Our Salvation Is Nearer Than When We Believed

Intro: The title is taken from Rom. 13:11 “And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Some mistakenly think Paul was expecting the imminent return of Christ. While no one knows when Christ will return (Mat. 24:36 “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”) we must always be prepared as if His coming is imminent. Some believe that Paul was speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Whether Paul was writing about Jerusalem’s destruction, the end of time, or the end of our life the principle is the same. For each one of us “now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

I. LIFE HERE UPON EARTH IS BRIEF AND UNCERTAIN
   A. Our lifespan on earth is limited.
      1. Psa. 90:9-10 "For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.”
      2. Jam. 4:13-15 “Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: 14 Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15 For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.”
   B. Some thought their life would shortly come to an end.
      1. 2 Kin. 20:1-7 “In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live. 2 Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, 3 I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore. 4 And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 5 Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD. 6 And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David’s sake. 7 And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they too and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.”
         a. Hezekiah had been a faithful king.
         b. He put a stop to people worshipping false gods.
         c. He was sick and Isaiah informed him that he was going to die.
         d. He prayed to God and was granted an additional 15 years to his life.
      2. Peter spoke of his life coming to an end; 2 Pet. 1:13-15 “Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; 14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. 15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.”
      3. Paul spoke of his life coming to an end; 2 Tim. 4:6-8 “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”
C. God did not intend for man to live a perpetual life here on earth.

1. Gen. 3:22-24 "22 And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: 23 Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. 24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

2. Physical death was the penalty for the disobedience of Adam and Eve; Rom. 5:12 "12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;"

3. Our purpose while here is to prepare for eternity
   a. Ecc. 12:13 "13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."
   b. Fearing God and keeping His commands is what man is.
   c. Acts 17:27-28 "27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring."

II. We should be thankful for the time we have to serve God.

A. Phi. 1:19-26 "19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again."

1. Paul had mixed emotions about departing this life or remaining for the good of his brethren.
2. Paul was in prison at Rome when he wrote this.
   a. He was going to magnify Christ either way: life or death.
   b. Most believe that he was released from this imprisonment.
3. He was imprisoned a second time and wrote; 2 Tim. 4:6-8 "6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

B. We know faithful brethren who are no longer with us.

1. There are many each of us have admired for their dedication and zeal for God.
2. The Lord’s kingdom is still bearing fruit from their labors.
3. Rev. 14:13 "13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."
4. Heb. 11:4 "4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."
5. Will this be true about each one of us?

C. We need to serve God and do all we can for His cause while we can.

1. John 9:4 "4 I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."
2. Good intentions will not be adequate for us on the Day of Judgment (adage: the road to hell is paved with good intentions).
III. WHAT CAN WE DO NOW FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRIST?

A. We cannot “pass the buck.”
   1. Many have the attitude to let someone else do it.
   2. We have our own personal responsibility; Gal. 6:5 “For every man shall bear his own burden.”

B. Faithfully attend worship services.
   1. Each of us can attend all the services.
   2. Each of us can encourage brethren who do not attend all the services to do so.
   3. God desires us to be true worshippers.
      a. John 4:23-24 “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”
      b. 1 Cor. 11:20 “When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper.”

C. Be a zealous worker.
   1. Why not volunteer instead of waiting and hoping someone else will.
      a. Eph. 2:10 “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”
      b. Tit. 2:14; 3:1 “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works…. 3:1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,”
      c. Acts 9:36, 39 “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did….. 39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.”
   2. If everyone waited on someone else, nothing would ever get done.

D. Parents should bring up their children properly:
   1. Eph. 6:4 “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”
   2. Often includes grandparents: 2 Tim. 1:5 “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.”

E. Reach out to delinquent Christians.
   1. Are we broken-hearted by those who have fallen away.
      a. Paul certainly seemed to be.
      b. 2 Tim. 4:10 “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.”
   2. Gal. 6:1 “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”
   3. Jam. 5:19-20 “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”
   4. We may not be successful with some we contact, but there is no way to be successful if we do not try.

F. Reach out to those who are not Christians.
   1. If we do not do it, no one else will.
   2. 2 Cor. 5:11 “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.”
3. Surely we would not want someone to see us as they go into eternal torment and say to us, “You met me day by day and knew I was astray, yet you never mentioned Him to me.”

4. Our souls will be lost if we fail to teach others the Gospel.

Conclusion: Our salvation is nearer than when we obeyed the Gospel. We cannot become lax for to do so is to become lost.