

We are told quite clearly in scripture that we are to store up for ourselves treasures in heaven rather than on earth. Earthly treasures are prone to decay, and theft, and, in modern times, inflation. Earthly treasures are not as valuable as they seem, and they lose their value very quickly over time. So how does one store up heavenly treasures? How is it that one can create a heavenly treasure, and then how does one access heaven to store it? This week we will orient ourselves toward heavenly treasures and begin storing them up.

Day 1

You Are a Covenantal Being

When we say that you are a covenantal being, we are not just saying that you have or participate in covenants. We are saying that you, to a large extent, *are* the covenants that you participate in. We already know this even though we haven't noticed it yet. When someone asks you about yourself, what do you tell them? I am a son, a brother, a husband, a father. I work at this job, I belong to these organizations, I am a citizen of this country. Most of the way we describe ourselves is by the covenants we are a part of because they form a large part of our identity and bring meaning and purpose to our lives. These covenants are, for the most part, spiritual. It is true that there is a biological nature to some of them, but even the most biological covenant is mostly spiritual, as such close biological relationships as parent to child are not always honored, and to some people mean absolutely nothing. Why is this the case? How can one person derive so much meaning and purpose from their covenants and others do not? Some people live according to the flesh, and some according to the spirit. The flesh is always at war with the spirit, telling you that you are too tired to meet your obligations, telling you that your covenant is getting in the way of what your flesh desires right at this moment. The spirit desires things that are contrary to the flesh, and the two are always at war with each other. How will you live? Do not give in to the desires of the flesh, for if you do the flesh will rule over you to your downfall. Instead, serve the spirit in all things. Begin with what is nearest to you, or begin with what is obvious, but begin you must.

Verses: Genesis 9:8-17, Isaiah 54:10, Galatians 3:15

Prayer Topics: Identity, Belonging, Commitments

Day 2

Future-You is Real

Homer Simpson once famously said, "That's future-Homer's problem. Boy, I'd hate to be that guy." You can't help but laugh at Homer's simple-minded foolishness, and yet we all know it hits very close to home, because we all live like that more often than we'd like to admit. We are often told to live for the moment, and there are ways to take this advice that make sense. In terms of anxiety and worry, it is good to live in this moment and not let all your concerns about the future carry into this moment and ruin the grace God is showing you now. However, it is also important to understand that although future-you doesn't exist, future-you is real. How can this be? Future-you is a spiritual entity, existing in the heavenly realms rather than the earthly, fleshly realm. We must live as if future-you is just as real, maybe more real, than current-you. You must live in covenant with future-you, treating that person as someone you care about and are willing to make sacrifices for. As an example, current-me might be hungry and wants to eat a piece of cake, but future-me would like to be healthy. What should I choose? Most of the time we act like our future self is not real, and we end up with disintegrated lives because of this, always sabotaging our future well being and happiness. To live by the spirit means to take future-you into account, realizing that current-you may face light and momentary trouble, but that

future-you will reap a great reward. Stop making decisions in the flesh, and live by the spirit, your future self will thank you.

Verses: Romans 8:1-11, Galatians 5:19-21, 1 Corinthians 10:13

Prayer Topics: Foresight, Wisdom, Sacrifice

Day 3

Interest Compounds

One of the great pitfalls of life that most young people are not ready for is the credit card. Each year, millions of credit applications are targeted to those who have recently become adults, so that they can enjoy the reality of compounding interest. The lure of spending today while paying tomorrow seems great, until the reality of a mountain of debt hits us. This unpleasant part of life can work in our favor, however. If we make small changes and sacrifices now, we can see great rewards in the future. Jesus fed a group of five thousand men not because someone was called on to make such an enormous sacrifice, but because someone gave up their lunch. That is the way sacrifice, and by extension service, works. The great treasures of our lives are lived in this manner. My family is a great blessing to me, and if I was very ill and could not work, they would take care of me. Why? Because I have stored treasures in them, and those treasures bear fruit. I have taught my family to work and make an income, and they in turn are teaching their families to work and make incomes. The net result is that all of us have wealth to fall back on, because we invest in each other. I receive calls every day without fail at the church asking for large sums of money, mostly (but not always) from individuals who are unconnected in any meaningful way to anyone else. Because they have, for the most part, not invested in others, they have no wealth stored up for when the storms of life overtake them and are forced to call complete strangers for help. When we serve, and truly care about others, our service does not seem like a sacrifice. We also do not think of it as self-serving, because that is not the reason we serve. But the nature of service is that those investments, when done in the spirit of love, yield fruit. Interest compounds, so store it in heaven.

Verses: Matthew 6:20, 2 Corinthians 9:6, Acts 20:35

Prayer Topics: Exchange, Contribution, Accumulation

Day 4

Time to Diagnose

Having spent some time this week re-orienting ourselves to look at our lives from a different perspective, it is time to evaluate and diagnose what needs to change. Where are you prone to put the flesh over the spirit? Where are you prone to see your life in isolation, from others and from your future self? In what areas are spiritual truths being lost to the immediate demands of the flesh? In what ways are you consistently prioritizing the present over the future, both your future and the future of other people? Where do these behaviors and habits cross the line into sin? If sin is missing the mark of perfection, or falling short of the glory of God, does that change how you view the last question? What are the reasons you fall into sin in these areas? What truths are you denying? What lies are you believing? What do you need to meditate on so that you will stop telling yourself the lies that keep you from the heavenly riches God desires for you? Spend some time today diagnosing the problem. It is not fun, but it pays great dividends.

Verses: 1 John 1:8-10, 1 John 3:4, Galatians 5:16

Prayer Topics: Reflection, Introspection, Truth

## Day 5

### Planning to Invest

Having spent some time yesterday looking at our areas of sin and failure, we can turn to the much more pleasant task today of planning our investments. If you had just won the lottery, and had millions to invest, it might be fun to look around for opportunities to make the money grow. If you were not afraid, like the one talent servant in the parable of the talents, you might find real enjoyment in looking around at the world at all the possibilities of making things more fruitful. The point of the investment is that it makes the thing invested in more productive, blessed, and fruitful, and by this earns a return for the investor. Many people, in contrast to this, look at service as some odious task that they are obligated to do but do not want to do. This aversion can come from a number of sources, some more innocent than others. But if you had an abundance of wealth, and you were confident of success, investment could be very enjoyable. In the same way, if we are certain of our riches in Christ Jesus through the covenant of His blood, and we are certain that many of our investments will bear fruit, then we should enjoy looking around our lives and seeing the opportunities we have to express covenant unity with God, others, and our future selves through service. Where can we live out the admonition to store up wealth spiritually? What changes will we make, what is our plan, and when will we start? It's a great adventure, let's begin joyfully!

Verses: Jeremiah 29:11, Proverbs 16:1-4, Proverbs 16:9

Prayer Topics: Big Picture Goals, Cost, Reward