

Plans for Tomorrow?

Regarding Tomorrow

By Steve Lyon

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: 2 Corinthians 4:14-18; Romans 8:18-28
Preached on: Sunday, January 5, 2020

Bible Baptist Church
8607 West Chester Pike 2nd Floor
Upper Darby, PA 19082

Website: www.bbcupperdarby.com
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/bbcupperdarby

Last Sunday I preached a New Year's message titled, "There's Always Tomorrow." It was based on James chapter 4. Remember James talked about counting on tomorrow. He said, "Go to ye that say tomorrow we will go into such a city and buy and sell and get gain (verse 14)." He called that arrogant. We're proud when we count on tomorrow as if it's a given. The point is, we don't know what's going to happen tomorrow. Our life is like a vapor. Proverbs 27:1 says, "Boast not thyself of the morrow for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." We are not guaranteed tomorrow are we? That does not mean that we should not make plans for the future. It is important for us to keep the Scriptures balanced. The Bible says "The prudent man foreseeth the evil (Proverbs 22:3 & 27:12)." There is an appropriate place for us to plan ahead, to foresee, to make preparations. But we must understand that we're not guaranteed tomorrow.

Today I want to bring the flip-side. There are often "flip-sides" in order for a topic to be balanced. It is important for us to always compare Scripture with Scripture: If we are going to talk about one aspect of something, it's important that we find out what the Bible says about all aspects. Today we're going to look at another aspect in the series, "Considering Tomorrow." This message is the result of me learning about a special group of people. I didn't know they existed. There are many in this group. People who devote themselves to something very honorable. The context of *WHY* they need to do what they do, however, is tragic.

There are certain places around the world, for some reason, that have an appeal. There are dozens, if not hundreds of these places. They have an *aura* which attracts people to them. There's even a term that people use to describe these places: To me, the term doesn't fit. The term is "romantic." These places are called "romantic." One such place is the Aokigahara Forest in Japan. Another is the Golden Gate Bridge in California. Another is Niagara Falls between Ontario and New York. There are many more. They attract people regularly for a unique purpose. While some call them romantic, it really is just tragic. What draws these people? What makes them so noteworthy is that they are places people go to end their lives. They are magnets drawing people in. It is tragic.

In that context however, unknown to me, these places also draw other people in as well. Special people. They are called "Watchers." Do you know what they do? They come to

save lives! Their purpose is to try to talk people into not dying. That is a special class of people.

Take the Golden Gate Bridge for example. There is an official whose name is Brando. He spends his working days going up and down that bridge (I think it's a two mile stretch). All he does is look for people in despair. They flock there. Every two weeks, on average somebody jumps off that bridge and ends their life. The number is actually more who attempt it. Many people go there and are talked down, thankfully, but the whole thing is tragic.

There is another man like Brando, his location is the Yangtze River Bridge. That's another "romantic" place people come to jump. For over a decade this man spent every Saturday and Sunday driving his scooter up and down the bridge. He would stop and talk to people. He literally saved hundreds of lives. These people are heroes.

Yet Another man, Kevin Briggs fell into his position by default. He began working in 1994 as a California Highway Patrolman on the Motorcycle Unit. In 1994, one of the first days on his job he got a call for a potential jumper on the Golden Gate Bridge. So, from 1994 to 2013 he has talked down hundreds of people from ending their lives. To me, it is so tragic that somebody would be filled with such despair that they would think of ending this precious life that God has given them.

The reason I bring these people to your attention, is because people like Kevin Briggs (who retired to start an organization called *Pivotal Point*) devote their time trying to rescue people who are suicidal. Here's what Kevin Briggs did for decades when he worked on the Golden State Bridge: He travelled back and forth across the bridge (which has pedestrians, joggers, bicyclists and others constantly going back and forth). There's an entire lane for people to use (who aren't in vehicles). Mr. Briggs spent his time looking for people that were there by themselves. If they were by themselves, and lingering, then they might be a potential jumper. As a "Watcher" he approached them and asked two questions. The second was the most pivotal of all questions. The first question was to simply ask them, "How are you today?" Then he would ask them this second question. It was the most important question of all. This would often let him know what their intentions were. After he'd say, "How are you doing," he would say, "What are your plans for tomorrow? Think about that question: What are your plans for tomorrow?" People that are in despair have a sad lack of something called *hope*. A person with no hope doesn't have plans for tomorrow. They go to the bridge, or they go to the falls, or they go to the train tracks, or they go up to the cliff, or they climb to the top of a building, not because they've have plans for tomorrow, but because they're desperate. They're so filled with despair that all they're thinking about is the emotion of the moment ... they want to end it all.

What a great question. *What are your plans for tomorrow?* If you don't have plans for tomorrow, maybe it is because you have lost *hope*. The Latin word for *hope*, along with a negative before it, has now become an English word all by itself. The compound word "desperare" literally means "*no hope*." It's the word "despair." Today there are thousands

of people that are filled with despair. There's no hope. They have no hope for tomorrow. Praise God for people that devote their lives trying to rescue these souls. They don't even get paid for it. One man on the Yangtze River, would spend hours there. He wasn't getting paid a cent and he would just try to rescue people. Because of these precious people (Watchers), hundreds of lives are spared. Someone cared enough to take a few minutes to talk to them.

I want to talk to you this morning about *despair*. I want to ask you that question: What are your plans for tomorrow? Last week we somewhat bashed that idea... "Don't make plans for tomorrow." No, it's okay to make plans for tomorrow... but don't *count on* tomorrow. Now the flip-side. It is so important that you have plans for tomorrow, that you have hope; something in your life to look forward to. And I submit to you, there is much for every one of us to look forward to. No matter what your situation is. Perhaps right now someone that's filled with despair will say, "You don't understand." Usually when a person is filled with despair, there's a reason they have lost hope. Losing hope is very much a temporary situation. Our emotions are a powerful force in our lives. You can wake up feeling low, and at that moment, you can't think of anything else. All you know is, "I feel horrible!" If you allow the emotion of the moment to overwhelm you, you may do something that you'll regret.

I direct your attention to Romans chapter 8. It is the perfect passage to address the issue of *hope* in our lives. We're going to see three things from the text this morning. Let me give you the outline, then we'll bow in prayer as we ask for God's blessing on the text this morning.

First, in verses 22 and 23: **The Reason Why You May Loathe Today**. The Bible teaches that right now in this body, you and I *groan* and *travail*. There is a condition this very minute happening on the earth. It's what causes us to have bad days. This condition has been identified as "the curse." Sin came into the world. It didn't just affect us in our emotions, it affected the whole creation. The whole creation, everything about this world and everything in it is *groaning*. And boy, it is, is it not? Sometimes because of that, it is easy for us to magnify the moment and lose hope.

Then the second part of verse 18 into verse 19, we see **The Reality Of Hope**. Paul makes some statements about the nature of hope. He states something obvious as he defines hope. If you miss this ingredient; then you will not have hope.

Then thirdly, verses 24, 25 and 28, we see **The Revival Of Hope**. There is a reason why every one of us has reason to live for tomorrow. I want you to understand that. You may have bad days. You may have had a bad week. You may have just finished a bad year. 2019 may have been horrible for you. For a lot of people I'm connected with on Facebook, 2019 was not good for them! There's reason for us to look at 2020 and say, "I've got a reason to live. I've got hope." What is that hope? We'll talk about it.

Please pray with me as we ask for God's blessing on these three points.

Father, help us this morning to be filled, not with despair, which is natural, but hope. We know that every man at his best state is altogether vanity. I pray, that you would help us as we battle with our emotions. I pray that you would help us put things in perspective and realize that there is a reason for us to want to live until tomorrow. We ask your blessing in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Look at Romans 8:18. **The Reason That You And I May Loathe Today**, why we may really not like what's going on in our lives right now. Verse 18, "For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time." Newsflash: if you're in this world, there is a certain degree of suffering that goes on. Is that a newsflash to you? You say, "I did not know that! I didn't know there was suffering (sarcasm)!" Paul wrote, and this wasn't even Paul's worst day, humanly speaking (One day for him would be really bad, he would die for his faith. That's a bad day, humanly speaking), "The sufferings of this present time." Yes, there are sufferings that are part of this present age that you and I live in, which includes today.

Look at verse 22, he says, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." That continues up to this day. This condition, which began thousands of years ago, "the curse," is still in play today. It affects the whole creation.

At this point he's not even talking about us. He'll get to us in a minute. When God created this world originally, it was not like it is today. There's a teaching called "Uniformitarianism." It teaches that *the way things are now are the way things have always been*. It is a presumption that leads to a lot of false philosophies.... like evolution. Some believe that because things are the way they are now, that means they've always been that way? With that thinking comes a lot of wrong conclusions. Do you realize that the way things are now *is not* the way it's always been? When God created this world things were very different. When Jesus referred to the book of Genesis, he did not treat it as a fairy tale. He addressed it as actually happening. By the way, there is much historical evidence *in the creation* to show that this earth is exactly created the way God created it! When God originally created the world, He said that it "was good." Everything was good. There was no death. There was no sickness. There was no pain. There was no suffering. There was no illness. There were no thorns. There was no poison. It was a whole different ballgame. When God created this world it was beautiful, it was perfect. God gave Adam and Eve one test. They failed that test. The Bible says in Romans chapter 5, "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." Before you get all bent out of shape about Adam, wanting to blame him for everything (if Adam hadn't sinned we'd be a whole lot better off). Remember Romans chapter 5 says, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin so death passed upon all men for that *all* have sinned." When you start condemning Adam, don't forget that you also sin *by choice*.

What God originally created was beautiful. Something happened to bring us to the condition that we are today: The curse... sin entering the world and death by sin." Today the heavens still declare the glory of God, and the firmament (the earthly part) still shows His handiwork. You can visit the Grand Canyon and see the handiwork of God. You can

still look out at the beautiful creation and see the good hand of God. It's been marred a little, but you can still see God's goodness. It is the marred aspect that gets us the most. It's the sin. It's what's happened because of sin. Death has come upon this world.

You and I are now mortal. When God created mankind, he created us originally to never die. When Adam & Eve ate the forbidden fruit, we became **mortal**. That means *subjected to death*. But, do you know what the Bible calls *death* in Corinthians? There's not a better word to describe *death*. It is called an "enemy." Aptly put, is it not? There's something else that's great about the way it's identified. Death is not just called an *enemy* in 1 Corinthians 15, it is called "the *last* enemy that shall be destroyed." Some day God is going to put an end to the curse and to death. What a glorious thing.

For now, however, you and I are subject to it. Look again at Romans chapter 8. Verse 22 says the whole earth, "groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Scientifically this is what's called *The Second Law Of Thermodynamics*. If you've studied science you remember that everything *tends toward disorder*. Things break down. That is *The Curse*. That is *the Second Law of Thermodynamics*. That's what's happened.

But look at verse 23, "And not only they," it's not just the creation. It's not just the plant life and the animal life and everything around us. "But ourselves also... even we ourselves groan within ourselves." That's where we're at right now. We are *groaning*. As long as the curse is part of the world, there will always be the need for *Prayer Meeting* at Bible Baptist Church. Do you realize that? There will always be that need.

As pastors, we tend to lament the fact that at Prayer Meeting, all we do is mention things that are wrong. People are sick: we want them healed. This problem's wrong: we want it to be made right. But that's part of the curse. Until Jesus Christ comes again that's never going to leave us. We mentioned this morning that Evangelist Morris Gleiser just had his numbers down to zero. Praise the Lord! We've been praying for that! Wouldn't it be great if, all of the sudden we got a news bulletin from God: Death has been abolished! No more death!" Wouldn't that be awesome? Of course, we would be in a conundrum, what are we going to do for Prayer Meeting? If everything's perfect, what are we going to do? I can just imagine our prayer meeting after death has been vanquished, we'd all come together and people would raise their hands for prayer and say, "Pastor, please pray for me because...oh no, wait a minute, that doesn't apply anymore." or, "I have a need please remember...oh no, wait a minute, that's been taken care of!" That would be great? We'd have to come up with a new format for our mid week service!

Right now that's not the case. Right now it says, "even we ourselves groan within ourselves." Because of the nature of this life, if we are not careful we can despair. We get bogged down under the pressures and the concerns of the day. We lose sight that there is anything to look forward to. It is tragic how many people today have no hope. Every year across the world about 800,000 people take their lives. 800,000 people. That is one every 40 seconds. These are people who are so overwhelmed by their present circumstances that they can't foresee anything else. They lose hope. They become attracted to places they think are *romantic*. They come to end their lives. Praise God

there are people who try to intervene. They say, "No, you've got something to live for." May God raise up more people that care enough about others to say, "Listen, tomorrow is worth living for! There is something you have. You can look forward to something. There is a reason for us to hope."

In America, an average of 41,000 people take their lives annually. That is twice the number as die by homicide. Do you realize what that means? There are twice as many people who willingly end their lives than there are whose lives are forcibly taken from them... they don't want to die! Of that number in Pennsylvania, anywhere from 600 to 900 people every year take their lives. What's closer to home for us: In Delaware County, about 60 people take their own lives every year. When I hear that, I wish we had the opportunity to rescue those 60 people. Can you imagine if we saved 60 people a year by giving them the hope of the Gospel? We'd be a mega-church by next year. Okay, maybe not by next year. But these precious people live in our community. They are in such despair. They think they have nothing left to live for. But we have the hope of Jesus Christ within us. We can share with them and say, "There is so much to live for. Come with me. Come, let me give you a vision of how much there is, how exciting it is! We've got something to live for." 60 people every year. You and I need to pray for that. We need to pray for these precious souls who are alone. They're our neighbors. They're people right down the road. How tragic.

In one study, speaking of the Golden Gate Bridge, as of 2013 there were 34 people that actually jumped off the bridge and lived. The chances are low when you jump. There's a 98% chance that you're not going to live. Some have survived. Others have been talked down. Extensive follow-up studies have been done on those suicidal people who didn't succeed. 90% of them went on to lead normal lives. Only 6% ended up taking their lives. They've concluded that suicide is a very impulsive, irrational act. When it comes, it comes strong, but then it goes away. If you don't act on the impulse when you're in despair, then you're probably going make it... statistically speaking. It is an impulsive act. That's our emotions, isn't it?

Have you ever had a bad day where you were really down? I remember when I first got saved I couldn't believe it. I marveled, "Man, I'm saved. I'm going to heaven. I have my sins forgiven!" And some time after that, it might have been a month or two, I woke up and I didn't feel saved. I'm not sure what *feeling* saved is like now that I think about it. Salvation is not a feeling. If you think being saved is a feeling, then you're putting too much stock in your emotions. You can be born again, you can be saved, you can be washed in the blood, and still wake up to have a really bad day. That's the nature of our emotions.

Remember what the Bible says, "There hath no temptation taken us but such as is common to man (1 Corinthians 10:13)." You may think you are all alone on days when you have no hope. When you are filled with despair, I assure you, there hath no temptation (and one of those temptations is *despair*) but such as is common to man. You are not alone. Many others have had those same exact feelings and are glad they didn't act on them.

The Yangtze River Bridge is another popular place people go to end their lives. There's a documentary called "The Angel of Nanjing." It focuses on one man who goes to the bridge to talk people down. He's talked hundreds of people down. God bless people like that. They are heroes indeed! This documentary showed him talking to a distraught woman. Her husband had run off with a younger woman. She was filled with despair. She wanted to end it all. This man came up to her and plead with her. You could hear the desperation in her voice. She was crushed because of this disappointment. Somebody whose love she counted on, let her down.

Human relationships are very powerful. You and I were created to be relational. There is a relationship that you need that far excels any other. You were designed to have this relationship, which alone can fulfill your deepest need. It is not a husband or wife. It is not a boyfriend or girlfriend. It is a relationship with Jesus Christ. There are married couples all around the world who walk with Jesus Christ. They're blessed with healthy marriages and healthy relationships. They would tell you, "The greatest relationship which satisfies my soul is my relationship with Jesus Christ."

Is that your testimony? It needs to be. Too often we look to others to fulfill what only God can fulfill. We become disillusioned. The Bible says, "Every man (or woman), at *their* best state is altogether vanity (Psalm 39:5)." We are all imperfect. Only if we look to Jesus Christ can the deepest needs of our soul be fulfilled.

"What are your plans for tomorrow?" Is that even in your psyche right now? Is that even your mentality? Are you even thinking about tomorrow? Or are you so swallowed up in today that you have no hope? I hope that is not the case.

Verse 18 says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time." Notice the next phrase, "are not worthy to be compared." Stop there. What did he just tell us? He told us that there is something other than the sufferings of this present time. There's something to compare them to. Listen, when we get swallowed up in the moment, when we lose all hope and are filled with despair, we are not thinking that there's anything else, but there is.

Regarding the follow-up studies of suicidal people. World Magazine has an article titled, "He who hesitates is saved" Usually the saying is "He who hesitates is lost," but in this extensive study on suicide, they've determined that *he who hesitates*, if you can just, during that acute crisis where you're in despair and not thinking right, if you can get by that, then you will be saved. Most people go on to live normal lives. It tells us that when we are in the moment of suffering, if we are not careful, we're not going to think of anything else. The sufferings of this present time become so magnified that all we do is look on *the things which are seen*. When we do that, we remove all hope. That's why Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:18, "We look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen, for the things *which are seen* are temporal." You know that despair that you feel... that hopelessness.... that panic....that anxiety? Those are all

temporal feelings. That means they're not permanent. Praise God! "But we look at the things which are *not seen* because they are eternal."

Verse 19, "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." There is something else beside our suffering. Psalm 30:5 says, "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." That's the nature of our emotions. *Weeping may endure for a night* and when it happens, it is magnified. When we are going through those valleys of death, when we are going through despair, it is so easy for us to magnify that! We see nothing else. But it behooves us to see past it.

Look at Romans 8:24, "For we are saved by hope," and here's a statement that is simply common sense. "Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" It is stating the obvious. It is the nature of "hope." If you see something, the moment you see it, there's no longer the need for hope. It has been fulfilled. The very nature of hope means that there are going to be situations where we do not physically see the answer in front of us. That's why we have to hope. That's why the Bible says we walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). When you walk by sight you're going to be filled with despair all the time because you're living in a cursed world. God challenges us, "Don't look at... don't walk by the things that you see." There's so much more beyond this world. There's the hope of heaven. There's a living God who wants to give you grace every day. You just need to walk by faith.

Verse 24 continues, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" Verse 25, "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." Paul said this, in 2 Corinthians 4:16-17, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." That's a companion verse to our Romans 8 passage. "Which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man," and this is the key, "is renewed day by day." That perspective caused Paul to call the present suffering, "our light affliction." In fact, that's why in Romans 8, he said, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." There are good things to come.

I want to close by having you turn to Romans 8:28. This is where you and I can hang our hats if we are children of God. If you're not a child of God, if you've yet to experience the new birth, then there is no reason why you shouldn't be able to claim this verseonce you become a child of God! It says, "And we know that all things work together for good." Take note of what it doesn't say. It does not say "We know that all things *are good*." Some people interpret Romans 8:28 that way. I've heard people say, "Well, I don't understand it, the Bible says all things are supposed to be good." No, the Bible doesn't say all things are supposed to be good, the Bible says all things *work together for good to* certain people. Not to everyone. All things work together for good to them love the Lord. If you're trying to find happiness in any other place but love for God, then you're going to come up empty.

There was a song I heard growing up, before I became a believer. It was not a song that I liked even then, but it's one of those songs that sticks in your mind. It came out in 1980... that's how old I am. The song was, "Looking for love in all the wrong places." Some of you have heard that song. That phrase has jumped out in my mind because it describes so many people. I won't sing the song for you. I don't even know how it goes (Aren't you glad?). *Looking for love in all the wrong places* describes anybody that's looking for love in anyone but the true lover of our souls, Jesus Christ. If you look for love anywhere else, then you're going to come up empty. There will be *some* temporal satisfaction (because we were made to be creatures of relationships) but, oh, how many precious people jump from relationship to relationship and never find their souls satisfied. They have forsaken the springs of living waters.

I ask you today: What are your plans for tomorrow? I want to close with an illustration that came across my desk a while back. It's the story about a man who passed away a couple years ago. He was a gem. His name was Eugene Lant. He was a millionaire. He went to Swarthmore College (near us) at the age of 15 on a scholarship. He worked very hard to become a millionaire, One day he was giving a speech to a group of sixth graders in East Harlem. There were 59 sixth graders present. The statistics were very clear for this depressed neighborhood and for this school which had been around for a long time. The writing was on the wall, most of these sixth graders would not graduate from high school. He comes to address these sixth graders. He knew most of them didn't have money. They couldn't afford college, so most of them would go on to be drop-outs. What could he say to inspire them so that wouldn't happen? He begins giving his speech. He looks out at the group, all fifty nine of them. His heart broke. He became burdened as he saw potential in each one of these young people. He wanted to do something that would give them hope. He started to read his notes, and then scrapped his speech, He ad-libbed it. An idea popped into his mind. This same idea probably wouldn't pop into our minds because most of us couldn't do what he was about to do. He looked out at those sixth graders and said, "It is so important that you have the opportunity to work hard and succeed in life. I want to give you *hope*. Stay in school. And I'll pay the college tuition of every one of you." He made that commitment to all 59 of them. The story is told that it was as if, at that moment, hope sprung eternal. This group of kids who had no hope... they were going to be statistics.... all of the sudden had hope for the future. They thought, "All I have to do is graduate from high school. He's going to pay for my college." 90% of them went on to graduate from high school because of that promise. They didn't have hope. Then they had hope.

There's something far better for you and me that gives us reason to live for tomorrow. It is the promise of eternity. When you become a child of God (Born Again), you have the guarantee of Jesus Christ: His undying eternal favor, NOT because of anything you've done. If that's not reason to hope I don't know what is. Many people put hope in their religious performance: "I hope I live good enough to please God." Being saved means you realize that you CAN'T please God. Because of this, He sent Jesus Christ to die for you so that you can be, "accepted in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6)."

So I ask you today: Do you have plans for tomorrow? I hope that you are born again. If you're not, get saved. Get washed in the blood and then, you have every single reason to live for tomorrow.

Let's pray.