

Considering Your Latter End

by Michael L. Brown

The sermon emphasizes the importance of considering the final end of our actions, avoiding the devil's strategy of blinding us to consequences, and living a life of wisdom, discipline, and obedience to God's instructions.

Duration: 58:39

Scripture: Proverbs 19:20

Topics: "Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by sharing a tragic story of a 15-year-old girl who ran away from home and ended up becoming a prostitute. He emphasizes the gradual descent into sin and the devastating consequences that follow. The speaker then quotes Proverbs 5:3-6, which warns against the seductive speech and destructive path of an adulterous woman. He highlights the hidden realities of sexual sin, such as STDs, broken marriages, and the emotional pain inflicted on children. The sermon concludes with a prayer for the power of God's Word to penetrate hearts, bring healing, and lead to a life dedicated to overcoming the works of darkness.

Transcript

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. Father, this truth, this message is so powerful and so explosive, Lord, the message of your Word.

God, I pray that I would adequately and faithfully deliver what your Word says, and that there might be supernatural spiritual penetration, that all the walls that people have unconsciously put up would fall, that any resistance, any hardness, any pull towards the flesh and the world would be broken this morning by the power of your Word. May your Word come, O God, as a piercing sword that will wound the heart and bring great healing. May it produce death to the flesh and life in the spirit.

May it bring out for you, Lord, a people wholly dedicated, free, O God, from the wiles of Satan, overcoming the works of darkness by the power of your Word. May Jesus and his truth be exalted in our midst. Lord, may your Holy Spirit anoint these words to the changing of lives eternally.

In Jesus' name, amen. I want you to open up to the book of Proverbs, the 19th chapter. It's a real blessing to me to see the love that you people have for the Old Testament.

Because of the history of this church, there's also a love for the Hebrew language. I was blessed to meet people last night, several that tell me they subscribe to the Jerusalem Post. Well, this is a life and death message, but it starts with a Hebrew lesson.

And I want you all to repeat one word with me. It's the Hebrew word, acharit. Say it with me, acharit.

Once more, acharit. What does acharit mean? Well, I'm going to give you a Hebrew lesson first. In Hebrew and the Semitic languages, many of the words having to do with direction, prepositions, and different things like that, can come from parts of the body.

For example, the word for beginning in Hebrew comes from the word for head. Because the head is what's on top, or the head from the top down is what comes first. And if you want to talk about the top of a mountain, in Hebrew, the Semitic languages, you talk about the head of the mountain.

We do that with a class. Being at the head of the class means being at the top. If you want to talk about somebody being right next to you, you would literally say it's by the hand.

If you want to talk about someone being right before you, you'd speak of them as at the face or to the face, facing you, right before you. Well, the Hebrew word acharit comes from the word for back. What's the principle? Now, I look, you know, I look fine here this morning.

I've got my, you know, jacket and tie on. I look fine, but you can't see what's behind me. You can't see what's on my back.

Now, I don't know if you kids have ever done this, so you can remember doing this when you were younger, but you ever have something that you stick on somebody's back, some sticker, you know, and the person's walking around and you're, you know, everybody's laughing at you and you don't know why. Well, there's something on your back, but you can't see it. And when, when I'm walking towards you, you can't see what's on my back because that is that which comes after, but it's hidden from this side.

And it's only if I turned around and let's say the thing was splattered with mud or ripped, everyone would, I guess, but you don't see it from this side. It's only from the other side. So, the Hebrew word, literally means that which comes after, but the principle is you can't see it from this vantage point.

So, for example, this word can refer to the after effects of something. This word can refer to offspring of parents because it's the next generation, that which comes after. And then it comes to mean the end.

When the prophets would speak of the end of days in Isaiah, the second chapter, it'll come to pass in the end of days. It's in the acharit of days. And you see, one of the principles of God's wisdom is He shows us that which comes after, which we cannot see from our present vantage point.

He shows us the final consequences of sin and righteousness, but we, from our own vantage point, can't see them. And the word acharit occurs about 65 times in the Old Testament, but 13 of those times, it's found in the book of Proverbs. In other words, it's out of all proportion in the book of Proverbs.

20% of its occurrences are found there because it's the whole purpose of Proverbs. And look in Proverbs chapter 19, verse 20, Proverbs chapter 19, verse 20, listen to advice and accept instruction so that in your acharit you will be wise. Listen to advice and accept instruction so that you will be wise in your acharit.

That's the whole purpose of the book of Proverbs. The problem is that this world and the devil, with all of his guile, are constantly presenting to us that which you can see instead of that which comes after. The devil is always trying to present things to you in the most appealing, attractive way so that you need it, so that you have to have it, so that you can't live without it, and at the same time blinding you to the consequences.

And the whole message of Proverbs is to open your eyes to that perspective that you can't possibly see. Open your eyes to the divine perspective so that you will live right in the here and now, and in your aharit, in your final end, you'll be wise. Now, I want you to turn back to the fifth chapter of the book of Proverbs.

As you're turning there, I want to tell you a tragic story that I read about years ago when I lived on Long Island. There was a 15-year-old girl, lived on the island, attractive young girl, looked older than she really was, was having real problems and hassles with her parents, and finally decided that she was going to run away. She couldn't take the fighting anymore.

So, she and a friend decided to hitchhike from New York down to Texas, and they were picked up by a trucker, and this trucker paid them money to perform a sexual act with him. On a certain level, it was fairly minor, but they were so ashamed of it, when they got out of the truck, they just cried in shame. Well, the one girl gets down to Texas, the 15-year-old, family doesn't hear much from her, then they hear that she's a waitress and this and that.

Well, little by little by little by little, her life was getting more and more caught up with sin. Little by little by little, she was depending more and more on her good looks and sexuality to get along. Before long, she ended up becoming a prostitute.

Now, remember, this is the same girl that had cried after being paid to do something by this truck driver. She didn't let her parents really know what was happening, but she worked in this place that was just the lowest of the low. There were porno movies on a huge screen in this restaurant, and then the waitresses would just come out and men would pick who they wanted, go to bed with them.

And she became the most popular in the whole place. Although she was young, she looked a lot older, she became the most popular, and soon she noticed that the other ladies were starting to get jealous. Finally, she realized that her life was in danger and she was going to try and make a run for it, but she got caught by the pimp and his wife.

And a policeman that had been involved in fishing her body out of the river said that when they pulled her naked body out of the river, it was the most brutally tortured body they had ever seen in all their experience. She had cigarette burns from head to toe. Her jaw was broken.

She had been shot through the mouth and then thrown into the river. Now, I want you to understand something. If for one split second she could have seen her Aharit, if for one split second she could have seen herself being tortured and abused and screaming out that her life would be spared, if for one split second she could have seen her body dragged out of that river, she never would have left her parents' home.

If she could have seen her Aharit, no temptation would have been so great to pull her down that path. She would have rather sat home and been cursed and abused by her parents every day of her life than to step out of that home. Yet the thing is, she did not see her Aharit, she did not see her final end.

And that's the whole seductive way of the devil, to show you how good the thing is, to show you how nice it's going to feel, to show you how much you need it, for that pull to come in the flesh where you feel like you can't live without it and to completely blind you to the consequences. Years ago, I realized that one of the great incentives in my life to keep me from sinning was if I could remember how I felt after I sinned. If I could remember that and then the next time temptation came, say, wait a second, remember how miserable you felt, remember the destruction that it brought, remember the conviction, remember the shame.

If you could remember how you felt after you sinned, before you sinned, the next time you wouldn't do it. But you see, we know better. Oh, we're smarter than all that.

I remember being junior high, high school, before I fell into drugs, I should say dove into drugs. And this police sergeant came into our school and he had all this drug paraphernalia that he was showing off. You know, and they had all these things from, you know, showing you what, you know, a joint looked like for, you know, smoking pot to all the way, you know, all things having to do with shooting dope.

And he had all this stuff up there and he began to talk. He said, now you see it starts with a marijuana joint. You know, and all this terminology seems so stiff to me, you know.

Starts with this, he said, but it leads to this. And if you start smoking pot, you'll end up shooting heroin. I said, right, come on, give me a break, man.

I mean, I knew plenty of people that were smoking pot that never in their wildest dreams would shoot heroin. Man, this guy didn't know what he was talking about. Well, sure, most of the friends that I knew and most of the friends that I hung out with in high school did certain drugs and never ended up shooting dope.

But for me, the one that sat there and mocked and laughed and said he's stupid, within a year or two, I was doing that very thing, stealing money from my own father, breaking into a doctor's office, just for the fun of it, see what we could find, shooting every possible thing I could into my veins, coming within an inch of death numerous times, several times at least. For me, one thing led to the next, led to the next, and all the while the devil was there saying, hey, look, it's not so bad. I mean, look, so you do this drug, you're never going to do this real bad, I mean, you're never going to shoot heroin, you're never going to become a junkie, but it's not so bad if you do the next thing.

And then you go to the next thing. Well, you're never going to shoot heroin, become a junkie, but it's not so bad to go to the next. And before you know it, I remember right before God saved me, you know, shooting dope and doing every drug I could, the thought hit, that wouldn't be so bad to just be a junkie and totally addicted dead, it wouldn't be, it's so bad about that.

Something that would have been totally unthinkable, totally impossible in my mind, little by little by little, the devil had pulled me in. Now, look at what it says here in Proverbs the fifth chapter. My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my words of insight, that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge.

And there are more warnings in the book of Proverbs about adultery, sexual immorality than anything else. The sections are so long and full. Look, this is why I'm telling you, this is what Proverbs is saying, this is why I'm telling you these things, because the lips of an adulteress drip honey and her speech is smoother

than oil.

Listen to me, nobody looks as good as they're presented as looking. You see all these pictures, you know, all these displays, you know, magazines and pornographic stuff, some cities just in open view, newspaper stands and this and that. Oh man, all the women look so beautiful, all the men look so perfect.

If only you could have that, think of how unsatisfied you really are, if only you could have that. Think of how much more fulfilled you would be, if only you could have that. Boy, that speech, that seductive speech, that seductive look, oh boy, it just draws you right in, you need it.

The lips of an adulteress drip honey, her speech is smoother than oil, but her acharit, the final end associated with her, the final consequences of consorting with her are bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps lead straight to the grave, she gives no thought to the way of life, her paths are crooked, but she knows it not. Listen, you never see the picture of the people wasting away with VD, you don't see the picture of the people who've been infected with AIDS, you don't see the picture of the marriages who've been destroyed and the little kids crying because they can't see daddy anymore, they can't see mommy anymore, you don't see the people looking for forgiveness, but they can't find it because the husband or wife has been totally betrayed.

No, the devil doesn't show you that, just some beautiful seductive picture, just something that you have to have, and he puts within you this spirit of dissatisfaction. You know the whole problem that we have with divorce in the United States is certainly coupled with this notion that there's someone better out there, that there's something better, that there's a better experience, that there's something more fulfilling, that there's someone who'll love you more faithfully, or he'll serve you more, or he'll be a better partner, it's out there, as opposed to being content with what God has and letting God's blessing be the thing that fulfills. I remember when I worked teaching in New York City, teaching Korean students, training for ministry, that there was a Christian bookstore down the block, but in order to get to that bookstore, you walk past all these porno movies, and on one side of the street were all these ungodly, despicable things, lives, sex acts, girls, girls, girls, and on the other side was the exact same thing, except it was all male, it was all homosexual, and I remember saying to myself, if the devil can get you in this one place soon enough, he'll get you in the other.

That constant degeneration, and then before you know it, the ones that he's got in the homosexual place are going to be seeking out child pornography, and if they give themselves over to that, then all types of violent pornography, and if they give themselves over to that, soon you'll be reading about them in the newspaper headlines, serial killer, child molester. Oh, the devil doesn't show you that. The devil doesn't show you some sick, demented human being, withering away in a prison cell for life, with a tortured memory of all the people's lives they destroyed.

No, he just shows you this beautiful woman, or this gorgeous man, and he doesn't show you the Aharit. One time I was going into the city, and I found a newspaper on the train, when I lived on Long Island, going into New York City, and I opened up the paper, and I read a story. I'll tell you, that whole day, my stomach was in knots.

That whole week, I couldn't get over it. The memory of it just kept shaking me. There was a rich businessman on Long Island, and this group of people got together, and they were going to kidnap him and get a ransom.

What happened was, they set it up. They knew there was one way they could get to him. This attractive young woman invited him over to this house, and that was the bait.

Boy, he was married, but he was some young girl. He really wanted it. He went into the house where she was, and next thing, got attacked by the rest of the people.

They kidnapped him, and then they brought him to this apartment in a desolate area that was specially made. It had thick boards so that he couldn't be heard screaming, and they abused him, and they tortured him. Unbelievably, every type of thing you can imagine.

Here's a grown man. They made him relieve himself in a diaper, and then they got his wife to agree to give the money, but they were so demented that they beat him to death before they even got the money. In the last five days, when they did an autopsy, they found he hadn't had food in his body at all for the last five days.

And you think, if he could have seen the Akhirite? I mean, look, you may say, well, that's extreme. That doesn't happen every day. Well, this is nothing compared to the Akhirite of hell and destruction, and being cast out of the presence of God forever.

If he could have seen it, if he could have heard his tortured cries, if he could have seen the fear in his eyes, if he could have just one glimpse, one split second of that, there could have been 10 million gorgeous women. He wouldn't have gone near them. It wouldn't have been worth it.

It wouldn't have been worth it for all the pleasure in the world. Not with an Akhirite like that. The lips of an adulterous drip honey in her speech is smoother than oil, but her Akhirite is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword.

I want you to look down. Let's keep reading. Verse 7, Now then, my sons, listen to me.

Do not turn aside from what I say. Keep to a path far from her. Do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your best strength to others and your years to one who is cruel.

Lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil and enrich another man's house. And in your Akhirite, you will groan when your flesh and body are spent. You will say, how I hate it, discipline.

How my heart spurned correction. I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors. I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly.

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares, let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth, a loving doe, a graceful deer.

May her breast satisfy you always. May you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulterous? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife? For man's ways are in full view of the Lord and he examines all his paths.

The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him. The cords of his sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.

You know, there was a man that traveled internationally. People referred to his ministry as apostolic. From what I heard, God used him, planted churches in some other countries.

I don't know what happened. I don't know what discouragement set in. I don't know what the factors involved were, but he ended up completely falling into sin at least one night.

He went to New York City, he got drunk and he ended up in a homosexual orgy. One night, years later, he found out that he contracted AIDS. You tell me you're going to have faith for healing when you know how you brought that on? You tell me the devil's not going to play mind games with you all the time to condemn you and say you'll never be healed? Well, he wasn't.

He died. Not only did he die, but before he died, he infected his wife. Not only did he infect his wife, but the baby that she bore is also infected with AIDS.

In your aharit, you will groan when your flesh and body are spent. You will say, how? I hate it. Discipline.

How? My heart spurned correction. I mean, look, you have to understand, young people in particular, the devil has nothing good planned for you. His only goal is to destroy you.

And to the extent that you will go his way and yield to the lust of the flesh, that quickly will he destroy you. That quickly will he make your aharit ugly. But you see, we don't see it from this perspective.

From our vantage point, we can't see that which comes after. That's why the word of God has to warn us and tell us. That's the purpose of divine wisdom.

I remember growing up, they used to have commercials for Marlboro country. You know, get on this horse, you know, big macho cowboy. Get on this horse and ride off into the beautiful horizon.

And all you need to make that dream come true in your life is a Marlboro cigarette. I mean, they don't show you, you know, they should have showed you Marlboro country and go into a lung cancer ward in the hospital. There's somebody withering away.

There's the family at the grave site mourning, you know, the wife and four children as the husband's being buried, dead of lung cancer. But they don't show you that part. No, the devil lies.

Oh, sure, there's some pleasure in sin for a season. You know, I tell people, listen, especially with drugs, they used to call me drug baron Ironman. I used to put such huge quantities of, you know, doses of things into my system.

I mean, the fact of the matter is I did everything that I could possibly figure out how to do. You know, the pleasures of sin, especially, you know, with this drug abuse. And when I met the Lord, I mean, it went instantly.

Do you understand? I didn't go through some up and down battle for months and months. I had a couple of weeks of wrestling it through. And when I surrendered, that was it.

God freed me. And it wasn't, I've never for a split second since I've been walking with the Lord, never one time regretted abandoning all that or wished I could have it back. Sure, there's pleasure.

Sure, there are things that cater to the lust of the flesh. But if you don't give in to the lie, if you yield to God, you find out that God's blessing is the only thing that fulfills and brings life and true satisfaction. And the other stuff may stimulate for a bit, but it destroys.

I'm not saying that if somebody did the drugs that I did, that there wouldn't be some pleasure. I'm not saying that when I shot heroin, it was misery. No, the sin or the pleasure of sin is not the misery.

It's the consequences. And there are always consequences that destroy. Sin is never the right thing.

Sin is never the good thing. Sin is never the helpful thing. Sin never benefits you or benefits the kingdom.

Look at what it says in Proverbs, the sixth chapter. Start in verse 23. For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life, keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife.

Do not lust in your heart after her beauty, or let her captivate you with her eyes. For the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulterous preys upon your very life. She may look beautiful, she may look tempting, it may look like what you want, but don't be drawn after it.

In the end, it's going to reduce you to nothing. Young women, in the clearest possible way I can address you. Do not ever make yourself into a temptress.

Do not act and dress and walk and live in such a way so as to draw attention to your flesh, or so as to make other men desire your body. You be godly, you be holy. There's a beauty that excels words for anyone who will be beautiful and holy in the sight of God.

And God will bring into your life the one He pleases to bring into your life. But I'll tell you something, you may have blood on your hands if you find out that you have woefully made yourself into an object of lust for other men. Sisters, maybe you're struggling in your marriage.

Maybe your husband is really not being a husband and a man in your home. Don't play games with flirtatious friendships. Don't play games with your eyes and draw other men in, or just satisfy your ego by knowing that somebody else would want you.

Don't play games. Before you know it, the thing that's just an impossible thought in your mind might become reality and you might find yourself trapped. Jesus said, yes, there are going to be stumbling blocks.

Yes, there are going to be things that cause offense, but woe be to the man or woman that causes the people of God to stumble. Do not lust in your heart after her beauty. Go over to Proverbs, the 23rd chapter.

I want you to see something amazing. Proverbs, the 23rd chapter. We're starting verse 29.

The writer says, don't lust after some prostitute's heart. Don't lust after her beauty in your heart. Don't be drawn after her.

Look at what it says here. Proverbs 23, 29. Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? Those who linger over wine.

Who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Now, look at what it says. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly.

Same thing. Don't lust after the prostitute's beauty in your heart. Don't lust after that drink.

Boy, just glistening in the cup. You know, I don't know if it's still the case now, but as long as I can remember anyway, it was illegal for beer and wine commercials on television, whatever was allowed on television, it was illegal to advertise it in such a way that the person would actually drink. Remember my father, who was a lawyer, told me that years ago, and I'd notice it.

Here's a beer commercial. You know, in the days when I had a television, here's a beer commercial. I'd see this, and they'd, you know, pour that beer in, and boy, that ice-cold looking glass, and that beer comes in, and that foamy head just comes and, you know, pours over the side, and they take it to their mouths, but they don't drink.

They weren't allowed. I don't know if it's still the case, but they were not allowed to show the person actually drinking it in an advertisement. So, what you had a highlight on was how this thing looked in the cup, how it looked in the mug.

And the same thing, you may see some commercial. I remember getting on the train one day, and there was a poster. You know, this gorgeous couple.

I mean, the most perfect looking male and female you'd ever seen, sipping some liquor together, and the message was to you. I mean, you could be sitting on that train. You could weigh 400 pounds and have warts from head to toe.

You can be the type that no matter how crowded the train is, nobody will ever dare sit next to you, but if you can just get that drink in your hand, you'll be just like that couple. I mean, male, you'll get a woman like that. Woman, you get a man like that.

And what do they do? I mean, they show that scene, and they show that drink, that wine, that liquor, just sparkling, just sparkling in the cup. And I remember as a youngster that I'd see those commercials, and the idea of drinking beer really appealed to me. Please stop your machine at this point and turn the tape over.

And I remember as a youngster that I'd see those commercials, and the idea of drinking beer really appealed to me. And even in the days of just real sin in my life, I would not get drunk as much because I didn't enjoy drinking. I'd do it every so often, but I didn't enjoy it.

But I'll tell you, I remember being younger, and I'd see those beer commercials, and the idea of, you know, that beer with some big fat pretzels. It just appealed to me. And I don't know how old I was.

My friend and I were, you know, we're over at my house, and my parents were going to be away. And my dad used to have some friends come over and play cards with him, and he didn't drink beer much really, but he'd have some in the house every so often for some of the guys. And we just got this brainstorm.

I mean, we'd plan it out. All right, they're going to be away, and we're going to go out, and we're going to play ball, and we're going to get real, you know, work up a real sweat and a real appetite, and we're going to come back, and we're going to get some of that ice cold beer, and we're going to pour it in there, and

we have some of those pretzels, you know. And we'd sit, and we couldn't wait, and we'd take a sip and go, and that was as far as it went.

It just, oh, it didn't, it didn't live up to the expectations. But look at what it says here, though. I mean, it is laughable, but not when it leads to alcoholism.

Look at what it says. Don't gaze at wine when it's red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly. In the end, it's after effects.

Bite like a snake, and poison like a viper. Look at this description. Your eyes will see strange sights, and your mind imagine confusing things.

You will be like one sleeping on the high seas, lying on top of the rigging. They hit me, you will say, but I'm not hurt. They beat me, but I don't feel it.

When will I wake up so I can find another drink? You know, there are people in the streets of our cities, winos, alcoholics, laying on the streets, sleeping on the streets at night, and you can go talk to them, and some of them used to be doctors with, you know, practices in the hundreds of thousands, happily married, and alcohol came in and destroyed them. And now, I mean, you look at that person and say, what a wretch, and you find out here's some well-educated person. Now they're doing everything they can just to, you know, drinking the most despicable things, just because there's a little alcohol content in it, to just try and get high.

You mean that they would have given up everything to be laying in the street somewhere? You tell me one alcoholic that is thrilled to be bound by alcohol. No, you don't see the akhirith, you don't see the final consequences. And let me tell you something.

It's real important to hear this. A lot of times we're smarter than I'm making it out to be. We're fully aware of the consequences of sin.

We know what's down the pike. We know the danger. We know what could happen.

There have been times when I've prophesied over somebody I didn't know, just had a word for some teenage girl, and it was a word of warning. And, you know, it's happened a few times, so I've learned, you know, exactly what it's about. Here's some word of warning, put down the idol in your life, or here's some word of warning that I know is just clear that this person's involved with an unsaved guy, or it's just clear that they're flirting with the world.

And I remember the first two times God gave me words like that. Shortly thereafter, all the people heard one time the girl cried, but neither of them fully received and repented. Shortly thereafter, they were both pregnant at a wedding.

And I think that a lot of us are wise enough to know just one minute of sin can destroy a life. Now, all of a sudden, there's a whole blemish on you. Now, there are these things you have to live with the rest of your life.

But what happens is, the way the enemy gets a lot of people is really simple. He gets a lot of people by slowly putting them to sleep. You see, the standards of the world have fallen so far, we hardly realize it.

So, we as the people of God set our standards a little higher. You know, let's say 50 years ago, the standards of the world were 6 and the standards of the church were 8. Now, the standards of the world drop to 4 and we adjust ours. You know, we look around in our society, we've got to be a little bit more holy, so we set ours at a 6. And then it goes on, the standards of the world go down to a 2. You know, we set ours a little higher, we go to a 4. Before you know it, our standards are far lower than the world used to be.

But we don't realize it. You know, it's like this notion that I talk about, how saved are we? With the standards dropping, dropping, dropping, dropping at our beaches, you know, through the decades, through the century. Now, you get people going to the beach in a modest bikini.

You know, that's being godly. You know, the question came up to me when I began to think that in other parts of the world, in some parts of the states, you know, there's nude bathing and in certain parts of this nation, you know, it's recognized and not prosecuted. So, in all effects, legal.

Now, I wonder, what if nationally, nude bathing was legalized? Would the believers come up with a modestly nude look? But see, we don't realize, see, we adjust our standards. We adjust our standards. And the clearest illustration I can give of this, and please, especially younger folks here, you know, I know your hearts are after God, and some of you here and there are struggling, but remember, I'm not some 80-year-old preacher that was raised in a monastery somewhere, you know.

I'm not speaking to you as some old fogey who has no understanding of what's going on in the world. You know, I messed up my life for a period of time more than I hope and pray most all the rest you'll ever dream of doing. So, you know, don't say, well, that's just some old-fashioned warning.

Listen, I'm right. You don't heed this message, you'll destroy your life. I'm right.

I'm just telling you what the scriptures say. I've kept my eyes open now for 20 years in the Lord, and I've seen people's lives destroyed. I've warned people.

I've warned people in ministry and warned others to get their lives in order. Destruction was coming. I've seen friends fall into adultery, people in ministry that I work with, that I prayed with, that I laugh with.

I've seen them destroy their lives. But listen to me, the devil's goal is to put us to sleep. The clearest illustration I can give you is, and not to glory in this, but I just want to explain it.

Before I was saved, I told you I used to be really sicko, and I would love to just do as much of a drug as I could to see what would happen, to see how far I could go to the edge without overdosing. I'm serious. I did it all the time.

And if a friend would say to me, how much should I do of this particular drug? I would always give them too much. Always. Thank God I didn't kill myself and kill anybody else, but it could have happened.

One time it should have happened, if not for the mercy of God intervening. Well, this friend came over and he had never done this particular hallucinogenic drug and wanted to know how much he should do, so I gave him a big overdose, way more than he should have done, just for fun. Remember I said I was a sicko.

S-I-C-K-O. And no conviction, no conviction about it until people began to pray for me right before God saved me. I had no guilt of any of the things I did.

When I stole money from my father to help out some of my friends that had some needs, I felt no guilt. When I did all the things I did, all of a sudden, no guilt at all. Even though I was raised in a good moral home, it was only towards the end that conviction began to set in.

Well, I went with my friend. We were going to hitchhike to another town and hang out over the weekend and spend the night at this guy's house. And my poor friend was, he couldn't, he was in another world.

He was almost beside himself. Some guy picked us up hitchhiking and offered us a job just to make a few bucks, to stop at this parking lot of this college and to put flyers on the front of every single car, and you know, this massive parking lot. So we, you know, we said, sure, we'll do it.

And by the end of this thing, my friend was in another, I mean, he didn't even look like his mind was in his brain or his brain was in his head. I don't know. I mean, he was just so delirious.

And I thought it was great. I just thought it was so funny. Well, we get over to this friend's house and we did more drugs and we were going to spend the night there.

And then this guy who would get terribly paranoid and fearful when he did drugs said, look, you can't stay at the house tonight. Why? He said, because my mother's boyfriend's going to come. He's big, he's strong, he's vicious.

If he sees you down here, he'll kill you. So at this point, we're like standing against the wall, trembling, you know, ready for this, you know, this, you know, massive thing, you know, with smoke coming out of his nose to come down the steps. So we said, all right, you know, what do we do? What do we do? I mean, this guy used to get so fearful that he would do drugs that would just keep him up all night.

He just bought a motorcycle and he would stand. This was his great drug experience. He gets so paranoid that he would stand and look out the window motionless the entire night because someone was going to steal his motorcycle.

Like eight hours, just stand there and watch the motorcycle. So he had us scared. We wanted to get out before the boyfriend came.

So what do we do? He said, look, there's a tree house. This is one of my friends. He said in the back of the house, they have a tree house.

He said, so we're going to go. I'm going to take you over there. He said, and you just got to be real quiet.

I mean, the friend didn't know there was anybody in the backyard in the tree house. Just got to be real quiet so nobody hears. You go up there, he said, and you stay there all night and I'll come get you in the morning.

I said, okay. So we go in this little tree house. You go up this little ladder and there's a little table, a chair on one side, a chair on the other, and that's it.

That's it. And my friend named Ron is sitting there like that, just swaying. I mean, he cannot sit still.

Now, if I do this long enough, it'll get to you, but you picture being in a tree house with this, just the two of you with this little desk in between and two chairs. And I said, Ron, Ron. I said, I can't take it.

You're driving me crazy. You got to stop. You got to stop.

So he's just got this silly grin on his face. Okay. Okay.

He's gonna stop. He's gonna stop. Well, he got himself together.

He got a hold on himself. And the night goes on. I don't remember what we talked about or what happened.

Every so often a squirrel would run over the tree house and it was the most wild experience, you know. And finally, you know, early in the morning, sun's starting to come up. This guy, Kevin, comes back to get us.

Now, my friend Ron had been doing real good. I mean, everything was just fine in the room, little shack in there. Kevin comes up and he says, what's with you guys? What's the matter? I said, what are you talking about? He said, both of you were sitting there like this.

I had no idea, but that thing just got so overwhelmed. I mean, I had no conscious idea of it whatsoever, but I just fell into it. I just joined into it.

He didn't change. I became like him. You know, students used to come to Christ for the nations and say, boy, the school has changed a lot since I got here.

I said, the school hasn't changed, man. You changed. You just became like us.

You were all stiff and couldn't dance and celebrate before God and all uptight about everything. Now you're just free. We didn't change.

You changed. We didn't become stiff. You just got free.

But see, we have almost no idea how much we've just started to sway with the world. Hey, things aren't so bad anymore. Things aren't as bad as they used to be.

You know why? Because our level of conviction has dropped and we're oblivious. You know, we go on this campaign with these food stores to get them to remove magazines like Cosmopolitan from the checkout areas. So that as you're walking out with your kids, that your families are not bombarded with this trash.

And people think we're crazy, fanatical, nuts. You know, the headlines, you know, supermarket smut. People say, this is sexual smut.

What does Brown think he's doing? This is holy crusade. I mean, they're mocking it. They can't realize that all these things are despicable.

They can't realize that that a generation ago, you'd never have this stuff in public view of youngsters. Never have women just being presented as sexual objects like that for every eye to look at, you know, in a grocery store. We don't realize.

We don't realize. Listen, you need to get set in your heart that sin is never the right thing to do. You know, as someone in ministry, I have set it in my heart.

I love my wife. My wife loves me. We have never, you know, had a battle to be unfaithful one to another.

We're committed to God and committed one to another. But I have just made the assumption. I've made it a life assumption that adultery for me or for anyone in ministry, I'm not judging someone else, but I've made it a life assumption that that destroys your ministry for life, destroys your family and disqualifies you from ever doing anything for God again.

You say, that might be exaggerated. I'd rather exaggerate on the safe side. In other words, I'm not wrestling with something.

I have to hold that up. But I just put that as another foundation because I see enough other people falling and enough other people destroying themselves. And at the moment of falling, I'm sure the devil's saying, God understands.

You want to hear a wild story? Do you want to hear a wild story? There was a professor at Oral Roberts University and a couple came up to him for prayer and they said, you know, we want you to pray for God's blessing on our lives. And something felt wrong to him. And he said, are you married? And they said, oh yes.

He's going to pray, but something still felt wrong. And he said, to each other? And they said, no. Can you believe the level of deceit they're operating in? He said, well, what are you doing up here for prayer? You're married to someone else and you're coming up here for prayer together? They said, oh yes, well, we know it's God's will.

And that we're going to, you know, divorce and marry each other. You know it's God's will? He said, yes. He said, because every time before we're together sexually, we pray in tongues.

Do you believe it? Listen, once the temptation comes in, once the flesh yields to it, you never know what it's going to lead to. You never know what type of perverted thinking. The only right solution is to shut the door first.

The only right solution is to not give the devil any place. The only right solution is to run. You know, I know some young men say, man, you know, I must be really weak.

You know, I go to the beach and I'm just so tempted. You know, I've got all these filthy thoughts. I must be weak.

You're not weak. You're stupid. You can pray up all you want.

You can pray in tongues six hours and fast for three weeks. You go there, you're going to get bombarded with sinful thoughts because it's a sinful environment. What does it say in Timothy? Flee youthful lusts.

There's a time to fight and there's a time to flee. The thing to do is use wisdom and shut the door in advance before the thing starts to reel you in and before you find yourself bound by it. You know, the devil's line of some folks here, well, I'm going to live right, but if the right temptation comes my way, I'm going to follow it and then I'll see if it's really worth it.

By the time you see if it's really worth it, you may be looking up from hell saying it's not worth it, but it's too late. There's a positive side to all this. In Proverbs the 23rd chapter, verses 17 and 18, it says this, do not let your heart envy sinners.

If you're right with God and doing the will of God, there's nothing in the world that you should envy. Nothing. Because if even if you could have it afterwards, it wouldn't satisfy.

The fellow who led me to the Lord backslid and he backslid so he could be free with sex and drugs again. And then I saw him years later. He had a divorce.

He'd remarried. He still was not serving God, but he said to me, you know, all the things that I backslid for, I did. And I gave him up again.

Anyway, he left God so he could have all those things. And once he had them, he didn't want them. Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord, literally in Hebrew, but be in the fear of the Lord all day long.

There is surely an Aharit for you and your hope will not be cut off. Look over the 24th chapter, verses 19 and 20. Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of the wicked for the evil man has no Aharit and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.

The NIV translates Aharit here as future hope. The wicked have nothing to look forward to. There is no future hope.

There is no Aharit aside from blackness and darkness and gloom and hopelessness and destruction. But for the righteous, there is an Aharit. For the righteous, there is something to look forward to.

And Balaam, who was called in to curse the people of Israel in Numbers 23, 10 said, oh, that I might die the death of the upright and that my Aharit would be like theirs. Do you think when you stand before God one day that you were going to have any regret if you served him with all your heart? Do you think when you stand before God and see the pleasure and joy at the right hand of God forevermore and the awesome blessings that he has in store and just the glory of Jesus himself and the unspeakable blessing and the satisfaction of seeing all the lives that you're able to touch, do you think you're going to have some regret and wish you could have gone back and sin more? The only regret we'd have is if we were half-hearted. The only regret we'd have is if we compromised.

Come on, be realistic. Once you've been walking with God for a while, have you ever regretted fasting? No, but you sure regretted breaking fast. Have you ever regretted when you separated yourself to God in prayer? No, but you regret the times that you went away the flesh instead.

Have you ever regretted doing the hard thing and taking a stand for Jesus? No, but you regret the times you were ashamed. There's an Aharit. There's something we have to look forward to.

I heard a quote from Richard Wurmbrand, a man famous for his book Tortured for Christ. He said, I've never regretted a word I didn't say. Man, there are times when the flesh wanted to blurt out and I held my peace and I've never regretted it, but there have been all too many times when I spoke out when I shouldn't have and I wish that I wish I could have taken it back.

Let's be realistic. At the end of your life, when you look back, are you going to be filled with regret or gratitude? At the end of your life, when you look back, are you going to say, oh, I wish I could have done it over again. All those hours as a teenager, I spent alone with God, especially the ages of 17 and 18, right before I started college.

All the hours pouring through the word, all the hours in prayer, all the hours memorizing scripture, all the time out on the street witnessing the people and going door to door. It laid a foundation for life. I don't regret a single second of it.

There were times when my other friends, after a church service, we go to church five times a week and then occupy ourselves with church ministry the other nights. I mean, it was just day and night. That's all we knew.

We didn't have families either to deal with at that time. But I mean, after a service one night, you know, sometimes we'd go out, get something to eat or just hang out or something. But I remember enough nights when my friends wanted to go out, we're going to do this or that.

And I said, no, I've got to go back because I just had to spend more time with God. I've never regretted that. I have all the friends I need and more, but I've never regretted to this day the times and say, no, I can't be part of this.

I have to be alone with God. One last story to tell you. Leonard Ravenhill shared it with me.

There was a woman in a church, terrible gossip, terrible, terrible gossip, slanderer. And a woman told her husband, listen, we've invited Sister so-and-so over tonight. He says, oh, not her.

All she does is gossip. And he said, look, we're going to have her over. It won't be that bad.

Well, what happened was this woman had given her husband a brand new chair for his birthday or something. Nice big chair. And he decided he was going to do something.

So he took a tape recorder and he hid it under this chair. And when the woman came, he said, oh, why don't you sit down here? Nice new chair. So she sat down in the chair and proceeded to rip apart everybody in the church.

Slander, gossip, ugly rumor, innuendo, you name it. So, you know, they're sitting there, you know, having tea, coffee, whatever. And he says, well, well, I have to be going.

And he said, no, no. He said, I just want you to hear the latest. And she said, no, I really have to be going.

He said, no. He said, I want you to hear the latest. He said, there's a scandal you won't believe.

He said, I want you to hear this. So she sits down and he pulls out the tape and plays it and she is in a state of shock. I mean, her jaw drops and she is in a state of shock.

And she, she says, I must have that tape. I must have it. He said, I'm sorry, can't.

He said, look, if that gets out, if that circulates, oh, it'll destroy me. I must have it. He said, I'm sorry, it's not for sale.

He said, I'll give you anything for it. He said, no. So, finally, she plays it.

Look, I promise I'll change. I won't say these things. I'll be different.

Please, just give me that tape. And he says, all right, I'm going to give it to you. He hands her the tape.

And she says, you haven't made a copy of it, have you? He said, no, I haven't. She said, thank God there's no copy. He said, I didn't say there's no copy.

She said, but you said you didn't make a copy. And then he just pointed up. And the look on that woman's face was, from what I understand, awful.

Listen, friends, there's nothing hidden. There's nothing hidden. Jesus said, the things that are whispered in the dark, in the closet, they will be shouted from the rooftops.

There's nothing hidden that won't be revealed. What if everything stopped right now and God took out the books of the last week and publicly read my life to you or publicly read your life in front of everyone? How would we feel? How would you feel if God stopped everything right now and said, that's it. This is it.

From here on in, your life is determined by how you have lived up to now. The course you have set is set for life. And it can't be altered for good or for bad.

I want to ask you an honest question. If your life continued on the course that it's going now. And remember, you know, when that Korean airliner was shot down over the Soviet Union, according to the reports, it had just veered the slightest bit from the normal path.

But after enough hundreds of miles, it was over the Soviet airspace. Just a slight deviation from the path can end you up in a totally wrong direction and not too long. If you continued living the way you're living now, would you end up in heaven or in hell? If your life was fixed right now and you just continue to develop for all eternity, would you end up closer to God or farther from him? If your life was to stop right here and now, and that was it, what would your akhirit look like? Are you going to be one of those in the end who groans? You're going to be one of those who's so cool and so on top of things and so doing your own thing in this world.

And at the end, you wish that you wish that you wish that you could do it over, but it's too late. Are there things that you are harboring in your heart that when the opportunity presents itself, you're going to go for it? Maybe to your destruction? What is your akhirit going to be? Will it be one of mourning, weeping, hopelessness, of darkness? Will you have some akhirit in this life that you wish you could undo? Or at the end, will you say with Paul, for the good fight, run the race, finish the course that God set before me. Henceforth, there's laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge will give me on that day, not to me only, but to all those who love his appearing.

What will your akhirit be? God has laid out a path before you. And the choices you make every day of your life are going to have eternal implication. And the patterns of living that you establish now are going to continue to work themselves out for eternity.

Consider, my friends, your final end. Everybody bow your heads with me. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you, Father. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Father.

Blessed be your name. Blessed be your name. Blessed be your name.

Father, fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Lord, your son, Jesus, endured the cross, despising the shame for the joy that was set before him. He went through it.

Father, give us a vision that we can see clearly. As Jonathan Edwards prayed, Lord, stamp eternity on our eyes. Lord, give us a revelation of what is good for this life, as well as for eternity.

May we see through the lies of the devil. May we see through the wiles of the enemy. May we see through, Father, the seductive temptations.

May we see where they're really going to lead. May we remember the consequences of sin before we go to sin. Lord, where we've fallen asleep, where the enemy has lulled us to sleep, where we've become like the world and don't know it, show us, O God.

May we have a rude awakening to holiness once again. May we not regret our lives, O God. May we not wish we could do them over.

May we truly give our utmost for your highest. Sold out, turned on, on fire, full of your Spirit, doing your will. Lord, not for some thrills, and not for some little experiences, and not for the satisfaction of our ego, but for your glory, and for the true fulfillment of the deepest longing of our souls.

Father, set your people free from every bondage. Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Father.

Thank you, Lord God. Let's just stay still before the Holy Spirit for a moment. Hallelujah.

Thank you, Lord. Blessed be your name, Lord God.

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