had to be a miracle. Not sure what the tree deal was, but something about it told Nathanael that Jesus saw him when he felt he could not be seen. Getting alone with God, just being still, being humble and childlike, is a place to soak in his Spirit.

I think of Elijah. He was a powerful prophet of God. At one point God moves Elijah into the wilderness, in hiding, for three years. He was alone and ravens brought him food morning and evening. When Elijah came back on the scene, he came in power. He appeared and challenged nine hundred prophets of Baal to prove whose God was real. Then he ordered the people watching to kill the false prophets, all nine

hundred.

Interestingly after this event, it was as if Elijah was poured out, spent. He became suddenly afraid and ran into the desert, a forty-day journey. Read this full account in 1 Kings 17-19.

What I find interesting here is that Elijah's time alone with God in the silence – without the Bible, without worship music, retreats, etc. – was empowering. He was soaking in the Spirit of God. I'm sure like all long days and nights, Elijah's thoughts and feelings and experiences and strength varied up and down. But when it was time for Elijah to act, to prophesy, all the soaking came forth in zeal, in power. It was as if the time leading up to this was a time of filling, and then when Elijah was full of the Spirit, it was poured out. Then he was empty again, and ran.

This is not an equation, a paradigm to follow all the time. But it is history, an account of God working through his appointed people for battle. We need to soak, marinate, so that we *'feel the zeal'* when it is time to act, to witness, to share, to ***'acknowledge Christ before men.'*** (Luke 12:8-9)

We will end this section with this last reflection. Jesus told his disciples that hard times would come, when they would be dragged into court regarding their faith. Look carefully at what Jesus tells them to do in preparation for this:

‘Determine it in your mind that you will not prepare in advance for what you will say. I will give you words and wisdom that they will not be able to resist.’ (Luke 21:14-15)

Jesus tells them to prepare by *not* preparing. This is not the way of the world. But what it does tell us – what Jesus tells us – is that it is more important we know his voice, his Spirit, his prompting, than some clever strategy and argument.

We get to know his voice by spending time with him – in the Word, in worship, in fellowship, in obedience. We get to know his Spirit by spending time soaking in his presence.

8. Dust off Your Feet

There are spiritual forces at work all the time, and spiritual territories. And every person in the mix defines an era. Let me explain...

So you take five people on an island. There's a culture. Each character is a soul, made in the image of God, unique. When you add them together, and give them a common goal (such as survival), you have an intricate, spirit equation. You have not only the interactions and relationship dynamics between each person, but you have the dynamics impacted by the common goal. If you changed the goal even slightly, different character dynamics would be triggered and interact differently. For example, if one person suggested that as a group they need a leader and should vote for one, well, this new goal for the group could change up friendship and relationship dynamics.

Now, keeping this island analogy, let's say that you are introduced to the group for a three month period. Now there are six people. Your relationship with every one of the other five will bring new dynamics and in a sense define a new era. Your relationship with just one of them – positive or negative – will impact that person's relationship with the others, and so on. So for this three month period while you are in the mix, there is a different spirit in the air.

Now let's bring this home to real life. Let's talk about you and me as Christians, when we are in the mix with other people.

Jesus said that Christians were *'light'* and *'salt'* here on earth. And Jesus admonishes us as salt to *'not lose our saltiness'*. Jesus also casts vision for our role as *'light'*, saying:

'A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.'

(Matthew 5:15-16)

So when you are involved with people for a set time, your presence there marks an era. It may be that you are three days on training with people, or ten years in a family with people. You may be two years on a particular team, or twenty years living in a particular city. The parameters that mark your presence in a place or set of people is particular to you. For example, you may be five years in a business, but there is a sub-set of an era in that team of eight people you are on. An era within an era. It is an interesting exercise to consider how many (and there are many!) groups you are involved with, and therefore eras you define.

Now, let me emphasize, this is a spiritual thing. But I am talking to you as a child of God bearing the light of Jesus in your very person. You also have a mission that underpins your life, the mission of letting your light shine, i.e. your testimony of being a follower of Christ. This is God's highest call on all of us. This mission – what we call the 'Great Commission'⁸ of Jesus – is at the core of what's really going on in history. It is history. All of life is going to rise and fall, live and be judged, on this truth: Jesus Christ. So God's truest reality, and therefore the very heartbeat of your truest reality, is the Spirit of Jesus in you, and his work in you and through you to advance his kingdom.

An example of this might be as follows. Your boss at work is preoccupied with the big project underway. Fifty people are on it. It is a twelve-month project with many stakeholders and much money involved. So much to do! It is your employment, after all, so it is good that there is work to be done or you would not have the job. This is level one of what's real.

Level two – and let's just go with two levels right now – is the work of God revealing himself to all people. So in this work place there are hundreds of people. God is at work in each one. In fact, the very reason each person in this workplace was created by God was to:

⁸ Matthew 28:18-20

'Seek God, perhaps reach out to God, and find God.' (Acts 17:25-27)

So apart from the hustle and bustle of survival, and being a good, upstanding worker (also glorifying to God), there is the eternal purpose of each person around you to know Jesus Christ. Now, regarding your actual part in this 'reach', this revelation work in people's lives, that is a different question. Not one to be stressed about, but yes, to pursue and grow in. Please see this footnote here for recommended reading on that.⁹

But what we are considering here is the 'era' you mark by being present in this place. You are light here, you are salt here, for Jesus. So when you side-step gossip, speak wholesome things, pray silently and faithfully for people, even maybe with some people, and generally let your light as a Christian shine, you are marking an era. Your season here is significant. They are blessed to have you. The Spirit of God in you affects and even brings favor and blessing on those in your space, your era, according to God.¹⁰

Now, let me jump deep in where this era you are marking comes to an end, for whatever reason. It may be that you simply move on with new prospects, or maybe it is a little more explicitly to do with your faith. I personally have lost jobs

⁹ **'Sharing My Faith: Learning as I Go.'** Under BOOKS at www.sharingmyfaith.weebly.com

¹⁰ See 1 Corinthians 7:14. There is a type of blessing on those you are present with.

because of my faith and witness. I have been let go, asked to leave. Era ended.

Note this, it is very important: When you – salt and light in Jesus' name – leave a place, a particular spiritual era comes to a close. Your part is over. And you can be at peace.

What you have left behind may not be in great shape, and may still weigh on your heart – a family situation, a workplace, a relationship, or a whole country or political space. But your part is done. With the change of the era, a new era begins. This should bring a sense of hope and a sense of relief.

You see, even Jesus underscored places and spaces and times, and moved on. I will give only one example of this, but it impresses on me, and I think gives us a paradigm to note for eras in our own lives.

Jesus sent his disciples out on mission, in pairs of two. Look at what he tells them:

'Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.' (Luke 9:4-5)

The disciples come to a town with the authority of Jesus to bless them, and to proclaim the

message of Jesus. You and I have this same calling, equipping and mission. If the town they go to (or business or workplace or country or neighborhood or church) resisted them, they were to draw a line in the sand. They were to close that era and mark it as hostile. And move on. Their part was done there. Jesus went on to say the following:

'I tell you, it will be more bearable on Judgment Day for Sodom than for that town.'
(Luke 10:12)

We see that this rejection of the disciples – and your faith and my faith – underscores a type of judgment. It marks a moment spiritually. It marks an era of you, them, and God's Spirit through you.

When you move on from a place, so does your spiritual part in that place. Be at peace, your part is done. And the place isn't the same now without you. A new era has begun, good or bad, but spiritually-speaking your deposit there, your salt and light for whatever time period, has been underscored.

9. Why Look Back?

I remember a party that my wife and I went to when we were in college. It was a mistake to accept, but alas! We found ourselves on a bus, hired by the girl's family, to take all the invitees to their holiday home an hour or two away. It would be a big meal, and overnight.

Started fine, as most parties do. Big meal served. But then the beer started to flow, music cranked up, people starting to get tipsy. We realized soon that it was going to be a night of heavy drinking and immorality. Such a sinking feeling in my gut. House was out in the middle of nowhere, so just had to weather it till the next day. We found a room in this big house, a blanket and pillows, and tried to sleep on the floor. Music and noise and shouting in the background, door opening and then slamming, laughing and joking... It felt like hell. Anyway, believe it or not we fell asleep. Next thing I know our friend is tapping on my shoulder with a hot cup of tea for me and for my wife. Morning had come. He said he just thought we might like a cup of tea.

I remember sitting up against the wall and seeing the light of dawn coming in the window. Light changes everything! The morning had broken in, people were exhausted, weary, some asleep, some whispering on the porch. But the power of darkness had slipped away. That's

what it felt like to me.

I think of Jesus saying to the people that came to arrest him in the dead of night, **'This is your hour and the power of darkness.'** (Luke 22:53)

So here and now, in the present, in this life, we have Christ. And he does have powerful purpose and calling on our lives here in this life. He redeemed us here for a reason, and left us with mission here for a reason. He loves earth, people, and seeing his kingdom come to earth, like a rising sun over a dark land.

However, while we soldier away here for Christ, we are still living and working in a sinful place. We still face sickness, hardship and death. So as we bring God's kingdom here, we still **'weep with those who weep'**,¹¹ as there is unrelenting suffering.

For this reason God called us, while living here, to fix our eyes on the unseen. Peter refers to **'our inheritance stored up for us in heaven'**, and Paul said, when choosing between life and death, **'I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.'**¹²

The fact is, despite all worthy and meaningful efforts of believers to bring God's kingdom to earth, life here is hard and will never be heaven.

¹¹ Romans 12:15

¹² 1 Peter 1:4; Philippians 1:23

It may or may not be merged with heaven one day, but not before final judgment of all people, not before the complete defeat of death and mortality, and not before the whole world has been razed to the ground by fire.¹³

Understanding this, we as Christians focus on our eternal home: Heaven. Here we battle, as an outworking of the victory that Jesus has won. Here we work for the kingdom, for the King, Jesus, because every action of faith is meaningful to God and to people. As we advance the kingdom, the world becomes a better place and souls are saved. But, **'here we do not have an enduring city, rather we are looking for the city that is to come.'** (Hebrews 13:14)

While we are here in the body, as Paul writes, **'that will mean fruitful labor for us.'** (Philippians 1:21) We will work to pull heaven down, as Jesus taught us to pray and to live: **'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.'** What an incredible reason to live! What a purpose! As a cause above and beyond survival and savings, marriage and family, we have the daily call to walk with Christ as King, and seek to advance his rule as the Spirit leads. We live in the present, we labor in faith in the present.

¹³ 2 Peter 3:11-13

However, God's truest reality is up ahead. When we **'finish the race'**,¹⁴ well, we arrive. We cross the river. Sin and sorrow will be no more. Holiness will course through our spirits and holiness will be in the very fabric - the streets - of heaven itself. No death. No regrets. No tears. This is God's highest prize for you, for me, and it is closer every day.

'The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, ever brighter until the full light of day.' (Proverbs 4:18)

Let's keep our eyes on the horizon. We are seeing the dawning of the day.

'What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.'

(1 Corinthians 2:12-15)

¹⁴ 2 Timothy 4:7

'From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view, as we once did Christ, but we do so no more.' (2 Corinthians 5:16)

Thank you for taking time to read this book. For more free resources to encourage you in your faith, please visit:

www.1peter1three.weebly.com

