

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

What I Would Like to See Happen in 1984

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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When people in our society evaluate a year, as I said earlier, they evaluate it in ways perhaps differently than we do as Christians. We look at things through a heavenly perspective. But it is kind of interesting to see how our world evaluates itself.

I was reading several articles this last week just to get a feeling for what our American society says about itself as it comes to the end of 1983 and how it marks out certain trend- setting features of our life. And some of the things that characterize trends in 1983 are interesting. Did you know that four million video cassette recorders were sold, making over nine million of them now in use? Ten thousand home video stores are providing all the entertainment tapes and discs for these nine million VCRs. Eight million dollars worth of telephones were purchased. Now there are about 182 million of them in use every day. Nine point one million cars were sold in 1983. And I know you're aware of the fact that now there are 118 million of them on the highway. Mail boxes were crowned with 40 point seven billion pieces of junk mail processed by the U.S. Postal Service. Thirty-one million pairs of jogging shoes were purchased. Five million home computers were sold. And each one of us per capita consumed 42 quarts of popcorn. Other folks consumed 226 million beers a day...other folks. Two point five million people got married, twenty thousand fewer divorced than last year. Thirty- one thousand four hundred psychiatrists practiced...and we hope some of them are getting better. One point eight billion books were sold. Two point five million Cabbage Patch dolls were purchased. The average household grew a little bit to 2.73 people and there is no average household, obviously. Life expectancy for babies born in 1983 has reached 74.5 years. And Gallup poll says six out of ten people are interested in a deeper religious experience.

That tells us a little about our society, doesn't it? Its technology, its consumer habits, its materialism, its communications, its problems. But as we look at a year to try to evaluate what happened as I said, we look at it spiritually. And we've all heard recently the prognosticators telling us what 1984 might bring, and we're all happy to know that George Orwell was wrong...1984 is not going to bring to the United States of America an utterly totalitarian state, you might also be interested to know that he first named his book "1948," and it wasn't true then and it isn't true now in our society. So the prophets of doom, in a sense, have sort of missed the date.

As we look at 1984 we hear people around us telling us the things that might happen or might not happen. And all of that is somewhat insignificant to us when compared with eternal things. And so for this morning as we look to the new year that we're embarking on today, I want to share with you

some of my own personal desires for 1984. I can't tell you what's going to happen but I can tell you what I'd like to happen. And I want to give you just a few of the things that I would like to see begin to happen in 1984.

First of all, I would like to see the world be the way God intended it to be. I mean, when God first created it, it says in Genesis 1, that He looked on everything He had made and said it is...what?...it's good. And now He looks on it and says it's bad. The earth was good and all that was in it was good. And then came sin and the Fall and the curse and we look at a world today and we really can't see the world the way God intended it to be. I mean, not even the created earth, I mean the pre-Fall mountains and streams and valleys and meadows and trees and animals and birds and all of that were somewhat different than we know them even now. There was a glory and a grandeur in the created world that we've never seen. I mean, we're familiar with famine and we're familiar with a lack of food and the earth's inability to produce what needs to be produced in a certain climate. We're familiar with plagues. We're familiar with distended little stomachs on children who have flies crawling all over their face and sores all over their body. We're familiar with diseases. We're familiar with disabilities and handicaps. We're familiar with disasters. We see whole villages in a rubble after an earthquake. We see people caught in an avalanche or a mudslide or whatever. We're familiar with hatred. We're familiar with battles and wars and murders and crimes and death. It's all around us. And we really have never seen the earth the way God intended it to be. And I get tired of the way it is, don't you? I mean, get weary of all of the problems that the earth has, all of the terrible disasters that it somehow entertains and seemingly supports. And we live in the constant fear that some little man somewhere is going to push a button and blow us all into bits by setting off a nuclear chain reaction. I mean, the world lives in fear. The world lives in fear that is real, connected to real events and fear that is unreal connected to what might happen. The world is not the way God made it to be. And that's why in Romans 8 the Apostle Paul says the whole creation longs, the whole creation travails, the whole creation has pain until the day that it comes to its fullness, until it enters into the manifestation of the sons of God.

I would like to see the world the way God made it to be...a world of unrivaled inexplicable unstained unmarred beauty, a world where all of creation lives in absolute harmony. I would like to see what the Bible calls the regeneration of the world, the times of restitution, the fullness of times, the times of refreshing. I would like to see how it is in the world when the curse is lifted and the lion lies down with the lamb and the children of a wild...the cubs of a wild bear can lie down beside a sheep. I would like to see how it is when children can play in snake pits. I would like to see the world when the desert blossoms like a rose. I would like to see the world when the blind can see and there are no deaf and the lame leap as deers. I would like to see the world as Joel 2 describes it where there's plenty of food, the latter rain, the former rain come together and there's an abundance of food, food for everybody, food for all the needs of all the people. I would like to see the world of Isaiah 29:8, a world of health. I would like to see the world that is restored to all of the glory that God ever intended at the first, without pollution where people have a long and happy and peaceful and joyous life...where there

is no fear of man or beast.

You say, "You're a dreamer." That's the world I'd like to...you see, I'd like to see that begin to unfold in 1984. That's what I'd like to see. I mean, I've had basically enough of the one we've got.

There's something else as long as I'm wishing for 1984, I've got more. A second thing is I would like to see perfect human life. I would like to see man as man was meant to be. I mean, I would like to see people who are just the way God really intended man should be. You see, life is so defeating and basically its bottom line problem is that man is frustrated by his inability to be what he senses inside he ought to be or wants to be. It's in the heart of the preacher who writes in Ecclesiastes, what does he say? "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The word vanity means emptiness, nothingness, pointlessness, uselessness, meaninglessness. It's the meaninglessness of a philosopher who looks at life...you say, "Well maybe the guy doesn't have anything." No, he's got everything. Most likely his name is Solomon and he has everything...all the money you could want, all the power you could want, all the authority you could want, all the land you could want, all the women you could want, and more. Everything you could possibly want and it's all meaningless, he says. It doesn't mean anything. What profit has a man of all his labor which he takes unto the sun? You work hard and you get it all and what good is it? It doesn't do any good at all, it's meaningless. One generation passes away and another generation comes. And now he goes in to these cycles. People live and people die, and people live and people die and people live and people die and the sun rises and the sun goes down and it hastes the place where it rose...the sun comes up, the sun goes down...he's in to the cycles now. The wind goes toward the south, then turns to the north and it whirls on around continually and the wind returns again according to its circuits. Everything just keeps going on, everything goes on. It's all so endless, so meaningless. No progress, right? Starts here, comes back to there again...that's it. All the rivers run to the sea, what has to happen? The sea is not full, evaporation takes it back over the land, it drops it where the rivers start and it goes through the cycle again.

So it is with man. He works, he eats so he can work so he can eat so he can work so he can eat. The thing that hath been is that which shall be, that which is done is that which shall be done and there is no new thing under the sun. It's very boring, very cyclical.

That's kind of a sad way to live, isn't it? It's meaningless. He says in the midst of all this meaninglessness I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things. I decided that I'd get educated and get wisdom and so I pursued all of that and this severe travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. Man is stuck with trying to figure out the meaning to all this meaninglessness.

I've seen all the works that are done under the sun. And behold, all is meaninglessness and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked can't be made straight and that which is lacking can't be numbered.

In other words, you can't have what you don't have and you can't change what you can't change, and life goes on and it's all meaningless...it's all meaningless. I spoke to my own heart and I said...Lo, I am come to great estate and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem, yea my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge and I gave my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly, I perceived that this also is nothing but vexation of spirit, for in much wisdom is much grief and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. The more you know the sadder you are because you know so much and so much of what you know makes you sad.

Now that's the way you look at life. And you know, really that is a very profound philosophical statement. That's the substance of what Sartre wrote in his book "Nausea" which is his view of life, which says the same thing. That's the view of Hedonistic philosopher. That's the view of a man without God. That's the view of man captured in this world who looks at it and says it all seems so meaningless, you just live and die and then somebody else lives and dies and nothing really means anything. And life is like that. And in the midst of it there is pain and there is sorrow and there is distress. He says I tried pleasure and it was unfulfilling. I tried pain and it was unfulfilling. I sought wealth, in chapter 2 he goes on to talk about all the things that he would pursue and all of that was unsatisfying. Anything that I looked at I got and that was unsatisfying. I mean, the world is a painfully debilitating place. Man has the sense of unfulfillment. He has the sense of never arriving. That's why he longs for something better. That's why he anticipates something in the future. Man just can't cut it. He can't be what he was made to be. He's debilitated. He's captive. He's tied down.

Its symbolized most beautifully by a bumper sticker. It says, "It's hard to soar with eagles when you live with turkeys." There's something in a man that wants to soar with eagles but he knows he's living with a bunch of turkeys.

But imagine on the other hand that the fulfillment of Romans 8, the manifestation of all that man could ever be, the whole creation becoming all that it could be, imagine man with perfect knowledge, perfect wisdom, perfect power, perfect wholeness, perfect love, perfect goodness, perfect joy, perfect strength, perfect self-control. I mean, you get tired of a world where people kill each other, don't you? You tire of a world where people are unkind to each other, where parents abuse little children and where their children abuse the parents. Tired of people that can't make relationships meaningful and that go through life just hurting everybody that they touch. Tired of people who kill and maim. Tired of people who step on the necks of others to gain things for themselves and then live with horrifying guilt and pain. Tired of people who give bad answers to good questions. You get weary of so-called education which educates nobody toward the truth. And you'd like to see man be all that man could be. So I'd like to see that.

I have a third thing that I'd like to see begin to happen in 1983...(John meant 1984)...I would like to see the salvation of millions of people all over the globe. I would like to see the salvation of millions

of people all over the globe. I would like to see a world-wide preaching of the gospel that resulted in world-wide salvation that wasn't the result of some human enterprise, that wasn't the result of some man-made Madison Avenue evangelistic technique. I would like to see a world-wide movement of salvation that could only be ascribed to the power of God. I would like to see all of the battles that missionaries fought and have fought and do fight to conquer evil and unbelief and the false religions of the world won on the behalf of Christ. I would like to see the pagans of the world kneeling at the feet of Jesus Christ. I would like to see the evangelism that we've done and found so hard to do all of a sudden made easy in the power of God as a world-wide belief in Jesus Christ takes place. I would like to see those in darkness come running into the light. I would like to see those who are condemned come to Christ. I want to see the time come when all Israel is saved. I want to see the time come when they as Revelation 7 describes it out of every people and tribe and tongue and nation fall down before the Lamb and cry out "salvation unto our God." I would like to see the whole world of people exposed to the gospel and a world-wide belief in Christ come to pass.

Boy, you say, you are a dreamer. Well that's what I'd like to see. I would like to see the world the way God intended it to be. I would like to see man as man was made to be and I would like to see the salvation of multitudes across this world.

There's a fourth thing I'd like to see. I would like to see the full glory of believers. You know, we all struggle, don't we? I'd like to see what you're like when you're perfect. Really. I mean, we are difficult for each other, aren't we? I mean, you've probably thought that about a lot of people in your life. If you could just eliminate their imperfections they'd be wonderful. I mean, wouldn't it be great to see Christians being all that they really were meant to be? Wouldn't have to do any more church discipline. Wouldn't have to do anymore exhortation. I mean, I'd be done. My job would end. The Lord would have to give me another job...play on a harp, sit on a cloud, I don't know...lead some hallelujahs. But if all the believers entered into the full glory of the image of Jesus Christ, wouldn't you like to see your husband like Jesus Christ? Men, wouldn't you like to see your wife like Christ? Wouldn't you like to see those people that sort of bother you perfect? And you could handle it because you'd be perfect too.

I mean, wouldn't it be wonderful to get out of Romans 7 forever?...forever? Wouldn't it be glorious to never have to be made humble so that you could be made strong? You don't need to know a weakness in order to experience a strength. Wouldn't it be great if we didn't have to encourage the faint hearted because there weren't any faint hearted? We wouldn't have to support the weak because there weren't any weak. We wouldn't have to confine the unruly because there weren't any unruly. And all believers were functioning on all cylinders using all capacities for the glory of God. Wouldn't it be marvelous to see believers become all that you've longed that they should be? I think of the Apostle Paul who in his heart of hearts could say of those he had seen redeemed in Christ Jesus, "I have travail in my soul until Christ be formed in you." In other words, I have pain until I see Christ formed in you. Anyone who serves Jesus Christ should feel that way. And oh what a

fulfillment it would be to see that pain end because the person is like Christ. What a marvelous thing.

Wouldn't it be great to see people who have entered into the fulfillment of 1 John 3 where John writes, "When we see Him we shall be...what?...like Him for we shall see Him as He is"? Wouldn't it be marvelous to meet believers whose mortality had become immortal, whose corruptibility had become incorrupt, who had entered in to the eternal glory of a glorified body and a glorified soul forever and ever and ever? I mean, that's what I'd like to see. I'd like to see the just...the spirits of just men made perfect. I'd like to stand in that general assembly, the church of the firstborn, the innumerable company of angels that stands in the glories of eternal heaven and there and there alone is absolute and eternal perfection. That's what I'd like to see. I mean, if we're going to make a wish, let's make a good one.

Something else I want to see. I want to see Satan get what he deserves. I want to see the world be what God wants it to be. I want to see man be perfected as man was made to be. I want to see the full glory of believers and I want to see on the other hand Satan get what he deserves. I'm tired of him. I'm tired of the fact that he attacks God. I'm weary of the fact that not only did he begin in a rebellion, and you can read about that in Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, other places, Christ talks about him as lightning fallen from heaven. He has rebelled against God. He has defamed God's name. He has blasphemed God's character. He has denied God's work. He has counterfeited God's truth. He has fought against God's rule. He has tried to halt God's authority. He curses God. He curses Christ. He curses the Holy Spirit every way possible. He has attacked Jesus Christ. We see him attacking Christ in the temptation. We see him attacking Christ to keep Him from the cross, when He goes to the cross he tries to hold Him on the cross. When He goes to the grave he tries to keep Him in the grave. When He goes into heaven he tries to rub out the church by persecution. He attacks Christians. I mean, wouldn't it be wonderful to live at a time when you didn't even have to put on any armor because there wasn't any devil going around shooting arrows, fiery darts? No more slander, no more doubts, no more temptations from him, no more persecutions, no more divisions, no more sowing tares among the wheat, no more discord. I'd like to see Satan get exactly what he deserves.

You know, the whole world, it says in 1 John 5:19, lies in his lap. He holds the whole world captive to death and hell and I would like to see him get what he deserves for such a thing. I would like to see him go to the place prepared for him, mentioned in Matthew 25:41. I feel sometimes like the martyrs under the altar in Revelation 6 who cry out, "How long, O Lord, how long?" Or like David who says, "How long are You going to allow these things, God, without stepping in? How long are You going to tolerate these kings of things?" I want to see Satan chained and bound and cast into the bottomless pit, the lake of fire which burns with fire and brimstone forever and ever. That's what I want to see. I'd like to see that begin to unfold in 1984.

And there's something else I want to see. I want to see Jesus worshiped as He deserves to be. I understand a little bit of what David felt when he cried out in zeal for God that he felt the pain that was

put upon God, Psalm 69:9, the reproaches that fall on You are falling on me. In other words, when God was dishonored, he felt the pain. I understand that a little bit. I think a little bit, a very small amount, I understand what it was like for Jesus to go into the temple and see it blasphemed and desecrated and to make a whip and start throwing people out of there. He wanted His Father to be honored. I understand a small part of what Henry Martine must have felt when he came out of a Hindu temple in India and cried out with tears in his face, "I cannot endure existence if Jesus is so dishonored." I mean, I get weary of those who dishonor Christ, of those who take His name in vain, of those who mock His cross, of those who deny His name, of those who refuse His salvation, those who reject His deity, and so forth and so on. I get weary of that. I feel a righteous indignation in me over that. I see a cult or something and I want to make a whip and throw them out, but I just don't have the whatever it takes to do that. I mean, He suffered enough humiliation, I think. He came unto His own, His own received Him not. He was in the world, the world was made by Him, the world knew Him not. He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief. He was without comeliness or beauty, undesirable, the form of a servant, sacrifice, His humiliation, even His brothers didn't believe in Him. People hated Him, mocked Him, spit on Him, cursed Him, refused to believe in Him. He was betrayed, denied, persecuted, mocked, killed and continues to be so to this day. People are continually in a sense killing Him by rejection. And I think it's time for Him to enter into the essence of Philippians chapter 2 where he says that the one who was humiliated is now exalted and at His name every knee should bow and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father. I would like to see Him enter into His glory. I would like to see the whole of the heavenly hosts falling down on their knees crying out, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive glory and honor and riches and power and wisdom and strength and blessing." I would like to see Him enter into full glory riding on a white horse coming as King of kings and Lord of lords. He's had enough humiliation. He's had enough mockery, enough unbelief.

Those are the things that I want to see. There's one more. I want to see Jesus Christ. Many of you have been Christians longer than I have, some of you have been less. But anyone who has known the Lord Jesus Christ for any length of time and prayed with Him and communed with Him and studied His Word and walked in His way and studied the things that marked His life and tried to emulate them in his or her own life, anyone who has lived in proximity to Christ and loved Christ with a whole heart longs for the fullness of communion with Christ. Sometimes I wish there were no barriers of space or time or sight or sound between myself and the living Christ. I long to be like Peter was, in His presence or John or others of the Twelve.

I understand what they must have felt when He said, "I'm going to go away," and they went into instant panic. And He said, "Stop letting your heart be troubled, I'm going to come back and take you where I am." I understand a little bit of what Paul meant when he said, "For to me to live is Christ, to die is gain. Better to be absent from the body, be present with the Lord."

We had a time with our family, my wife's parents' fiftieth anniversary and all this family was together. There was one member missing, Tim Rea, he was murdered last year. And there was a certain amount of discussion about him because his presence is so very much a part of our family and his absence therefore was much a part of our time. And I thought about it quite often and all I could think about was that he was where I wanted to be. And I couldn't find it in my heart to have any sorrow for anyone but the rest of us because he was there in glory in the presence of Jesus Christ, having seen the fulfillment of all the things that every believer ever dreams and ever longs for, namely and mostly the presence of his Lord. And there we were with all of the dumb things of this world. We had a whole family reunion up there, so we had all the meals together. It was really quite a thing. And I preached at night and other people came. I didn't just preach to the family...although they listened. But I mean we all had assignments. There I was and I was mopping the floor or sweeping or cleaning off dirty plates or doing dishes...dumb things...backed my car into something and bent a deal...trying to drive and make sure we had chains to get somewhere. Who needs it?

I couldn't be sorry for one who had ascended the heights of glory and was in the presence of Jesus Christ...with all that stuff behind him. I want to be with Jesus. You see, it's not that you're looking for an event, it's that you're looking for a person, right? This is what I wish. That's what I long for...to start happening in 1984.

You say, "Well now wait a minute. How can all that happen?" Well what I really want to see happen in 1984 can be reduced to this, if I want to see the world the way it was created to be, men the way they were made to be, believers fully glorified, Satan getting what he deserves, Jesus Christ being exalted, and if I want to be with Him, then what I really want to see in 1984 is...what?...the Rapture of the church because that's event number one that sets in motion all the rest of those promised realities. And so I say with John at the end of the book of Revelation, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." I'm looking for the day when the last trump sounds, when the dead in Christ shall rise first and those that are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the air to meet the Lord and to ever be with Him. I'm looking for that day when in the moment, in the twinkling of an eye we are transformed, we're changed. I'm looking for the coming of Jesus Christ. I wish the Lord Jesus Christ would come in 1984. I'm not that old but I've had enough of all this stuff. And it isn't that I don't love what I love here, I do. I just want to love it with a perfect love and I want to love it in its perfection.

And so, I trust you can say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," nothing greater could happen in 1984. Who knows? Maybe it will. We ought to live every moment as if it will. For John says, "He that hath this hope in him purifies himself." It is a purifying hope to live that way. It is a purifying anticipation to live that way. Peter says, "Seeing you know all these things are coming to pass, what kind of person should you be?" Spotless, he says, blameless, growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We should be those of whom Paul spoke when he said, "Those who love His appearing...who love His appearing..."

I don't know what's going to happen with computers. I don't know what's going to happen with telephones. I don't know what's going to happen with Cabbage Patch dolls or Cabbage Patch dolls' kids that I read are going to come out. I don't know what's going to happen with automobiles. I don't know what's going to happen with the economy. I don't know what's going to happen in all those things. But I know one thing that is going to happen, and this is it, Jesus Christ is coming for His church. Now I don't know when it's going to happen but nothing could be more wonderful to me than it happening in 1984. And I guess the question I would ask you is if indeed it does, are you prepared for that? And if you are prepared for that, are you living in the light of that so that when the Lord does come He finds you in a place of faithfulness, purity, loving His appearing? Let's bow in prayer.

We have looked forward briefly this morning at what lies ahead of us...the glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, for His beloved, His redeemed. Great, great hope. But a look forward is only possible because of a look backward. It's only because we understand the meaning of His first coming that we can have any hope at all in His Second Coming. And so this morning as we come to the Lord's table, it's with the thought of His soon return in mind that we celebrate His death, for it is His first coming and dying that granted to us the salvation that gives us the hope for His Second Coming and crowning. The Bible tells us that when He returns the world will be the way God created it to be. Paradise will be regained. Men will be as men were meant to be. Believers will enter into full glory. Satan will be cast out. Christ will be glorified and we will be forever in the Father's house with Jesus Christ. It happens when He comes. But it only happens for those who have stood at the foot of His cross and embraced Him as Lord and Savior. And so we come to celebrate His death for us, taking away our sin. It is a celebration. It is also a time for conviction as we look at our own hearts and see that though He died for our sins and though we embrace that death and love Him, there's sin in our life, sin which He hates and we hate and this table becomes a table of confession where that sin is confessed. And in the light of His death for us we repent of sin which caused that death and ask His cleansing. And it is a place of communion because we as believers all come at the common ground of the foot of the cross, all sinners, all in need of salvation, all without resources apart from Christ, and here we celebrate our love for each other, our oneness with each other in Him. And it's also a place of communication for we communicate His death, we preach a message in the service...the bread, the cup speak of His body and blood, they become preachers of a sort, preaching to all who will hear, proclaiming to all who are near His death for sin. And so we who have hope in the future have it because we have help in the past, for at the cross He provided our salvation and gave us there the guarantee of our future glory. So we stand beneath the cross and look to a glorious future.

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