

On today's show: Seminary education may or may not be a part of the prerequisites for impacting the kingdom, but suffering always is. And the Lord's taught us that in our own ways even though we're only stateside. But as we dive into that, the purpose of the chapter of the book was to talk about eschatology. And again, we're trying to bridge the gap between our theology and our methodology. So where does eschatology fit in? And it's simply this, that I would want to assert that God has given us these doctrines concerning the last things so that we can suffer.

Welcome to The Missions Podcast, the show that explores your hard questions on missions, theology and practice to help goers think and thinkers go. I'm Alex Kocman, Director of Advancement and Communications with ABWE. Today I am not joined by Scott Dunford, our West Coast Advancement Coordinator, cohost of the show. No, today, we're doing something a little bit different. And of course, like you and everyone who's in ministry, different opportunities come across every now and then and we have a privilege to be able to go out and speak and present. But we wanted to bring you today a special presentation of a talk that I had the privilege of giving to the Student Missions Fellowship at Westminster Theological Seminary that's outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. And at this event, I was asked to speak on a chapter of an upcoming book, "Mission by the Book," written with myself and Chad Vegas, a guest on the show, a friend of the show.

Now there are times where we all realize that we're inadequate in ministry, and this is one of those for me. Those of you who listen to the show know that my background is not as a missionary. My wife and I have a conviction that we're here to send and send faithfully right now, but right now our ministry is in the great state of Pennsylvania, and not overseas, not cross-cultural, that's not my background. And so when I was invited to speak on the topic of suffering on the mission field, needless to say, I thought well, God certainly doesn't call the equipped. And yet as we look at the text of scripture, I pray that you'll be edified, 'cause I think what scripture does is it sets up suffering as something that's normative for all believers and everyone that's involved in the work of ministry, whether here or abroad. So we pray that you're blessed by the content this week.

And before we head into this week's special presentation, wanted to give you two reminders. First, do all the normal show things, share, subscribe, rate, review, and you know you can also go to missionspodcast.com/support to show your support for the show. As we head into the end of the year, that helps us offset the cost of bringing you this content. But second, if you'd like to get to know ABWE and hear about what life on the field is like from people who know, our ABWE 24-hour demo event, it's our preview day, it's our time to come and learn more about who we are and how we function as an agency, and how we can serve you, or your church, whether you're sending or going or just praying and you're just excited about missions. That happens three times a year at our headquarters here in Harrisburg, but in January we're doing it in Orlando, Florida. And who doesn't want to go to Orlando, Florida and have their lodging and food paid for as they think and retreat and pray about their involvement in missions in the cold of January. So join us at the 24-hour demo in January, that's ABWE.org/demo is where you go, ABWE.org/demo. We'd love to see you, we'll roll out the red carpet for you, your lodging and food is covered. But the goal is for you to come and experience what missions would be like with the ABWE global family of ministries. And so with that said, we now bring you this special presentation from Westminster Theological Seminary.

Mason, thanks for the flawless introduction, that's couldn't have been better. It's good to be back here, so the accusations made of me are true. My name's Alex Kocman, and I serve with ABWE. ABWE, if you're not familiar with it, is a missions agency that's existed for ninety-four years.

We're, we serve about a thousand missionaries worldwide, 1,200 personnel total if you include our board, and other volunteers, and senior ambassadors, retirees, those that continue to minister in some ways. And we're in eighty-four countries, we have long-term boots on the ground in about sixty-eight countries, but we also have national partnerships that we facilitate with indigenous workers. And so that brings us to about eighty-four countries that we're ministering in.

So it's a real amazing privilege to be a part of something that's bigger than myself. I grew up in Philly, and then mid-way through childhood in my upbringing moved to Lancaster County, and then to York County. And so I spent a number of years as a teenager in York County, about an hour and half, two hours west of here. And then only after college, and only after grad school, and getting married, and moving back, only after all of that did we find out that there was this organization twenty miles up the road from us called ABWE that was a part of this nearly century-old legacy of missions. And it was incredible to learn about. But I felt a little bit ripped off that I hadn't heard about it sooner. And so my mission is to help change that and connect people with what God is doing around the world so it doesn't stay a best-kept secret in missions. So that's my goal.

And it's a pleasure to be back here and to connect with you. It's been two years, yeah, it's been since before COVID, so before the COVID era, BCE, whatever you wanna call it. And Mason did ask me to present on what is the ninth chapter in my upcoming book with Chad Vegas. I'll preface all of this by saying, we were, I was talking to a few of you guys before we started. I am not a missionary; I have never been a missionary. So I'm definitely not the most qualified person to talk about those things. I do have the privilege of working with missionaries, interviewing them, onboarding them, screening them, sending them off on their way, 3 John, we want to send them in a manner worthy of God. But also it just causes me to reflect on how God uses broken and unqualified and foolish vessels. So I'm overqualified from that standpoint, especially if you ask my wife.

So with that said, a couple years ago my friend Chad Vegas, who's pastor of Sovereign Grace Church in Bakersfield, California approached me about joining him on this book project. He had been teaching through a series on various heads of doctrine. Not all of the heads of doctrine that we would locate under systematic theology, but several of them. And pulling in a few other themes from biblical theology as well. But the purpose of that teaching series that he had begun was to simply say hey, why is there this massive gap between missionary practice and, or doctrine, why is there this gulf between the way that we think and the things that we know that are true about whether it's the definition of a local church, whether it's the way that conversion happens. All of our doctrine that we have, there's this sense of as soon as you go to the mission field you sort of check all of that at the door. And all of the sudden you get into these kind of insulated circles in missiology, and then you read of the missiological literature and you realize they're not dealing with those topics very often at all.

And so our goal within ABWE, and some of the projects that I've been a part of through our magazine, our blog, our podcast has been to bridge those two worlds and to make sure that the missionaries that we send are thinking soundly and biblically. And Chad has resonated with at same message as well. Chad was a part of founding Radius International, which is a training school based in southern California and has a facility in Mexico as well where they do trainings for frontlines workers, and give them a taste of, give them a taste of culture shock before they ever actually go to the mission field. That's their vision.

And he'd been teaching through this series and so what we did was we tackled this book, fifty-fifty, and we were taking various doctrines and we wanted to take those and then with that say, "What if we built our missiology out of these various doctrines?" So what if we took our Christology, our trinitarian theology, our theology proper, our ecclesiology, and we drew points of application for that for our practical methods that we would employ on the mission field, or in church planting here in the States, wherever that would be. And so to me fell the unfortunate lot of tackling the topic of eschatology, which is nothing controversial at all of course, as we all know. And so the, chapter nine in that project, which Mason encouraged me to share about today was the glorious reward of missions, if we want to refer to it that way. But keeping the end in mind, and remembering how those last things in the doctrine of last things ties into the missionary calling. So that's what I wanted to talk about a little bit.

My background is interesting. Full disclosure, I'm not a seminary graduate, I did my undergrad in biblical studies. But then I went the marketing and communications direction for grad school. And so I tend to see through it – and I told my wife this the other day, once you see things through this marketing, communications, ad, PR lens, you can't unsee any of it. All right, so we've got like this natural Listerine in our bathroom, and I said to Hanna, "You know, it's brilliant, all you need to do is just put some nice label on it." It says it's like botanically inspired, you put in a little bit less of the food coloring so it looks more clear and natural, and then you charge twice as much. I said I should be in food marketing. Right, that, so once you see things through that lens, you can never unsee it through the lens of advertising.

And so today, this morning I was doing a little bit of an experiment and I started running a few Google searches to see how missions agencies talk about becoming a missionary, and the missionary task. And some of the search terms were honest, a lot of what I saw was just make an impact on communities, long-term impact, share the gospel. But I did find a few terms and I think we would all be able to identify times that we heard this same language, the word purpose, the word success I found used. A lot of emotional terminology, so purpose, success, feel called, do you feel called, right? A lot of focus on how you feel. And then this was an actual catch phrase that was used on one of the results, personalized coaching, practical training, relevant resources, and proven strategies. So kind of like we've found the magic bullet, come with us, do it our way and you'll just have proven success, right? We've studied it, we've benchmarked it.

And you even think about some of the other language that we use in evangelicalism. You know, everything is purpose-driven, we want to thrive, not just survive, we want to thrive, right? And so a lot of that language slips into the way that we market missions, and the way that agencies try to draw people to their organizations. So as a thought experiment, just think what it would be like if an agency or an organization or a church were to use the apostle Paul's church to advertise the missionary task? If they were to say, "Hey, come with us, enlist with our missionary organization and you will be afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not despairing, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed, always carrying in the body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in your body," 2 Corinthians 4:8-10. Different ring to it, right? Yeah, yeah. So I wanna dive into that text, just kinda wanna walk you through some of the things that we included in the book when Chad and I put pen to paper. And then we'll just open it up and have some conversation afterward, so that's my goal. So let me just pray real quick.

Gracious Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the sober reminder of the seriousness of the missionary task, that whether we're at home or abroad, whether we're in the States, or whether we're in other countries, that you're sovereign over every square inch of

this creation. You're draw your light to yourself, and you've chosen, Lord, to reveal to us truths about the future, and what the future holds for us so that we would persevere, and we would endure, and we would suffer well for the sake of the gospel. And so we pray that you'd open up your word to us as we discuss it and dive into it this morning. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

So early in my time with ABWE, I've been with ABWE about five years, a mentor of mine who, him and I had visited local mosques together, he had been really key in showing me how to minister to Muslims, he and I sat down. He's someone who has had a lot of personal trials. His wife has had nine or ten lung surgeries in the last year. She's obviously someone who would be very concerned about a respiratory virus like COVID, right, and so she's contracted these chronic infections ever since their time overseas many years ago. And they've served in Africa, in the Middle East, in Islamic contexts. So he's seen suffering, he's got his missionary battle scars. And this was several years, this was at a point where I didn't know if I was gonna be overseas or in a local church somewhere, or in a parachurch organization. And he said to me, "Well, if you wanna serve in ministry, and if you want to have an impact for the Lord," he just says, "Just do this." And I said, "What?" And he says, "Just be prepared to suffer, just be prepared for suffering." And he's right. That seminary education may or may not be a part of the prerequisites for impacting the kingdom, but suffering always is. And the Lord's taught us that in our own ways even though we're only Stateside.

But as we dive into that, the purpose of the chapter of the book was to talk about eschatology. And again, we're trying to bridge the gap between our theology and our methodology. So where does eschatology fit in? And it's simply this, that I would wanna assert and this is kind of our thesis, that God has given us these doctrines, these doctrines concerning the last things so that we can suffer, so that we can suffer well, so that we can prepare ourselves for the suffering of the missionary task. And with all the controversies that come with eschatology, all of the debates over the nature of the millennia or what have you, there's a number, you know, dispensationalism, covenant theology, everything in between, every flavor in between. The purpose ultimately for us being given some of these truths is that we'd be able to endure and suffer well, and keep our eyes on the blessed hope. And so I just wanna unpack some of what the apostle Paul says here.

So in that same chapter that I just read from, 2 Corinthians 4, in verses 16 through 18, I wanna start here and I might backtrack, I might skip a little bit forward. But Paul says this, "So we do not lose heart, though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." And I think it's important to pause when we read a text like that and recognize, you know, when you read Paul, you kind of envision him like this superhero, right? His back is to the wind, and his cape is flowing, and we're accustomed to reading him say things that sound pretty extreme. You know, "To live is Christ, to die is gain," and we're like, "Sure," and that's Paul.

And you almost assume he was numb to the suffering, you almost assume that it didn't affect him, it didn't discourage him at all. Charles Hodge said this is his exposition of 2 Corinthians and he points out that no, Paul did feel it. And this is what he says, this is a longer quotation so if you'll indulge me. Hodge wrote, "He did not regard these afflictions as trifles, nor did he bear with them with stoic indifference. He felt their full force and pressure. When five times scourged by the Jews and thrice beaten with rods, his physical torture was as keen as that which any other man would have suffered under similar afflictions. He was not insensible to hunger, thirst, cold,

contempt, ingratitude. His afflictions were not light in the sense of giving little pain. It was only by bringing these afflictions into comparison with eternal glory that they dwindled into insignificance.” And he goes on from there, he says later, “Paul’s Christian life was a protracted dying.” So he was, it was a living death. But what is the longest life compared to everlasting ages?

And so Hodge has some good things to say there, but when Paul says that his momentary affliction, that it’s light, that it’s fleeting, it’s momentary, it’s not because of the affliction itself. Now the affliction itself was heavy and serious, it’s only in comparison that it appears light and momentary. And it’s in comparison to these things that he says are unseen and are eternal. And so wanna break that down just in three ways. What are these unseen, eternal things that outweigh all of the suffering? And the suffering of missions is real, and this is, actually I was having a conversation with my pastor a week or two ago and we were kind of reflecting on, you know, you encounter people who will visit the church for a little while and then will dip out. And they don’t wanna count the cost, right, they don’t want to suffer.

There’s this idea that you either suffer as a Christian or you don’t suffer. And it’s not true. If you’re an unbeliever, you’ll suffer. Life is filled with suffering. And if you’re a Christian you’ll suffer, but you’ll suffer with Christ and it’s worth it. And the same for those who are either senders or goers in the great commission, it’s not become a missionary and suffer, or stay home and not suffer. Frankly, we’ll suffer for the Lord in some way or another, here or abroad. So it’s really just embracing that fact.

And so the three areas that I wanted to unpack for unseen eternal things. First, and yes, I did alliterate, I’m sorry. And when you’re reading a book that you’ve already written, you know probably a year after we finished the manuscripts, I’m reading through this, and I’m like, “Did I really alliterate that?” I did, I did do that, it’s a Baptist thing, you guys wouldn’t understand. Mason would understand, some of you Baptists would understand. It’s a thing that we do.

The first unseen eternal thing: refinement of our character. Verse 16, Paul says, “We do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.” And so our afflictions cause us to deepen in our character. Consider this from Psalm 119 verse 67, David writes, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.” And he says similar things throughout that psalm, right, that it was his affliction that caused him to cling to the law of God. You have this statement from Paul in Romans 5, “We glory in our sufferings because we know that suffering produces perseverance, perseverance character, and character hope.” That’s Romans 5:3 and 4. So we know, and we don’t have to think too hard, we recognize that suffering improves upon, and it sanctifies us, and it grows us in our character, and our heart for the Lord.

William Carey, the father of the modern missionary movement, you’re all familiar with William Carey, he had spent twenty years in translation work, until in the year 1812, his print shop with all of the stored literature and translation work burned. And nothing was able to be recovered. So twenty years of life’s work in translation went up in flames. And he said this in a letter to those that were back home. He says, “God has the sovereign right to dispose with us as he pleases. We ought to acquiesce in all that God does with us and to us.” So Carey resigns himself to the sovereignty of God. He surrenders to the decree of God, the sovereign will of God. But he responds in that way after twenty years of struggling, of persevering, of enduring.

I'd argue those twenty years prepared him to be able to have that kind of response, right? And honestly, I'm not at that point where I can respond quite as easily to afflictions. And yet our sufferings do cause us to have our character refined in that way. But this is actually something that I've seen in screening missionary applicants, in interviewing them, in working with sending churches, is that sometimes there are missionary candidates who have a really strong sense of, "No, I want to grow, I want to do something for the Lord." But the problem is they're only focused on this. So I've talked to people who are working jobs fruitfully, and they'll make comments like, "Well, I just feel like I need to do this for the Lord because I'm not making a difference in my life, and I want to invest my life in something that matters so that I'll have peace." Right? What word did you hear a lot in that sentence?

Audience member: I.

I, me, right, right. So the individual becomes the center at that point. So even in this fact that we're refined through our suffering and through the missionary call, there's still a danger there which is that it can become all about ourselves. And so the other thing to point out there as far as these unseen eternal things that outweigh our sufferings, redemption of our hearers, redemption of our hearers. So Paul says this a few verses up, earlier in chapter 4 he says, "But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believe, therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore we speak knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and present us with you. All things are for your sake, so that as grace is spreading to more and more people, may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God."

So this idea that their suffering is teleological, it has an end, it has a purpose. And the more that they're suffering, the more that they're counting on thanksgiving being given to God by other people, and other people being added to the fold as worshippers of God. Similar statements Paul also makes, 2 Corinthians, excuse me, 2 Timothy 2:10. Paul says, "I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they may also gain a salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." And Colossians 1:24, "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. And in my flesh I'm filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the church."

So I mentioned Chad, who helped found Radius International, him and I have the privilege of working together on this book project, "Missions by the Book." A mutual friend of ours and somebody that he's worked very closely with at Radius is Brad Buser. Brad was also one of the founders of Radius. Brad is a legendary mobilizer in the missions world. And he poured out his life, sacrificed good years of his life with Iteri people in Papua New Guinea. And he made the comment, 'cause people approach him often, they raised their boys on the field and that came at a cost. They didn't get to celebrate certain childhood mile markers and milestones in what you would typically envision as the American dream, or typical, comfortable middle class life. And people will ask him, you know, how he was able to reckon himself to that fact. And he says if he can get to the end of his life, and he'll say this often, but if he can get to the end of his life and be able to present the Iteri people to God and say, "Here, this was for you," then he'll rest confident. The idea of bringing those people to the Lord.

There's another individual that's involved in this same training school, he runs the Asia branch of the training school, Wayne Chen. And Wayne Chen as a powerful story. While they were preparing to reach the Biem people group, also in Papua New Guinea, and they were some of the first missionaries there, working on initial translation, they'd been there for several years learning the language. It's a tribal language no one else had yet learned, and they were some of the only workers among them. They had been there, and they were a few months away from

being able to unveil completed scripture translation to this people group, that's when his wife, Gail, was diagnosed with cancer and had to leave the country and go to Taiwan in order to receive medical care. And so she received care, but she insisted, Gail insisted to Wayne that he go back, that he see things through, he see that the translation gets released.

And one of the remarks that one of the Biem tribesmen made to Wayne along the way was, "I don't know what this message is that you've been preparing for years to share with us, but whatever it is, it must be important because you came back." That was the remark that was made. And by the way, pray for Gail, at last I heard she's got stage four cancer. Things aren't looking good. So this is an active situation, this story's still being written.

But you see how that suffering uniquely equipped them to listen, and enabled them to listen. They wouldn't have responded in the same way were it not for that suffering, right? So we'll have doors open to us for the gospel even just based on the way that we suffer. It may not be anything in the way that we craft our message, in the way that we contextualize, our boldness. It might actually just be personal suffering that opens our hearers' hearts.

And then the third thing, and this is kind of what we're building to here. The third and final thing is this unseen hope, and the context makes this clear too, is that it's the resurrection of our bodies that Paul has in view that enables him to endure. And so he says this in the very next chapter, just in the next breath, chapter 5, first few verses there, "For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent we groan, being burdened, not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared this for us," this, excuse me, "He who has prepared this, for this very thing is God who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee." And he goes on from there and he says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, right? And so he gives us this unpacking of personal eschatology.

So when we come to this doctrine of last things, when we come to this doctrine of the future, we immediately think about the return of Christ. We think about how much tribulation will the world be under, or not be under, will the great commission be finished, what is the exact nature of the millennium, how do I understand all of the things that are happening in a book like Revelation, or what's going on Thessalonians? Those are some of the questions that we kind of just bring into that conversation. We skip over what all the creeds and confessions prioritize about the doctrine of last things, which is that there's a righteous, there's a judgment of the righteous and the unrighteous, right? There's the literal bodily return of Christ, and then there's also eternal conscious torment, or there's life forever with God. That, the individual eschatology, where are you gonna be? What are the last things for you? And so sometimes we struggle to keep the main thing the main thing, right? And I get it, and I've been in the dorm room, and I've had all of the eschatology debates and the things that happen there as well there.

So because I'm at Westminster it seems fitting to read the Westminster Confession of Faith chapter thirty-two. And it says, "At the last day, such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed; and all the dead shall be raised up with the self-same bodies and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever. The bodies of the unjust shall, by the power of Christ, be raised to dishonor; the bodies of the just by His Spirit unto honor, and be made conformable to His own glorious body."

So often when I would interview missionary candidates to serve long-term, we take them through kind of an ordination, not quite an ordination but kind of a doctrinal interview. We would have a conversation, make sure they match our confession of faith, our standards at ABWE. And when it comes to eschatology, they're kind of like getting ready to answer like, "Well, here's what I believe about the millennium," or whatever the controversy de jour is, along those lines. And so I would always just ask this question at the onset, I'd say, "Why is it necessary that Christ has to return? And why is it necessary that he has to return bodily?" Right, you have that promise in Acts 1:11 that just as you saw him ascend, so he'll descend, right? And I wanna hear them articulate that as well because it's not worth addressing all of the other ancillary issues around eschatology if we're not first centering ourselves on that blessed hope. The fact that Christ is going to return, and the fact that we're going to be conformed to him so that we can commune with him personally forever, that's what's enabling endurance for the apostle Paul.

And actually, I would say the whole body of biblical teaching regarding eschatology is given to us so that we can endure the same types of sufferings as well. And I think we know this intuitively, and whenever we get sidetracked studying, well what does this mean or that, like we know what the main point. And sometimes we allow ourselves to forget it. But just to make the point even more clear, the whole book of Revelation itself, whatever you do with Revelation, if you do nothing else with it, realize that it's a handbook on suffering and enduring persecution. And here's just a couple examples from the book of Revelation. First, in the first chapter the apostle John writes from exile on Patmos and he introduces himself as "a partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus." So he introduces the whole book that way, saying that I'm a partner in tribulation here. Okay, then you move on, the book begins with the seven letters, we're familiar with those. All of them, several of them are about to undergo intense tribulation and persecution.

Jesus specifically addresses persecution in Smyrna and what they're about to suffer in chapter 2, verse 10. And each church address ends with this injunction to those who are to conquer, right? It says if you conquer, so there's this idea, you have to conquer, you have to endure, you have to overcome something. So the idea of overcoming is there. Chapter 7, versus 9 and 14, God's elect are gathered from those, they're referred to as those who come out of a tribulation, right? So they're enduring suffering as well. In chapter 12, verse 11, the saints of God are those who have conquered Satan by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimonies. And they loved not their lives to the death. And then of course at the end when we see the consummation of all things in chapter 21, we see that it's presented in this way of the apostle John says God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, death shall be no more, neither that their, neither shall there be mourning, crying, pain anymore, for the former things have passed away. So the consummation is contrasted with what they've been enduring in their life up until that moment.

So you don't have to go far out into the world to recognize that in order to do something well, you have to begin with the end in mind. Stephen Covey, you know Stephen Covey? Like "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People"? Okay, so think the business world, okay? One of his principles is begin with the end in mind. And he writes about, "To begin with the end in mind, to labor in light of your goal point every day is to begin each day, task, or project with a clear vision of your desired direction and destination. And then continue by flexing your proactive muscles to make things happen."

So the whole point is simply this, and I'll wrap it up here, is simply, because of that future hope, because of the blessed hope of Christ's return and eternal life, right, that's the prize, that's the

prize. We've got to be willing to count the cost in missions. There's this idea that missions is this simple thing. Again, think of the way that we advertise it, and I think we're guilty of this ourselves, all of us that are involved in missions in one way or another, "Oh yeah, get plugged in, get involved, anyone can do it." But the Christian life also involves committing to suffer, and committing to endure hardship, whether it's short term or long term, whether it's here, or abroad. We have to reconcile ourselves to that fact. And because of the future hope, number one, it's a tangible hope. It's, it's not physical in the sense that it's fleshly, but it's physical in the sense that we know that the new heavens and the new earth are something that we're gonna be able to feel and taste and touch and smell, right? We'll have real bodies, glorified bodies. So because of that, the deeds done in the body matter. Not just spiritual needs, but physical needs as well. Everything that we do in the body matters.

Second, because it's future, we can leave behind this marketing language, this soft prosperity gospel of just expecting kind of this upwards and to the right trajectory of success constantly. And the third thing is because it's an infinite hope, we don't lose heart. And actually I'd encourage you, if you remember to do nothing else, don't buy the book, don't do anything, you can listen to the podcast, you can buy the book, you can do all those sorts of things. But if you're really looking for something to read and to dive into, go ahead and look up William Carey's Serampore Band of Agreement that him and his missionaries made when they were ministering in Serampore, because that document there lays out some really powerful things. And I, I might have a quote from it, I'm not sure that I do. But they do make this statement, from article five, "Oh that these glorious truths may ever be the joy and strength of our own souls. And then they will not fail to become the matter of our conversation to others." So it's only in reflecting on those weighty truths that you're gonna be able to endure wherever you're ministering so as to communicate that to others, so that evangelism is the overflow of our meditation on that blessed hope. So let me pray.

Lord, we stand in awe and we marvel at the fact that you have given us an inheritance that is imperishable and undefiled, and is kept for us, whom you've saved. Lord, we thank you for that fact. Lord, help us whether it's in our studies, our work, our current ministries, our families, help us to keep our eyes on the prize, help us to keep our eyes on the prize, help us to recognize that the sufferings that await faithful Christian ministry and the missionary life are not worth comparing to the glories of our character being refined, the glories of our hearers being saved and redeemed, and ultimately the glory of receiving a resurrected body that is conformable to your own body, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ so that we'd be able to commune with you forever face to face. And Lord, as you throw little trials and struggles and difficulties and circumstances our way, help us to look up, and help us to hang on tightly to you knowing that you're doing all of this for your good and our glory, and ultimately for the spread of your glory among all the nations. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

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