

Defying the Second Law of Thermodynamics

I will soon reach the 68th year of my life and I sense I am battling against time. I have often challenged young people to realize that they are created in the image of God. And to offset the farce of evolution I have used the second law of thermodynamics as proof that mortal life, as it is given to us by God, does not advance to a higher stage in the survival of the fittest, but rather it dissipates. The second law of thermodynamics states that there is a natural tendency of any isolated system to degenerate into a more disordered state. I sense this process now in this mortal condition in which I find myself today.

I received a call fifteen hours ago from a young preacher named Clint Kerns and was told that his father-in-law has less than twenty-four hours to live. Sometime today, I expect to be called by Clint who will be telling me of the passing of this dear preacher friend of mine. Brother Stinnet Ballew, an unusual man with power from God, could preach the proverbial paint off the back wall of a church. Now he who thundered in the pulpit will soon be silenced. He is only ten years my senior.

I have completed 49 years of ministry, on my way to 50 next March. I will be preaching to more teens than ever, if God grants me one more summer. As is often the case, I will be pleading with young people about seeking first the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). I will challenge those who have not had a personal one-on-one experience of salvation to give themselves to Jesus unreservedly. I will tell those who have not been raised in a Christian home and who have dabbled in the troubled waters of sin to repent and be saved, not only from Hell at the end of their lives, but deliverance from a tortured life while on this side of eternity. I will inform those reared in Christian homes that salvation is not real until it is personal. God has no grandchildren; they too, must be born again.

My preaching will still, in the main, be to young people that did indeed make salvation personal, usually very early in life, but have not enjoyed the unmeasured fullness of the Holy Spirit with complete abandonment (Ephesians 5:18). Too many times the antidote to lukewarmness (Revelation 3:16) is to make another profession. I hate to say it, but this is where some of my preacher brethren jump to conclusions with the pat answer, "no fruit; no root." I was at a camp once and talked to a troubled young person who had made nine professions of faith, but still doubted if he had received the real gift of salvation. This is like not liking the way God made you. You don't like your looks, your personality, the family you were born into or the environment in which you live. You cannot go back to start over. Nicodemus found this out when he inquired of Jesus, "...How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (John 3:4). Jesus pointed out there is one physical birth and one spiritual birth. You cannot receive a do-over. Our Lord said, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" (Matthew 6:27). We cannot change the fact that we have been born in this flesh and our very height is reflective of this fact. I was one-fourth of an inch below 5'11" at graduation from high school. I was measured recently at the doctor's office at 5'8." I said to the nurse, "Wait, please! that cannot be true! Let's try that

again.” So I stretched my body out as high as I could go while the nurse smiled and said, “Okay, 5’9”! And it looked like she winked at my wife. I didn’t ask any questions; I just sadly accepted all of what was left of me. We cannot make ourselves taller, but in this life we can become physically shorter by virtue of that hound of heaven, i.e., the second law of thermodynamics. So, much of my preaching is to young people reared in a Christian home who genuinely received Christ as their Savior. The problem is they are not living in total commitment; therefore my message to them is to give all their life over to God’s control. When a person gets saved, he or she is saved forever (John 6:37). The key to happiness is not to get saved again. You cannot get unsaved, no matter how hard you try. I do believe that many make another profession of faith and place the date of their conversion on a decision that brings a little more clarity to what they had already previously experienced. Yes, a person will often find peace in that second commitment. And I may be sticking my neck out in my opinion here, but I submit to you that those who find lasting peace after a second commitment probably never meant business or were too immature to know what they were doing the first time they attempted the commitment. And I really believe in the case of a young person who, as a very young child, sought God the best their little heart could muster, will not in the end be denied the salvation they so earnestly desired. I believe the Lord will guard their health until the time comes when they are old enough to understand and will be offered salvation by God’s Spirit. I believe this is what is taught in the reference to some of the responsibilities of God’s guardian angels when the apostle says in Hebrews 1:14, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” Therefore, for those truly saved young people who are having problems, my message is, as it has been for these many years, “start where you stand!” You cannot change the way you were saved or when you got saved, but you can do something about nourishing the life in Christ, Whom is in you, starting now (Colossians 3:1-10). This was the message of Paul to the believers when he wrote Romans 12:1, 2: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” For me, as a guy who was saved at six years, my dedication and entrance in the Spirit-filled life was actually more dynamic than my conversion.

Paul was not alone in his plea for Christians to give their all to Jesus, for we see Peter saying in II Peter 1:4, “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he

was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Notice please, Peter's desire that God's children be partakers of that "divine nature." Peter is saying don't be satisfied by living this lukewarm, existence of life according to our fallen human nature. He tells us how, by adding to our faith (that which we already have!) virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity (God's love). If we don't add to our faith, Peter tells us that we have forgotten that we were purged from our old sins. Think of it. So far from God in fellowship that our past experience of grace is more than a blur--the memory of our salvation is gone! Furthermore, Peter was pointing out that we should make our calling and election sure, in other words, accept that we are saved and add to our faith so that we may enter heaven having lived an abundant life here on this earth (John 10:10), and may receive an even more abundance of reward when we get to heaven. This is what John was talking about when he said to saved people, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." (I John 2:28).

I have studied and preached the Word all these many years as Isaiah said, "But the word of the LORD was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little..." (Isaiah 28:13a). By God's grace, I have added to my faith and presented my body a living sacrifice and experienced by God's blessing the transformed life. I can honestly say with the great old apostle, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day" (II Corinthians 4:16). I have never felt younger on the inside, although older on the outside. So, in a sense because of Jesus, I am defying the second law of thermodynamics. I have only just begun to live!

-Pastor Pope-