

## IT'S A SHORT TRIP...

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Thirty-five years ago or so, my father told me, "The older you get the faster the years go by." I now tell my own children the same thing, because each and every year my own experience continues to corroborate this common human observation. Of course, we all know that the rate of time passing is constant. It's our perspective that changes. This is an important point, because in the perspective of eternity, all the time we have spent down here will have been just *a short trip*.

The brevity of our earthly pilgrimage offers important implications: as we conform our perspective to that of eternity, we see the extreme limitedness of where we can go, what we can do, and who we can be. Even if we have an unlimited number of free travel tickets to anywhere we want to go, we can only visit a limited number of places, because we only have so much time. We might imagine, and we *do* imagine, all sorts of projects and activities and tasks that we'd like to participate in or accomplish during our life span, but only a certain number of accomplishments are possible, because our time is limited. We can and do wear many hats, even in the length of a single day, but we cannot be everything to everyone all the time, because, in fact, we do not have all the time in the world--we have only a certain number of days in this world. And we do not know how long our *short trip* will last.

Thirty-five years ago or so, my mother told me, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past; only what's done for Christ will last." For quite a while now, I've been telling my own children the same thing. If we let the limitedness of our time on earth sink in, and if, again, we try to conform our perspective to that of eternity, the eternal value of how we utilize our allotment of earthly time must be always set in the context of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He purchased us *from* a wasted life in bondage to sin *for* a useful life in the freedom of holy living. When we have only so much time, we should desire that all of our earthly time count for eternity, which means counting for the glory of our Savior.

Realizing that "this is only a short trip" and that Jesus is the Lord of our short trip helps us to do two things properly. This knowledge helps us first to narrow our focus, that is, choosing deliberately to go in a planned direction, work toward specific goals, and be who we are truly meant to be. This narrowing of focus doesn't mean that we should be narrow-minded. Actually, the opposite will be true if we learn to appreciate in others the directions, goals and personal expressions that are different from our own. As finite creatures, we all are limited and must focus our time and energies to please the Lord whose precious blood purchased us and whose divine will makes our paths and tasks and roles diverse from one another.

Secondly, this narrowing of focus will mean that we concentrate our efforts and consecrate our time to "follow Jesus" well in where we go, what we do, and who we are. As I mature in years and grow in knowledge, I find that my interests continue to expand, but in dealing realistically with the natural limitation of my *short trip* under Christ's leadership, I must humbly recognize that I will only carry out my Lord's assignment well if I discipline myself, narrowing my focus. Again, I will not narrow my awareness and appreciation of other areas of interest, of need, of usefulness. No, but I will acknowledge my dependence on others in the Body of Christ to go where I cannot go, do what I cannot do, and be who I cannot be. The beauty

in the unity of the Church is that I get to participate in all that Christ is doing through His people by the practical sharing inherent in what the Apostle's Creed calls, "the communion of saints."

Thirty-five years ago, or thirty-five minutes ago: both are about the same length of time in comparison to eternity. That is why we need to focus moment-by-moment upon the guidance of our Lord Jesus given through the Holy Spirit. When all is said and done, all the words we spoke while on our short trip here might in eternity sound like one succinct statement, or like one phrase in a long poem set among other rhyming lines from the lives of our fellow believers. All the "good works" we did on our short trip here might in eternity appear to be one single lovely garment of righteousness that we wear to the big praise concert! Together, we are destined to be the voices in a gigantic and beautifully dressed chorus singing the glories of our King, the Lord Jesus Christ. But how we sing there someday or how we dress up for the praise party of the King will depend on how well we recognize here and now that Jesus is the Lord of our earthly pilgrimage, and that, after all, it's just a short trip.