

“Living In the Light of Eternity”

(Adapted from John Hamby/Sermon Central)

Scripture: 2 Peter 3:11-14

Introduction:

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?**”

Illustration:

Yesterday I officiated a funeral for Richelle Sewell, 21 years old mother and daughter, leaving a little baby boy 18 months old behind.

The coroners had no apparent reason for her death. She just slumped over and died.

I preached a sermon to a little over 100 people.

I could tell that most of them were not church attenders.

The Title of my sermon was **Life after Death**. And I spoke to them about the reality of a place called Heaven.

The father was a avowed atheist – He didn’t believe in God or heaven or Christianity.

God had already put in my heart and mind that I was to preach the truth about heaven and genuine Christianity.

At the end of the sermon I asked people to pray to accept Christ into their hearts and lives and encouraged them to find a good church to grow in their spiritual life.

And when I prayed the sinner's prayer with the group and asked them with heads bowed how many of them prayed the prayer with me over 20 some hands went up immediately.

Why was that? Because all of a sudden a friend of theirs – so young – leaving a baby boy behind – had stepped out into eternity to meet God.

I felt God moving so strong as I presented the Gospel truth and it was if He was standing right next to me.

It's possible that there might be some people here today who were in that funeral yesterday.

So many of them were touched by the fact that they knew they should be in church and promised me they would be here soon.

If you are here – our church cares about you and I care about you and want to see you make it to heaven.

Does heaven matter? I mean does it really matter?

Should we be more concerned when heaven should happen for us?

Or what about when it hits close to us with someone we love who unexpectedly dies?

Last week I preached to you a sermon from Daniel chapter 12 entitled: **The Time of the End.**

Someone asked about the sermon and I told them most of the time the fellows upstairs who run the sound equipment tape all the sermons and you can get a tape for I think hardly anything.

But here is some relevant and pertinent questions for us:

- What difference should it make for us to know more about Heaven and God's future plan for us?
- How should we live in the light of what we know about the future?

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."**

Oh, folks, people I care about you when I say this – but maybe the problem has been:

We've heard it so much and it hasn't seemed real to us. Maybe we've been in the church too long and have become calloused to this truth.

You see - it is so easy to get swamped with things here on earth, as we get squeezed by
our jobs,
the finances are tight, and
our relationships are going sour.
Things demand our attention

When those kinds of things are happening it is not easy to mediate on the glories of heaven.

Would you agree with me?

When we get our minds and lives so wrapped up in the things of this world.

When we put other things before God and His church.
When we allow materialism and wealth to put our first priority.
HEAVEN AND THE THOUGHT OF JESUS COMING AGAIN TAKES
A BACKSEAT!

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.”

That 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 writes, ***“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.”***

Oh, folks, if we could just get a vision of Heaven or Hell for just a few moments. WHAT WOULD IT DO TO US?

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!”

Although it is difficult for some people to understand this, Heaven is to be our real Eternal home and we need to live like we're going there, instead of feeling like all we're going to have is this world.

What kind of people ought we to be then? ***We're not living for this world; The Word of God says –“we're aliens, strangers, and foreigners.”***

We as Christian believers are not a part of this world system, ***“we are commanded not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world.”***

And Yet this is exactly the problem today – too many are in love with the things of this 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.**

No wonder the old saints of yesterday shouted and ran the aisles of the church whenever they sang about Heaven and the glorious thoughts of it.

If we really began to think about this and lived what I am going to preach this morning, we would be shouting too.

Three things About How We Ought to Live.

1st We Are To Live With Devotion

It says in verse 11

“Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be ? You ought to live holy and godly lives”

Peter says that an eternal perspective will change the way we behave in two very practical ways,

1. In “holy conduct” and
2. In “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”

1) The first result of an eternal perspective is it will result in “Purity.”

If you are a Christian believer, one of the things that John told us is we will live Pure lives.

John wrote (1 John 3:3) ***“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.”***

Sir - if you’re having a problem with this area of Purity – then you need to get serious about your spiritual life and your future place in eternity.

You need to seriously pray – Holy Spirit, please help me to keep my life pure until Jesus comes to get me.

And if you mean it – then the Holy Spirit will help you to get through times of temptation – in the area of sexual temptation or pornography or whatever you’re facing that is causing you to live a life that is impure.

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. (Maybe this is the majority of our problem in the church today) **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 evenings 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?”

Wow! This sounds like a book all of us should read.

2) The second thing Peter says will be a result of a 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 but everyday of the week, every moment of the day).

If we really believe what Peter has just written, folks, listen to me, **it will be reflected in the way we live, and the way we live gets down to our personal choices:**

a. What I will do with my time and my money.

b. Will I be more willing to put my life into the life of His church and it's ministries?

b. 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 or Ford Motor Co., then buy stock in it.

If you want a heart for your house or car, boat or sports, 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.

Watch God work in other third world countries with your investments that you put into Faith Promise. Amen.

Friend, that's why many of you are going to be richly blessed because of your sacrificial giving to help the Howell family.

I personally believe we should raise \$5,000 in helping improve the Howell Home.

Pastor Derek told us in a recent e-mail that we are half way there right now with about \$2,500.

We are not only to live with Devotion but

2nd We Are To Live with Expectancy.

(look at vv. 12-14a with me)

“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...”

I know there are some people who would look at Jesus' Return as imposing on their plans they have for their own life.

Friend, listen to me carefully, you need to understand there will be nothing to compare with **The Day – The Rapture of the Church.**

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 12 where we read, “looking for ...the coming of God.”

And then in verse 13 **“looking for new heavens and a new earth.”**

Then he uses it again verse 14, **“looking forward to these things.”**

The word translated **“looking”** (prosdokao) is in the present tense indicating that this is **one's habit or lifestyle.**

The attitude we believers must have is **Looking forward to these things.**

Talking about them.
Getting excited about His return
Studying them.
Praying about them.
Telling others about it.

Are you continually living with an eternal perspective?

If you do friend, 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 once said,

"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, Sister, 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...

3rd 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 14 refers to two things;

1. 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.

Peter says, ***"So then dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless ..."***

2. 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.**

In other words, don't be afraid of His Coming. Be at peace about it.

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.

Your heart’s in your throat.

You flip on the light.

Surprise!!

Your house is full of smiling people, familiar faces. It’s a party – just for you.

You smell your favorites – barbecued ribs and pecan pie right out of the oven.

The tables are full of good and wonderful food.

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 our eternal 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,
it goes against the tide of all pleasures and
it goes against the sins of this world.

On this road there is fun and laughter too.

But there is a sense of destiny,
A sense of hope,
A sense of an assurance of something better to follow
this earthly existence.

Our motto should be: "**The best is yet to come.**"

Which road are you on?

What will be your final destination?

Church, do you want to pray about this – this morning?

Would you want to come forward and pray about how you've been living without thinking much about Eternity and Heaven?

If you are a sinner here this morning, what better time than now than for you to leave your seat and come to the altar and pray the sinner's prayer and accept Christ into your life.