

Don't Dilly Dally

Sermon by Bill Goff

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The last time I spoke, my subject was "Overcoming." I would like to continue along those same lines. I'll get right to the point by asking a question. How's your dilly? No, no, no – not your Aunt Millie – your 'dilly'? Maybe I need to spell it: d-i-l-l-y.

I was working in the yard a few weeks ago when I got a phone call from one of my sons. He told me to quickly turn on CNN. The tone in his voice made me drop what I was doing and as I accelerated my pace towards the house, I asked him, "Is it a bomb? Where did it hit?" He said, "No. No bomb, but something more important."

It was CNN anchor Bill Hemmer interviewing author Tim Lahaye. Tim Lahaye is the co-author of a true phenomenon in the book-publishing world. It's called "The Left Behind" series, and it has sold more than 50 million copies. The ninth book in that series, called *Desecration*, was last year's Number One selling book.

Bill from CNN was asking questions: Why does the author stress in his book that the end is near?

Tim Lahaye's answer was, "I stress in the book that the end is near for a number of reasons. One is because there are so many biblical prophecies being fulfilled." Another reason is "the frightening conditions of the world."

And, it's not just preachers, Lahaye said, that are teaching this. Scientists that look at the environment and the development of weapons of mass destruction and bacterial warfare are saying that they can see no future beyond 25 years for civilization. Scientists know facts. They know that in all human history, there has been no weapon devised that hasn't been used. Every type of weapon, and there have been many, has been used.

Tim Lahaye is not in the church, but he was on CNN telling this, and he went on to say something else. He said that there is a new government coming, a new world ruler. He said that Jesus Christ will soon return to take over this world's government, and that only one government will remain.

CNN anchor Bill Hemmer listened in amazement. His eyes looked like they could possibly come out of their sockets. He was intrigued, and quite frankly, so was I. Here was this guy from "the world" (not the church) on CNN saying that Jesus Christ was about to return and take the reins of this world's government. This is not news to us, of course, but he was saying this on a news channel that broadcasts to much of the world. But from that point on, he lost it. He said that once Christ returned and took over, all of us would go straight to heaven. He said he didn't have to elaborate on that, because we all know what it's like to be in heaven.

Many in the world, especially the older folks who have been around for a while, know that things are bad and getting worse at a rapid pace. Today, brethren, we are living in troubled times, dangerous times. The terminology used in the Bible is "disastrous times." We are living in a time like none that has ever been or will be again. And no, I'm not talking about the Great Tribulation spoken of in Matthew 24, or the one that Revelation 3:10 says is coming on all the world. We know the Great Tribulation will be horrendous, but what I'm talking about makes the Great Tribulation seem somewhat trivial. I'm talking about something far more important than that. I'm talking about something that Peter said that we need to heed.

I Peter 4:17

17 For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Judgment, from the Greek, means 'a decision, to distinguish, to decide, or to try.'

Hold your finger here for a minute, because we will come back to this passage.

If judgment is now for the house of God, we need to read I Tim.3:15. Let's clarify "house of God." We don't need any confusion.

I Tim. 3:14-15

14 These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly;

15 but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

The house of God is "the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Some brethren get confused here. They still think physically and put too much trust in the incorporated names of different groups, thinking they can separate or divide God's church by physical means. They don't comprehend that the church is spiritual, and hopefully getting more spiritual, as we, its members, become more spiritual. But, some think it's Rod's church, or

Gerald's church, or John's church, or Fred's church. Those ministers probably don't think like that; at least, let us hope not.

That confusion has always been around. Remember that in the early stages of the church some were saying it was Peter's church and some said it was Paul's or Apollos' church. You are familiar with I Cor. 3:3-5.

The "house of God" is the church of the living God, not the church of any man, but the pillar and ground of truth. Some of that truth has to do with testing. We know God has a plan, and he does everything in an orderly manner. He has a sequence of events. He has a timetable. We keep his feasts and we know his plan.

Brethren, we must not forget: We are being tried now. His church is being tried now. Where we park our tired, weary bones each Sabbath doesn't necessarily determine whether we are in his church or not. Whether we are part of the church or not depends more on whether we have God's spirit in us. The Church started on Pentecost –with God's spirit.

We know the church is not a building, but do we comprehend that it is a spiritual organization?

Rom. 8:9

9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

Christ said he would build his church.

Rom. 8:14

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

We not only need God's spirit to be in us, but we need that spirit to be leading us, guiding us, and directing us. For something or someone to lead us, we must follow, and for us to follow, (we all know what that is like physically, when we are on a trip,) we have to keep our eyes on the car we are following, at all times. We know if things get busy, if there's a lot of traffic, it's easy to get distracted, and it takes a lot more effort not to lose sight of the leader.

I Cor. 3:16

16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

These scriptures tell us who is in the church and who is not.

Temple: 'a place considered as occupied by God.'

I don't mean to get sidetracked, but Weldon brought this up last Sabbath. It irks me – just as it probably does him – that people shun us because we are no longer in their particular incorporated group. Some think that means we ("in their eyes") are no longer in the church. How did they acquire such good eyesight, that they can see who has God's spirit and who doesn't?

Those brethren need our prayers. I've had some tell me that the group you are in or the group you are supporting is more important than keeping the Commandments. Those brethren need to wake up and hear the chief shepherd's voice. Christ is the only head of the church. Christ's body is not malformed or abnormal. His body doesn't have two heads – just one, Christ. There's only one vine, Christ again, and we're the branches.

Don't get me wrong: Where we park ourselves on the Sabbath is important for many reasons.

First of all, we must be fed. You know everything physical points to the spiritual and vice versa..

Our God is so magnificent. He gives us the physical so that we can comprehend or understand the spiritual.

If we don't eat, we die. If we don't eat properly, we get sick. If we don't take in spiritual food, how can we stay alive spiritually? If we don't congregate and stir each other up, how do we keep our iron sharp? It takes iron to sharpen iron. We burn wood every day in my house during this time of year. How can one keep it burning if we don't poke it and stroke it? You know – stir it up from time to time.

I Thes. 5:21

21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

We know a lot of those brethren who went home and threw out the baby with the bath water.

What a sad thing; what a tragedy.

Let's go back to I Peter, where we left our finger, because we are talking about God's timetable. We are being judged now.

I Peter 4:12

12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

God doesn't want to be forced to try us in the Great Tribulation, and we don't want to be tried in the Great Tribulation. He's trying us now, proving us now. We have the opportunity now to show him where we stand, but time is running out. Time doesn't stand still. We cannot take our calling lightly. We have a job ahead of us. God has given us a tremendous opportunity. As first fruits, we are going to be kings and priests.

Tim Lahay was one hundred percent right about Jesus Christ nearing his return and setting up God's government. But we know the rest of the story. We know his first fruits will be working with him as kings and priests: kings to rule and priests to teach. We know that it will be here on earth, but are we sure those kings and priests will include you and me? Other scriptures say, "Many are called, but few are chosen."

What about Revelation 3 where it says, "Don't give up your crown" to another man? Do we take our calling for granted as we humans do everything else? Do we think we get the prize without running the race? We need to be mindful that it doesn't work that way.

Phil. 2:12-15

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,

15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, He is talking to his beloved here, that they shine as lights to the world. They shine as lights in the middle of a crooked and perverse nation.

Does this fit us? Are we busy becoming blameless? Blameless means innocent, guiltless, or perfect.

Matt. 5:48

48 "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

You know me; I'm the dictionary guy. I can never seem to study my Bible without a dictionary.

There's a bad word in the dictionary. I have it right here.

Procrastinate: 'to put off taking action until a future time.' Brethren, there is no future time for us. We are called now. God is preparing for that first harvest now. He has called us to be first fruits now. If we think we are just along for the ride, we are mistaken. If we think we are going to become perfect without putting forth the effort, we deceive ourselves. We have no time to sit back and be idle, or to be greatly concerned about physical things. We are living in dangerous times for us. Our eyes have been opened; we've been taught the truth.

Luke 12: 47

47 "And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare *himself* or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*.

Brethren, don't think this doesn't apply to some. The Bible is God's word; it is truth. Christ said this himself:

Luke 12:48

48 "But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few.

For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

We have been given much, brethren, and we may have much required of us. We're living in a busy world, in a crooked and perverse nation, as before the Flood. We have no time to waste; we should be the busiest people on the face of the earth.

There's a lot of talk in the Bible about Noah's ark and how the end time in which we are living now would be as it was in Noah's time. Let's take a look. Let's see how much of Noah's experience we can relate to.

Noah was a busy man. He only had 120 years to build an ark, and he didn't have some huge work force to delegate to.

Instead of going to Matthew 24:38 and looking at the world, "*for as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark,*" let's look at Noah. What kind of guy was he? Was he like us? Are we like him? Should we be like him?

Heb. 11:7

7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

I'm no grammar expert, and English wasn't my favorite subject, but wasn't all that in one sentence? There's a lot here. We have to take a look at what's being said here because it is very important. It's a matter of life and death for me and for you – just as it was for Noah.

We're talking ark here. We're going to see that we are in the same boat as Noah here, the same situation. God didn't say, "You know, Noah, I'm going to be a respecter of persons with you. You know, Noah, there's a flood coming, but I have a prize for you. It's an ark that I made myself just for you. Here, Noah, hop in and I'll close the door."

No brethren, it doesn't work like that. Noah had to build that ark, and so do we. I want to look at this verse a little, to see how it relates to us.

By faith Noah, (being warned of God:) The Greek means *to have business dealings with*. We sure fit that one. At baptism we made that deal, that covenant. We could say we answered his calling. It also means *to be called or named*. That's us again.

Of things not seen as yet. Like Noah, we haven't seen it yet either. But again it fits us, and in a way much more important than it was for Noah.

The ark that God had Noah build was to save his physical life. God was warning Noah about a physical flood. Noah could not see the water coming yet. But he had faith; he believed God.

He not only believed everything God told him, but he was, as we are going to see in a moment, a herald, a preacher of righteousness. The Greek means *a herald or preacher of divine truth, especially the gospel*. Isn't this us again? We just read, "Let your light so shine."

II Peter 2:5

5 and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;

In the past, I thought that God just brought on the Flood and killed everyone. But he didn't. He warned them first, as he always does. He gave them a chance to repent.

I Peter 3:20

20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

They didn't repent, but God gave them the chance. Just as today, they are going to hear the gospel. They will have their chance to repent and God's church will be the preacher. We are the light of the world now. Who else knows the truth?

How will any of us hold our tongues when we see a people, God's people, having their pride broken, their greatness crumbling and so receptive for answers – answers that they know are not coming from the worldly churches?

This is nothing new. The church always taught this. The two witnesses don't come on the scene publicly until the Tribulation starts. When the Tribulation starts, the church isn't even around – at least not the ones Christ accounts worthy to escape it. Those are tucked away, and like the ark, God shuts the door. I don't know the details of how Christ is going to use the church to do this; it's not my department. What I do know is the same that you know – that we had better watch and pray always that Christ will account us worthy to escape what's coming and to stand before him.

Luke 21:36

36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

The important word here is *always*. It means 'perpetually, at every time, on all occasions' – as opposed to 'sometimes.' It definitely doesn't mean 'never.' If we could view a virtual reality of one hour of life in the Tribulation, the "always" in that verse would probably be much more comprehensible.

Noah was a strong, healthy man. He exercised all his muscles building that ark, even his strongest muscle and most powerful muscle, (again, the same as with us) his tongue. But I doubt if he voiced any gossip or hogwash with that tongue. He had no time to dilly-dally. His life was on the line, the same as ours is.

By the way, I just used that point again that I'm trying to make: "How's your dilly doing?" We're getting to it. Hang on.

Noah's ark was physical; our ark is spiritual. His physical life was at stake; our spiritual life is at stake. We cannot become complacent; we are not perfect yet. We must not forget our environment. We live in Satan' world –a material world with lots of distractions.

How about Noah? Did he have lots of distractions? He also lived in Satan' world. Surely he had distractions, but "*Noah found grace in the eyes of God.*" [Gen. 6:8] A potential God being, you bet Satan was attacking him. But let's continue, because Noah knew just what to do and we definitely need to be doing the same thing.

Back to Heb. 11:7

7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

You can sum up the Greek here with one word: *circumspect*: 'attentive to everything; watchful in all directions, as against danger or error.'

This brings to mind Gideon. We all know the story.

Judges 6:1

1 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years, Judges 7. Gideon mustered an army to fight and 32,000 showed up. But God said that was too many, so they told the ones that were fearful to go home.

That makes me think now of Weldon's sermon last week, how he's noticed so many fearful people. Yes, there are many fearful. What will happen when persecution comes?

Well, 22,000 of Gideon's volunteers departed and 10,000 remained, but God said, still too many.

God told Gideon to bring the 10,000 down to the water so he, God, could try them.

Let's pick it up in Judges 7:46.

4 But the Lord said to Gideon, "The people *are* still *too* many; bring them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. Then it will be, *that* of whom I say to you, 'This one shall go with you,' the same shall go with you; and of whomever I say to you, 'This one shall not go with you,' the same shall not go."

5 So he brought the people down to the water. And the Lord said to Gideon, "Everyone who laps from the water with his tongue, as a dog laps, you shall set apart by himself; likewise everyone who gets down on his knees to drink."

6 And the number of those who lapped, *putting* their hand to their mouth, was three hundred men; but all the rest of the people got down on their knees to drink water.

We know the ones who lapped, who put their hands to their mouths and never let their guards down. They kept an eye out for the enemy. *Circumspect: attentive to everything, watchful in all directions, as against danger or error.*

Like Noah, brethren; like us. The enemy was everywhere. Again, just like us today – our enemy is everywhere. And it's not Bin Laden or Saddam Hussein that is the enemy of the United States and the world. That's the physical enemy. Our enemy is much bigger, much more powerful by far. He deceives the whole world, but he focuses his sights and fires his fiery arrows on us, and we, like Noah, must move with fear, and be circumspect, attentive to everything, watchful in all directions, as against danger or error.

Distractions: Noah had plenty and so do we. Let us not forget where we live.

Let us not forget that Man rejected God's way six days ago – 6,000 years ago in the Garden. This whole world in which we live was built with Satan's directions, with Satan's plans. And we're talking everything – everything but the church.

The banking system, financial system – Satan's. God says if you lend money, do not charge usury or interest. Ex 22:25, Lev. 5:37 and Deu. 23:19 all tell us this. And how is this world's interest charging system doing? It's in a shambles.

How about churches of this world? Also Satan's. Almost everything they teach is contrary to the Bible, contrary to God's way. And now the people are seeing it more and more. They are coming to realize that the churches of the world don't have the answers; they don't even have a clue.

School system – Satan's. They comprehend and teach nothing spiritual. When we returned from the Feast, many teachers voiced how this was lost time for our children to go away and keep this Feast. They viewed it as negative, as bad. If I had told them we were out that week to a Harry Potter convention, I think they would have been happy, smiling, excited and handing out extra credit.

How about sports? Do we think the sports of this world are okay?

Rev.18:4

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues."

Any sins involved with these sports? Is Rev. 18:4 not talking about sports? Do we think there's no sin in these sports that mesmerize the world? Is it not, at the very least, a huge idol for many?

Brethren, don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to point the finger at any one thing. I'm talking distractions that, for some, may be idols. Will we have these sports in the world tomorrow?

The devices of this present world, this system of Satan's, will be flushed down the tubes. We cannot be ignorant of Satan's devices. We know that one can hardly walk past a TV set, especially a commercial, and not be mesmerized by it. God is constantly telling us to come out of it, to separate ourselves. Don't become partakers of her sins and partakers of her plagues.

Back to Heb. 11:7. Noah prepared an ark.

Ark: The word ark seems to mean 'box,' but we must not let the little three-letter word 'b-o-x,' fool us; it has a big definition. The word for the vessel that Noah prepared –'ark'—means 'constructed outwardly,' the opposite of our ark construction which is a different word in the Greek, meaning 'internal.' Verse 7 again of Heb. 1:1:

. . . prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

The Greek for "to the" tells us that motion is involved here, directed to or towards something.

That something is just like it says – "saving" – and the Greek here means 'deliverance, preservation, salvation,' of his house or household, his family.

We must remember that God gave Noah the directions to build that ark, and Noah followed those directions to the 't.' He followed the directions to the 't,' because, just as it says, he was trying to save his household.

How about us brethren, did God give us the directions? Oh, yes; of course he did. Are we following those directions to the 't?' How much do we want to save our household? How badly do we want salvation? How badly do we want to do things that are pleasing in his sight?

Our directions are to live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God [Matt. 4:4].

Without turning to this passage, we all know what it says. But do we do as it says? Do we spend enough time contemplating our actions? God says, "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might." When we are on the job and something we are doing is turning out half donkey, do we take the time to fix it and do it properly?

He says, "Do not swear, but let your yes be yes and you no be no." Do we speak the truth? If we have a problem with that, are we working on it? Are we changing? Are we overcoming? Are we growing in grace and knowledge?

We know that no one can study for us so that we can be approved. Receiving salvation is definitely not just a matter of who you know. We know the scriptures tell us to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," and that "to he who overcomes will I" give this and grant that.

The point I'm trying to make today is that we must be careful because the mode of operation on the journey matters. One can stumble, one can trip, or one can fall. The ark could have leaked and would have leaked if Noah and his sons had not applied pitch both inside and out. But it didn't leak because they followed God's directions to the 't,' and so must we.

He also gives us the details. He tells us how we can be "sure" those kings and priests will include us, you and me. He tells us how to prevent someone else from taking our crown.

Let's go to II Peter 1:10. It's time to define this "dilly" I've been alluding to. We started in 1 Peter where we read that judgment is taking place now for the house of God – the church, us.

Peter also tells us how we can be "sure" that we will be there, meeting Christ, our elder brother, in the air.

II Peter 1:10

10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

Sure is a good word, brethren. 'Sure' means 'not liable to change or failure. Firm.

Unyielding, stable.' And how about this one? 'Infallible.'

But 'sure' is not the important word here. The important word is dilly, 'diligence.'

Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.

Diligence has a lot of meaning. 'Diligence: assiduous application; assiduous, devoted or constant, industrious, busy.'

Christ was diligent – busy about his father's work. Noah was diligent; you bet he was. 'Diligent: meticulous care, earnest or constant application to work or business.'" He covered every inch of that ark with pitch in side and out.

'Diligence: industry; proper heed or attention, meticulous care.'

Are we diligent brethren? Do we give proper heed to our high calling? Are we meticulous about following God's instructions to the 't'?

There's another definition for diligence: 'a continental four-wheeled stagecoach divided into three compartments, and having a driver's seat on top, used especially in 18th century France, called the diligence or dilly; the stage coach.' The diligence was a stagecoach that looked like a box. It had three compartments. The ark of Noah is defined as a box; it also had three levels. The Ark of the Covenant also is defined in *Strong's* as a box, and, if we consider, it also had three levels with God's seat on top. The stagecoach had the driver's seat on top.

Just something to think about, but do you think Noah didn't have to be meticulous in applying that pitch? Sure he did. He was diligent. Christ was diligent and we must be diligent. He had no time, they had no time and we have no time, to dilly-dally. Oh, we've probably heard that term in our life from time to time, but do we know how vital a saying it is to us?

Maybe we should consult Webster' to define *dally*. 'Dally: to make love sportively; to toy with; to toy with death.'

Brethren, do we dally? Do we toy with death – spiritual death? Or do we dilly – you know, chose life, and make our calling and election sure, infallible.

Stagecoach has an interesting definition: 'a large four-wheeled vehicle having a regular route from town to town.' According to Revelation 2, the coach on the old church mail route in Asia Minor started in Ephesus, stopped in Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, and ended up in Laodicea.

Time is short, brethren. Don't listen to those who say we have more time. Do we think Noah felt that he had more time? Could he sit back, let his guard down, and take a break from being circumspect – You know: being attentive to everything, watchful in all directions, as against danger or error?

We must be industrious, brethren, diligent, applying proper attention and meticulous care to God's instructions. Study his word. Test the spirits. Prove all things. Walk the walk; don' just talk the talk.

We, brethren, are called to be kings to rule and priests to teach in his soon-coming government –the government that the world will be intrigued to hear about and to see as it is established at the end of this horrendous time that is soon coming to try this world. This is a time to try this world, but not necessarily to try us. That trial has already begun. It has already come.

How are we doing? The diligence, brethren, is still usable today, but it may not be tomorrow.

If we ended up in Laodicea, it' time to panic. It' time to get out of town. We've always heard that Philadelphia is a good place to be, and it' only one stop away from Laodicea. God doesn't make it too difficult. His word is not out of our reach. You know that with diligence one can be sure –I can be sure and you can be sure –that we'll be there in his government.

All aboard.

**Scriptures from the King James Version.*