

A Church Positive About Eternity

By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. Illustration

1. Man's life is made up of 20 years of his mother asking him where he is, 40 years of his wife asking him where he has been and one hour at his funeral when everyone wonders where he is going.
Sermon Builder
2. The past few weeks we've been talking about our need to be a positive church – positive about Jesus Christ, positive about the Bible, positive about life
 - a. the world is already too negative a place
 - b. if we're going to change the world, change people in the world, then we're going to have to demonstrate that there is something better, a reason to be positive

B. The last question in the illustration mentioned a moment ago is actually a Good one

1. If you were to die today, or if the Lord were to return this minute, where would you spend eternity
 - a. Rev 22:20 -- He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. (NAU)
 - b. 2 Cor 5:8 -- we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. (NAU)
 - c. here are two amazing attitudes
 - 1) John, thinking about the return of Christ, says, "Come quickly!"
 - 2) Paul, thinking about being with Christ after death says, "I'd rather be at home with the Lord"
2. Our problem is that when it comes to eternity, we're sometimes rather negative
 - a. Many Christians have a fear of death that equals that of any unbeliever
 - b. Many Christians think of God's judgment as something to fear
 - c. Modern Christians have given in to the thinking that death is an enemy from which there is no release
 - d. we need to know that such thinking simply isn't biblical

C. Today I want us to think together about becoming a church that is positive About eternity

I. ETERNITY BEGINS NOW

A. The only way to be positive about eternity is to settle the issue of eternal life

1. John 3:16-17 -- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." (NAU)
2. John 4:13-14 -- Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." (NAU)
3. John 5:24-29 -- "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. "Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is {the} Son of Man. "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good {deeds} to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil {deeds} to a resurrection of judgment. (NAU)
4. John 6:27 -- "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." (NAU)
5. John 6:40 -- "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." (NAU)
6. John 6:68 -- Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. (NAU)
7. John 10:27-28 -- "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. (NAU)
8. John 17:1-3 -- Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (NAU)
9. Acts 13:46-48 -- Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. "For so the Lord has commanded us, "I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'" When the Gentiles heard this, they {began} rejoicing and

glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. (NAU)

10. Rom 6:21-23 -- Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NAU)

11. 1 Tim 6:12 -- Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (NAU)

12. I Jn 5:11-12 -- And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. (NAU)

13. I Jn 5:13 -- These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (NAU)

B. If you settle the matter of salvation, you can settle the matter of eternal life

1. Jesus Christ died on the cross, giving his life as a sacrifice for your sins and he was raised from the dead to give you the hope of eternal life

2. Mark 16:15-16 -- And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. (NAU)

3. The Bible tells us that the early church went about the business of settling the question of salvation and eternity for those who would believe and obey the gospel

a. Acts 2:47 -- praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (NAU)

b. saved people have settled the eternity issue

c. on that basis, saved people look forward expectantly, confidently, anticipating all that God has promised us

II. ETERNITY IS WHERE GOD'S PLAN HAS BEEN GOING ALL ALONG

A. Illustration

A little boy was offered the opportunity to select a dog for his birthday present. At the pet store, he was shown a number of puppies. From them he picked one whose tail was wagging furiously. When he was asked why he selected that particular dog, the little boy said, "I wanted the one with the happy ending."

B. Listen carefully because this is the crux of the matter: we ought to be positive About eternity because there exists all that we've ever hoped for

1. Does life seem unfair; do evil and unscrupulous people seem to come out looking like they have an advantage? -- it's only temporary
2. Are you puzzled by the pain and sufferings in life; by things that ought to be good that go wrong; by turmoil and trial and problems? – it won't always be that way
3. Does the thought of sickness, or persecution, or death create a fear in your heart? -- God has a permanent solution for it all
4. 2 Pet 3:10-18 -- But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord {as} salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all {his} letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as {they do} also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him {be} the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (NAU)

CONCLUSION

A. Is the matter of eternity settled for you?

1. If so, then lift your head and look forward to the future
2. Whether you live or die, or even if the Lord returns, it will all be for your benefit

B. If the matter of eternity isn't settled for you there is plenty reason for concern

C. Invitation