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# THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE

Trinity Sermon, No. 24

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THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE

An Address given by  
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at

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, ADELAIDE

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## THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIFE

We have a saying in Cricket - "If you're not a Cricketer, you can at least look like one" and we mean in appearance, if not in performance. I'm afraid that will be my position tonight. I am not a Clergyman, but I can at least look like one.

As I stand here (I think I would find it easier batting at Adelaide Oval) I ask myself: "Who am I to be speaking to people about the Word of God?" I speak only because I know in my own life what God has done for me! I am reminded of a cricket story about a young fellow who saw Keith Miller, the great cricketer, for the first time. His eyes just about popped out of his head and he said, "Dad! Are you sure that's Keith Miller?" The father said "Yes!" The boy said; "You know Dad, he's just an ordinary fellow like you are." As I come to you, I hope you won't think about me as a Test Cricketer, but as an ordinary person just the same as you are.

I want to share with you verses 50-58 of the first book of Corinthians, chapter 15. St. Paul is speaking to the Corinthian church about Life after Death.

Perhaps you think: "What a morbid subject!" But physical death is something which every person has to face and I'm challenged to share with you a few thoughts because of a friend of mine with whom I used to play cricket. This friend, a very busy person in cricket and business, suddenly had a heart attack and was compelled to rest in hospital for some months. Whilst he was in hospital I dropped him a note wishing him well. After he was allowed to leave hospital he called into the dressing room at the Sydney Cricket Ground during an interstate cricket match. I wasn't feeling too happy because I'd make a "duck" in the first innings and only one run in the second. This chap came in to have a talk. It became one of the most thrilling talks I have ever experienced in a dressing room.

He said: "Whilst I was in hospital, I had time to think. Here I was suddenly faced with the thought that I would die - that I would suddenly be no more. What a tragedy, I thought to myself, to die without faith." He wasn't a Christian, he wasn't a fellow who went to Church regularly, but here, because of a sudden illness, he was faced with the problem which every

person will face at some stage. He had decided that it would be a tragedy to die without faith. We had a wonderful talk about this. This man is now a converted Christian, a man who knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

St. Paul is giving us the assurance that there is life after death. I suppose every family represented here has experienced the passing of a loved one, or a near relative, or a close friend, and we know what a difficult time this can be. But in a deeper sense, the Christian ought not to fear death. It is a time when the Christian passes on to live a life forever with the Lord Jesus Christ. I wonder if you long to see the Lord Jesus face to face!

St. Paul also tells us that there is a certain sting to death. At cricket the other day you may have seen some of the players hastily going for cover. The South African wicket keeper was almost standing on his head. It was because a large swarm of bees had suddenly gone across the Adelaide Oval. You have probably had the experience of being stung by a bee. But it isn't the



bee that hurts us, it's that little sting that he leaves behind. St. Paul tells us in his own words here that death itself does not contain any sting, but the sting to death is a little word called sin. If there were no sin there would have been no need for the Lord Jesus to come to earth and give His life on the Cross for you and me. In Verse 57, he says: "But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Yes, you and I will be faced with this problem at some stage in our life. We do not know when it might be. We might be in perfect health today, but we don't know just when the Lord Jesus is going to call us Home!

I want to share with you what I believe is the most important thing in life. The Bible tells us that Christ died for all wrong that has been committed, and all wrong that will be committed in the future. Now, to me, this is a very challenging thought, because I know how I have failed in the Christian life. I let the Lord Jesus down every day of my life. In the Book of Romans we are told "For there is no difference, for all have sinned

and come short of the glory of God." Every person is in the same position as we face the Lord Jesus Christ. We all have a need. We have a need of a Saviour because we are sinners. We can do nothing about this sin in our own strength, not by trying to live a righteous life, not by doing good works, not by loving our neighbour; we can only come to this wonderful position of being a Christian through our faith in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us.

If I gave you a pencil and piece of paper and asked you to write down what you think is the most important thing in life, I imagine that I would get widely varied answers. I believe that some of you would put down success, work, or sport. Others would perhaps put down happiness, health, wealth. We are told that wealth isn't everything, but it is a big help. Perhaps you might put down, loving your neighbour or building up a credit balance with God. All these things are commendable, but I believe they miss the true answer.

Some years ago I was challenged by a man who played cricket for our own Club in Sydney. I became very friendly

with him while I was a student at the Sydney Teachers' College. He used to take me home for supper and we would have some wonderful talks about cricket and free suppers (as a student at Teachers' College I was always on the lookout for free suppers.) That night he said to me, "Brian, I know you pretty well now, and I want to ask you a personal question." I thought we were in for another wonderful discussion about cricket, but he said; "Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Saviour?" I wonder has anyone ever said that to you - "Do you know the Lord Jesus as your own personal Saviour?" I certainly had to admit that I didn't know Christ as my own Saviour. I believed in God, I'd always believed in God, but Jesus Christ was just a Name. As I look back now, how I thank that man for his courage, and it does take courage to ask such a question. But he pushed aside all embarrassment because he had so much concern for me. He realised that I had a need, and this need could only be met by the Lord Jesus Christ. That night I became a Christian because I asked Christ into my life. To me, that was the most important thing in my life, that to know Christ as the master of my own personal

life, and seek to acknowledge Him in all things that I do. But the answer doesn't finish there. I believe there is a second part which we find in verse 58.

Paul is saying, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Yes! the most important thing in life is to know Christ as Master and acknowledge Him, and it is just as important to abound in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in all things that we do.

I wonder if I might share another story with you; we'll get away from cricket for a change. It might do us good. I'm always thrilled to hear this story about a wonderful athlete - a chap called Eric Liddell. Eric was an Olympic Games runner. He had trained very, very hard for the 100 yards and 220 yards. He had put in a tremendous amount of work for the Games. When he arrived at the Games site, he was told that the heats of the 100 yards were to be run on a Sunday. Eric Liddell, being a Christian, was troubled and disappointed. He went along to

his manager and said; "I'm sorry sir, but Sunday is a day on which I'm afraid I can't compete. It's the Lord's Day, and even though running in the Games means so much to me, I'm afraid I'll have to withdraw from the team." The manager, knowing Eric well, also was disappointed, but accepted his resignation. You can imagine what a tremendous blow it was to an athlete who had put in so much work to compete at the Olympic Games. Next day the manager came along to Eric and said, "Look Eric, I know you're not trained for the 440 yards, but I could enter you in the heats to give you a run. Would you like to do that?" Eric decided he would. Now, for those of you who know anything about athletics, training for the 100 yards and 440 yards is quite different. The 440 yards is recognised as one of the hardest races in which to compete. Herb McKinley, the famous Jamaican runner, was once asked; "How do you run the 440 yards?" He answered; "Man, I run the first 220 as fast as I can, then I run the second 220 yards as fast as possible too." In other words, it is a sprint and as fast as you can go all the way. Eric won his heat, not in particularly good time, but after all the heats were decided it was found

that his time was just good enough to get him into the final. In the final he ran the race of his life to win in record-breaking time. That's not the end of the story. As he left the track someone pushed into his hand a piece of paper. He didn't have time to read it till he reached the dressing room. He sat down on a bench, opened up the paper, and as he did so, a thrill went down his spine. These were the words he read; "Them that honour me, I will honour." Perhaps I have told that story 10 or 15 times, but every time I tell it, a thrill goes up my spine. I believe those words were the greatest reward he could ever receive. You might now say, "That's all right for someone like Eric Liddell, a champion athlete, but I doubt whether I could walk 440 yards let alone run it. You may ask; "How can I serve Christ where I am?" I have a little book here called "Strength for the Day". It contains a small verse, plus a thought, and I was reading this just yesterday. The verse I read said; "They that fear the Lord, spake often one to another." It says; "It's not necessary to be able to do some great work for the Lord to be in His book of remembrance."



Sometimes we feel disheartened because we have not the ability to do big things for the one we love and would serve. Let us not be discouraged by this seeming lack of opportunity. We read of those who spake often with one another, that the Lord hearkened, and a book of remembrance was written before Him. May we take heart then, even if we are able only to speak a few words of comfort to cheer or encourage a fellow Christian, knowing that the Lord takes note of it and will not forget service for Him. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is asking us to be faithful in little things, in the everyday things of life, in our conversation, in our friendship, and perhaps He will call us to some big works for Him; but, first of all, He asks us to be faithful in the little things, at work, at home, at play.

I think of another story, which perhaps younger people might appreciate, about the house with golden windows. A young boy lived on the edge of a valley. Every morning when he awoke, he looked across the valley and there on the other side, he would see a house with lovely golden windows - the sun shining from behind his own house on to the

house across the valley. He thought how he would love to live in that house. So, one day, he decided to trek down the valley and up the other side, just to see what this house was really like. He set off early one morning, and it took him all day to get there. When he got there, the sun was setting. To his surprise, he found it was only an ordinary house, with ordinary windows. Then he looked back across the valley, and there was a house with golden windows and he realised that it was his own house he was looking at. I hope you see the little point of that story. I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has given everyone of us a particular talent. I believe that Christ is asking us to be faithful in what He has given us. Instead of wanting what others have, try looking at ourselves and asking what we have already that can be used in serving Christ. I am sure that you will find something there; some way in which you can serve Christ in the life you lead.

What is the most important thing in life? Firstly, to know Christ as Master and to acknowledge Him in all things that we do. Finally, to abound in the work of the Lord. "Forasmuch



as you know that your labour is not in vain."

I want to finish by just asking you two questions. Firstly, do you know Christ as your own Saviour? That's the most important thing in life. Do you know Christ as Saviour? Revelation 3: 20; "Behold I stand at the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him."

I'm reminded of a painter who depicted this particular verse on canvas. A house with a window, a light in the window, Christ standing at the door of the house, knocking on the door. He was rather interested to see the reactions of people to the painting so he sat near it as it hung in a gallery. Several people came along, glanced and passed on. Then a young lass came along and stood looking at it for some time. He decided to ask her what she thought of it. She said, "It's a marvellous painting. It depicts the verse in Rev. 3: 20 about Jesus Christ knocking at the door, but there is one thing missing. The painter has forgotten to put a latch on the door so Jesus can get in." The painter then said, "You've missed the whole point of

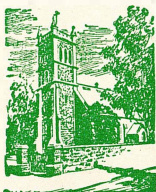
the painting. The latch is on the inside. The only way that door can be opened is from the inside."

Do you know Christ as your Saviour? He's not a rude Saviour who bursts His way into your life, but He waits for you to open up your heart's door and ask Him in. Perhaps He might be knocking at your door. It's up to you - He's knocking. You have to open up from inside.

The second question is this: If you do know Christ as your own personal Master, are you abounding in the work of the Lord, in your home, in your school, in your Church, wherever you are found? Are you seeking to work for the Lord Jesus Christ in all that you do.



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