



THE PASTOR'S PEN

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An Irrelevant Question

A teacher was walking from one town to the next with his disciples close by as they traveled. Mixed into the group were many other people from all walks of life asking questions and seeking answers from this wise man who had come into their lives. It seems that most of the questions that day were about life beyond the grave.

As the day progressed, the teacher only laughed and did not give a single answer about what awaited beyond this world. He talked of other things that focused on daily life and daily tasks. The people listened and as the day finally drew to a close, they departed and went back to their homes and their families. His disciples however, were puzzled by his actions of the day. They wondered why he had not answered any of the questions of what life would be like in the next world. That evening as they gathered around a fire and shared a simple meal, the disciples demanded to know the reason for his evasiveness.

The teacher smiled, then he quietly chuckled and said, "Have you observed that it is precisely those who do not know what to do with their lives in this world who want another life that will last forever?"

Not to be put off, one of the disciples persisted. "But is there life after death or is there not?"

The teacher enigmatically looked at his disciple and said, "Is there life before death? That is the real question!"

That is the question that we also need to look at and ask ourselves as well. What are we doing with the life that God has given us? Are we using it for good? Are we living for Him and serving others in the name of Jesus Christ? Or, are we wasting each day, drifting along without direction or purpose? If we cannot find a cause to live and work for in this world, and there are many, many good ones to choose from, then what do we expect to do in the next life?

This life is the trial, the proving ground, which shows who we are and what we are capable of accomplishing. Our time in this world is a pilgrim's journey that establishes what God can expect out of us in the world that is to come.

How are we using our opportunities for service here on earth? Are we living each day to its fullest? Are we using our talents and abilities in service to His kingdom here in this world? What kind of track records are we producing by our daily living and actions? I know that these are hard questions, but that does not make them any less real or less important. They are questions that we need to ask and then answer honestly to ourselves.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 2:12-13 (NIV), "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." In other words, we are responsible for our own personal relationship with God and the work we do in His name and service we give while we are on this earth. He expects us to be active in this life, living and working for Him. How are you doing with that responsibility? Where are you at as you "work out your salvation" with the Lord? If you are not sure about any of this, maybe you need to be involved more in Sunday School or a Bible Study. Maybe you need to be sharing your gifts more with others and helping them on their journey through this world. Maybe, you may need someone to help you along as you work out your own journey through this

world, to be ready for your journey and opportunities in the next. There are many challenges and opportunities here for you in the coming year, if you want a full and abundant life not only in this world but also in the world that is yet to come. So, are you ready to make your life here count and prepare you for the future? If so, we will be looking for you this week and throughout 2014 in worship, in study and in service to our Lord.

From a fellow pilgrim,

James


