

“Eternity: What Awaits After Death”

Sermon # 8

“Living In the Light of Eternity”

2 Peter 3:11-14

A pastor visited an older man. The Pastor said, “At your age you should be thinking about the hereafter.” The older man replied, “Oh, I do all the time. No matter where I am - in the living room, upstairs, in the kitchen, or down in the basement - I ask myself ‘What am I here after?’”

Christian author Phillip Yancey wrote, “Although [most] of us believe in an afterlife, no one much talks about it. Christians believe we will spend eternity in a splendid place called heaven . . . isn’t it a little bizarre that we simply ignore heaven acting as if it doesn’t matter?” Does heaven matter?

For the last six weeks we have been engaged in a study of Eternity, generally and of Heaven, specifically. What difference does it make now that we know more about Heaven and God’s future plan for us? How should we live now in the light of what we know about the future? Hopefully you know more about what awaits after death than you did before the series. And with new truth always comes new responsibility.

What we need to realize is that, what you think about Heaven determines what you think about the present. C.S. Lewis said, “It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one.”

But it is easy to get so swamped with things here on earth, as we get squeezed by our jobs, the finances are tight, and our relationships are going sour. When those kinds of things are happening it is not easy to meditate on the glories of heaven.

In 2 Peter 3:11-14 Peter addresses this very concern, “Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness. (12) looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (13) Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (14) “Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.”

The word “manner” means what kind or sort of person am I suppose to be. The word “ought” carries the idea of necessity. But as we all understand there is often a vast difference between what we are and what we should be.

Joseph M. Stowell, Pastor of the Moody Church in Chicago wrote, "When we begin to believe the reality of the other side, we start behaving differently on this side. This is what drove the disciples out into their world – they had seen firsthand the reality of the other side." [Joseph M. Stowell. "A Glimpse At The Other Side." Moody Magazine. (April/1994) p 24]

The word translated "ought" (dei) refers to obligation including the idea of owing a debt to someone. The question is, "Do you sense an obligation to live with an eternal perspective?" Peter is saying, "If you don't, you should" The Living Bible conveys the idea: "And so since everything around us is going to melt away, what holy, godly lives we should be living!" "How astoundingly excellent you ought to be!" Heaven is our real home and we need to live accordingly.

What kind of people ought we to be then? We're not living for this world; we're aliens, strangers, and foreigners. We as Christians are not a part of this world system, we are commanded not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world. It's not our place. We are pilgrims. We belong to a heavenly place. We look for a city whose builder and maker is God, a city not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

What kind of people ought we to be, at what level of excellence ought we to live? Since I am headed for eternal glory, since I am going to be a citizen of God's eternal Kingdom, since I am going to be delivered from the day of the Lord to enter into the eternal day of God, I should be living in expectation of that.

Three things About How We Ought to Live.

First, We Are To Live With Devotion (v. 11b)

"... in holy conduct and godliness."

Peter says that an eternal perspective will change the way we behave in two very practical ways, "holy conduct" and "godliness."

John McArthur compares holiness and godliness this way, "Holy conduct refers to action, godliness refers to attitude. Holy conduct refers to the way I live my life, godliness refers to the spirit of reverence within me by which I live my life. Holy conduct refers to that which rules my behavior, and godliness refers to that which rules my heart. And so he is saying what kind of person ought you to be in heart and in behavior, in motive and in action, in attitude and in duty." [John MacArthur. "Living In Anticipation of Christ's Return" (2 Peter 3:11-13) Part I. www.biblebb.com/files/MAC61-26]

The first result of an eternal perspective is it will result in "Purity." John wrote (1 John 3:3) "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

Randy Alcorn in his marvelous book on Heaven says, "If my wedding date is on the calendar and I'm thinking of the person I'm going to marry, I shouldn't be an easy target for seduction.

Likewise, when I've meditated on Heaven, sin is not terribly unappealing. It's when my mind drifts from Heaven that sin seems attractive. Thinking of Heaven leads inevitably to pursuing holiness. Our high tolerance for sin testifies of our failure to prepare for Heaven.

Heaven should affect our activities and ambitions, our recreation and friendships, and the way we spend our money and time. If I believe I'll spend eternity in a world of unending beauty and adventure, will I be content to spend all my evening staring at game shows, sitcoms and ball games? Even if I keep my eyes off of impurities, how much time will I want to invest in what does not matter?"

[Randy Alcorn. "Heaven." (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale, 2004) p.455]

The second thing Peter says will be a result of an eternal perspective is - "godliness"- the Greek word (eusebeia) which means literally "to worship well" describes a person whose life is devoted to pleasing God lived out even as an act of worship (and not just on Sunday).

If we really believe what Peter has just written, it will be reflected in the way we live, and the way we live gets down to our personal choices: What I will do with my time and my money. Because I realize, that of course, none of these things are mine but His and that we are just acting as stewards who will one day be held accountable in regard to how we handled the Master's riches!) Jesus said in Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

If you want a heart for General Motors, then buy stock in it. If you want a heart for your house or car or boat, just invest your time and money in them. If you want a heart for God, then put your treasures where God is at work. Want a heart for missions, then begin putting your treasure in missions, start giving to missions through Faith Promise.

We are not only to live with Devotion but

Secondly, We Are To Live with Expectancy. (vv. 12-14a)

"looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? (13) Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.(14) "Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things..."

Peter used the phrase "looking for" three times in these three verses. This verb translated "looking for" or "looking forward" carries the idea of expectancy, of waiting with alertness, of being ready. The first is found in verse twelve where we read, "looking for ...the

coming of God.” And then in verse thirteen “looking for new heavens and a new earth.” Then he uses it again verse fourteen, “looking forward to these things.” The word translated “looking” (prosdokao) is in the present tense indicating that this is one's habit or lifestyle. Are you continually living with an eternal perspective? If you do, it will radically impact what you are living for!

The idea is to wait for, to look for, to expect, to anticipate. It describes the attitude saints should have as anticipating, waiting with watchfulness, being in expectation.

The coming of Christ and the doctrine of Heaven provide some of the strongest motivation for living the Christian life that you will ever find. What you believe about the future determines how you live today. The future is like an anchor that has been cast ahead of us and is pulling us into the future.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee who has a way of putting things so simply says, "Today we see a lot of careless, slipshod living, but also a great emphasis on prophecy. I hear people say, “Oh, I’m waiting for the Lord to come!” Brother, my question is not whether you are looking for the Lord to come, but how are you living down here? How you live down here determines whether or not you are really looking for the Lord to come."

Not only should we Live with Expectancy but...

Third, We Are To Live with Diligence. (v. 14b)

“...be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.”

What one is "looking" for should have a direct relationship to what one is "living" for. The writer of Hebrews (6:11-12) uses the noun form to similarly urge his readers onward in their Christian walk, "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

The second half of verse fourteen refers to two things; first we are to be “without spot” or “spotless”- this refers to our character – what we really are on the inside – there is no hidden blotch. And secondly, we are to be “blameless” – this refers to your reputation and how you relate to other people – that people know that you truly are what you claim to be! These two terms speak of both character and reputation. They speak of both what we are in reality and what people think we are.

Peter says the result will be “be found by Him in peace.” I think what he is saying is...I want you to be at total peace, living without fear. If you were told that the Lord was taking you home in the next twenty-four hours, either through His coming or your death, You can be at ease, because you know where you are headed.

Conclusion

“Imagine someone takes you to a party. You see a few friends there, enjoy a couple of good conversations, a little laughter, and some decent appetizers. The party’s all right, but you keep hoping it will get better. Give it another hour, and maybe it will. Suddenly your friend says, ‘I need to take you home.’

What Now? You’re disappointed – nobody wants to leave a party early – but you leave, and your friend drops you off at your house. As you approach the door, you’re feeling all alone and sorry for yourself. As you open the door and reach for the light switch, you sense someone’s there. You’re heart’s in your throat. You flip on the light.

Surprise!! Your house is full of smiling people, familiar faces. It’s a party – for you. You smell your favorites – barbecued ribs and pecan pie right out of the oven. The tables are full. It’s a feast. You recognize the guests, people you have not seen for a long time. Then, one by one, the people you most enjoyed at the other party show up at your house, grinning. This turns out to be the real party. You realize that if you’d stayed longer at the other party, as you wanted, you wouldn’t be at the real party – you’d be away from it.

Christian’s faced with a terminal illness or imminent death, often feel they’re leaving the party before it is over. They have to go home early. They’re disappointed, thinking of all they’ll miss when they leave. But the truth is, the real party is underway at home – precisely where they’re going. They’re not the one’s missing the party; those of us left behind are.” [Randy Alcorn. p.441]

The ultimate question still is: “Where will you be one minute after you die?” Jesus said there are two roads in life. He said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the road is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who go through it. How narrow is the gate and difficult the road that leads to life, and few find it" (Matt. 7:13-14). The broad road leads to judgment, destruction, and hell. On that road people seem to be having a wonderful time. It’s a party atmosphere. But there is emptiness, loneliness, and insecurity.

The narrow road, on the other hand, leads to Heaven. Traveling on that road is difficult because it goes against the grain of society, the tide of all pleasures and the sins of this world. On this road there is fun and laughter too. But there is a sense of destiny, a distinction of hope, an assurance of something better to follow this earthly existence. Our motto is “The best is yet to come.”

Which road are you on? What will be your final destination? I will end this series with the same question that I asked to begin it, “Where will you be one minute after you die?”