

Aiming for Eternity

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This evening I want to elaborate for a moment on a principle—actually an orientation of life. Specifically I want to talk about **aiming for eternity**.

It is very easy in the world in which we live to get caught up in the temporary and passing. So much of what we give our time and energies to simply doesn't last, doesn't really matter and doesn't really satisfy. Most of what this world promotes is—in the end—vain and empty. Our lives can easily become ensnared, robbed of lasting fruit and deprived of value and worth. Our hours are full, but at the end of the day we have little to show.

As followers of Christ and with eternity at stake, we want our lives to matter for the sake of gospel and for the glory of God. So the question I want to ask tonight is:

How can we live aiming for eternity?

How can we live so that our lives make an impact for eternity?

We live in a world that is largely unconcerned or unaware of eternity. The world thrives on the here and now, captivated by what's current, popular and trendy. As believers, setting our sights on eternal things can be a challenge. John Bunyan portrayed the rift between the way a Christian is to view life and the way the world views life in the portion of the *Pilgrim's Progress* where Christian and Faithful arrive in Vanity Fair. "Vanity Fair" represents what this world values and lives for. The world sees its value in itself—its causes, its vitality, its happenings. It has no place for God or the things of God—at least no place for the true God of Scripture, who is Creator and Lord of all things. Listen as Bunyan describes the posture of the two pilgrims as they encountered the enticements of the fair.

"They would then look upward, signifying that the only things of interest to them were in Heaven."

That is to say they were men on a mission—they had one goal in mind. They were pressing on to the Celestial City and would not put down roots in the things of this life. Their citizenship was in heaven and their aim was eternity.

So how do we live this way? What does it look like?

Does it mean we should never buy houses or land or cars, or have possessions in this life? Some have tried to interpret the Christian life this way—but that is not Bunyan's point, nor the point of Scripture.

What we learn from Scripture, and what Bunyan is trying to help us get into our thinking, is living and walking in this world in a way that keeps eternity in view. Our lives should make evident to all who see and know us, that there is something much greater, more glorious and more satisfying than that which we can see and touch and taste and know and experience in this life. There is something more valuable than convenience, more desirable than painlessness, more glorious than living the American dream. The joy and peace and salvation we have in Jesus is worth more than anything this world can offer—and our lives as Christians should reflect this reality!

We need to learn to invest ourselves in this life in ways that magnify Christ and the gospel.

Paul gives us some direction on how we can do this in—

Philippians 4:8–9 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

So we can ask: What is true and honorable? What is just and pure? What is lovely and commendable? What is excellent and worthy of praise?

Finally, brothers, whatever is **true**, [in accordance with God’s Word, honest]
whatever is **honorable**, [noble, dignified, worthy of respect and worship]
whatever is **just**, [right, in accordance with what God requires]
whatever is **pure**, [without moral defect or blemish, uncorrupted by sin]
whatever is **lovely**, [pleasing, beautiful, worthy of love and admiration]
whatever is **commendable**, [of good report, deserving approval or good reputation]
if [there is] any **excellence** [moral virtue] and if [there is] anything **worthy of praise**
—meditate on these things.

In the preceding chapter, Paul warned the church of living for the world and commended his own life as an example of living for Christ with a view toward heaven—

Philippians 3:17–21 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

So how do we live with eternity in view? How do we walk, as Bunyan says, “looking upward”?

We do so, I believe, by looking to God’s Word. Scripture has much to say about eternal things.

I have found it helpful to keep in mind—as a grid for thinking and making decisions—those things that are lasting.

What lasts forever? What we will still have when everything else passes away?

I want to mention very briefly 16 things that Scripture affirms as eternal or everlasting.

The first obviously is—

1. God Himself

Isaiah 26:4 Trust in the LORD **forever**,
 for the LORD GOD is an **everlasting** rock.

Isaiah 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard?
 The LORD is the **everlasting** God,
 the Creator of the ends of the earth.
 He does not faint or grow weary;
 his understanding is unsearchable.

Revelation 4:9–10 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives **forever and ever**, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives **forever and ever**. They cast their crowns before the throne. . .

2. The Name of God

Exodus 3:15 God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is my name **forever**, and thus I am to be remembered throughout **all generations**.”

Psalms 72:19 Blessed be his glorious name **forever**;
 may the whole earth be filled with his glory!
 Amen and Amen!

Psalms 135:13 Your name, O LORD, endures **forever**,
 your renown, O LORD, throughout **all ages**.

3. The Reign of God

Exodus 15:18 The LORD will reign **forever and ever**.

Psalms 9:7 But the LORD sits enthroned **forever**;
 he has established his throne for justice,

Psalms 45:6 Your throne, O God is **forever and ever**.
The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness;

Psalms 146:10 The LORD will reign **forever**,
your God, O Zion, to **all generations**.
Praise the LORD!

4. The Kingdom of God

Daniel 4:34 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives **forever**,
for his dominion is an **everlasting** dominion,
and his kingdom endures from **generation to generation**;

Daniel 6:26 I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel,
for he is the living God,
enduring **forever**;
his kingdom shall never be destroyed,
and his dominion shall be **to the end**.

Psalms 145:13 Your kingdom is an **everlasting** kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout **all generations**.

5. The Son of God

Hebrews 1:8 But of the Son he says,
"Your throne, O God, is **forever and ever**,
the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom."

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same **yesterday and today and forever**.

2 Peter 1:11 For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the **eternal** kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Revelation 11:15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign **forever and ever**."

6. The Word of God

Psalms 119:89 **Forever**, O LORD, your word
is firmly fixed in the heavens.

Isaiah 40:8 The grass withers, the flower fades,
 but the word of our God will stand **forever**.

1 Peter 1:25 But the word of the Lord remains **forever**.

7. The Law of God

Deuteronomy 29:29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children **forever**, that we may do all the words of this law.

Psalms 119:160 The sum of your word is truth,
 and every one of your righteous rules endures **forever**.

8. The Purposes of the Lord

Psalms 33:11 The counsel of the LORD stands **forever**,
 the plans of his heart to **all generations**.

Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in the mind of a man,
 but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand.

Isaiah 14:24 The LORD of hosts has sworn:
 “As I have planned, so **shall it be**,
 and as I have purposed, so **shall it stand**.”

Isaiah 46:9–10 remember the former things of old;
 for I am God, and there is no other;
 I am God, and there is none like me,
 declaring **the end from the beginning**
 and from ancient times things not yet done,
 saying, ‘My counsel **shall stand**,
 and I will accomplish all my purpose.’

9. The Works of God

Ecclesiastes 3:14 I perceived that whatever God does endures **forever**; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. God has done it, so that people fear before him.

Acts 15:18 Known to God from **eternity** are all His works.

10. The Steadfast Love of God

- 1 Chronicles 16:34 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
 for his steadfast love endures **forever!**
- Psalms 118:1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
 for his steadfast love endures **forever!**
- Psalms 117:2 For great is his steadfast love toward us,
 and the faithfulness of the LORD endures **forever.**
Praise the LORD!

11. The Covenant [Promise] of God

- Psalms 111:9 He sent redemption to his people;
 he has commanded his covenant **forever.**
 Holy and awesome is his name!
- Psalms 89:28 My steadfast love I will keep for him **forever,**
 and my covenant will stand firm for him.

To Abraham:

- Genesis 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an **everlasting** covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

To David:

- 2 Samuel 23:5 For does not my house stand so with God?
 For he has made with me an **everlasting** covenant,
 ordered in all things and secure.
For will he not cause to prosper
 all my help and my desire?

The promise fulfilled in the New Covenant:

- Jeremiah 32:40 I will make with them an **everlasting** covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.

12. The Praise of God

- Psalms 44:8 In God we have boasted continually,
 and we will give thanks to your name **forever.** Selah
- Psalms 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
 all those who practice it have a good understanding.
 His praise endures **forever!**

Psalms 145:21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD,
And all flesh shall bless His holy name **forever and ever**.

Psalms 79:13 But we your people, the sheep of your pasture,
will give thanks to you **forever**;
from **generation to generation** we will recount your praise.

13. The People of God

2 Samuel 7:24 And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people **forever**. And you, O LORD, became their God.

Psalms 48:8 As we have heard, so have we seen
in the city of the LORD of hosts,
in the city of our God,
which God will establish **forever**. Selah

Psalms 28:9 Oh, save your people and bless your heritage!
Be their shepherd and carry them **forever**.

14. The Salvation of God

Isaiah 45:17 But Israel is saved by the LORD
with **everlasting** salvation;
you shall not be put to shame or confounded
to all **eternity**.

Isaiah 51:6 Lift up your eyes to the heavens,
and look at the earth beneath;
for the heavens vanish like smoke,
the earth will wear out like a garment,
and they who dwell in it will die in like manner;
but my salvation will be **forever**,
and my righteousness will never be dismayed.

John 10:28 And I give them **eternal** life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

2 Timothy 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with **eternal** glory.

15. The Righteousness of God

Psalms 111:3 Full of splendor and majesty is his work,
and his righteousness endures **forever**.

Psalms 119:142 Your righteousness is righteous **forever**,
and your law is true.

Isaiah 51:7–8 “Listen to me, you who know righteousness,
the people in whose heart is my law;
fear not the reproach of man,
nor be dismayed at their revilings.
For the moth will eat them up like a garment,
and the worm will eat them like wool;
but my righteousness will be **forever**,
and my salvation to **all generations.**”

16. The Judgment of God [Realities of Heaven and Hell / Life and Death]

Matthew 25:41 Then he will say to those on his left, “Depart from me, you cursed, into the **eternal** fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

Matthew 25:46 And these will go away into **eternal** punishment, but the righteous into **eternal** life.

John 6:40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have **eternal** life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

And in light of this—we can add one more: What lasts forever?

17. Every Soul made in the Image of God

Everyone of us will spend eternity somewhere—either in God’s presence in the joy and glory of eternal life or away from God in the torment and separation of eternal death.

So these are the eternal things—the things that last.

They all center on God: God Himself—His Names, His Reign, His Kingdom, His Son, His Law, His Steadfast Love, His purposes, His Praise, His People, His Covenant, His Word, His Works, His Salvation, His Righteousness, His Judgment—and added to these, every soul made in His image.

If you want to aim for eternity, you must anchor your soul in God through the Lord Jesus Christ—He alone is the Eternal One. Love Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And love your neighbors as yourself—they will spend an eternity somewhere just as you will.

Here is where you can invest with certainty!

- Spend time investing in the lives of others for the sake of the gospel.

- Spend time in God's Word
—hearing it, reading it, studying it, applying it—walking in its light
- Spend time in worship and invest yourself in God's praise with God's people.

As you make your plans and set your priorities, ask questions:

- What things will help me know God better?
- How can I best learn, understand and remember His Word?
- What will magnify His praise?
- What things can best serve the purpose of making Him known?
- What has God given to me that I can use to love Him, serve Him and bring Him glory?
- How can I best love and encourage my brothers and sisters in Christ?
- How can I leverage my home, my possessions, my money—how can I manage my relationships, my time, my resources, my energies—in ways that will exalt God and point to eternity?

These are the kinds of questions that will help us walk with an eye to heaven. We need to season our prayers with this. We need to preach this to ourselves every day:

I am not just here to take up space; God has me here for a reason.

I am His; I am made for His glory.

I am not just marking time and waiting for something to come along; I am living for Christ.

The world around us can only seize the day (*carpe diem*). They live for the moment.

We must learn to live in a way that lays hold of eternity (*carpe aeternum*).

May God make is so with us.

Let us pray.

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