

The Call of Eternity

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Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NKJV) “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.”

In 1903 author Jack London published a short novel entitled “The Call of the Wild”. The tale was set in Yukon, Canada during the 1890s Klondike Gold Rush when strong sled dogs were in high demand. Buck was a strong dog who lived on a judge’s ranch in Santa Clara Valley, California. Buck had a comfortable life until he was stolen by the gardener’s assistant and sold as a sled dog. He was severely abused by his various owners and became more feral in his primordial instincts. He was eventually rescued by John Thornton who nursed him back to health. The two became very close companions. While Thornton and his two friends mined for gold at the camp, Buck explored the wilderness and socialized with a timber wolf from a local pack. When Buck returned and found Thornton and his friends dead, he stalks and kills the murderers, fights off a pack of wolves, and follows the call of the wild.

I believe that Buck, prior to being stolen, is a picture of how we as fallen human beings have become “domesticated” in our identity to conform to this present world. We have adopted the mindset that we are in the land of the living on our way to the land of the dying. We are, in reality, in the land of the dying on our way to the land of the living. Our forefathers in the faith had a better grasp on eternity than we do in this secular and materialistic generation. On December 21, 1807 while on his deathbed, the last words of Anglican clergyman John Newton were, “I am still in the land of the dying; I shall be in the land of the living soon.”

King Solomon affirmed that God put eternity in our hearts. In other words, God put a nagging internal awareness that we have a higher purpose in this life beyond simply existing. We are given an internal belief that there is something beyond death, that our soul will live on beyond the grave. We may suppress it, but the fact that we do testifies to its reality.

Buck experienced the “call of the wild” that caused him to lay aside his domesticated identity to embrace his natural identity. In the same way there is within each of us “the call of eternity”. This “call” is a residual inner awareness that we are eternal beings and have a place in God’s eternal plan.

The call of eternity brings about a paradigm shift in our perspective. It refocuses our heart on the eternal rather than on the temporal. Seeing life from an eternal perspective will drastically alter the way we see everything else in this life. It will alter how we look at time, money, wealth, career, priorities, morality, friends, relationships, clothing, culture, pleasure, hobbies, leisure, entertainment, suffering, death, and life itself.

When we adopt an eternal perspective, we will begin to see ourselves as pilgrims walking through this temporal world with our heart set on the celestial city. We begin to understand that this world is not our home. We understand that we own nothing. We are only stewards of God’s resources in this life until we receive an inheritance of our own when we enter that celestial city.

Our life in this world is like passing through the city of Vanity in John Bunyan’s Christian classic, “The Pilgrim’s Progress”. In the city of Vanity there is a continual fair called “Vanity Fair” where everything that a person could ever want is available to be enjoyed if the pilgrim would simply stop their journey toward the celestial city and enjoy the vanities offered.

The theme of the book of Ecclesiastes is the vanity of this life lived without focus on God and eternity. Regarding the pursuit of success, pleasure, and happiness in this world, King Solomon said, “*‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher, ‘all is vanity.’*”¹ King Solomon concluded the book of Ecclesiastes with this sober

¹ Ecclesiastes 12:8 (NKJV)

warning: *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all. ¹⁴ For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.”²*

Those who look at this life from the eternal perspective understand that only those things done within the will of God are eternal: *“I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him.”³* The apostle John says it this way: *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”⁴*

If God has put eternity in our heart, then our proper response should be to set our heart on eternity. If we do not set our heart on eternity, then we will set our heart on this life. We will live for the moment rather than for eternity. The consequences of setting our heart on this world are tragic. In the Parable of the Rich fool (Luke 12:13-21), the man had a bountiful harvest, enough to live on for many years. Instead of considering the eternal purpose of God’s blessings, he decided to consider only himself: *“And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’”⁵* Unfortunately, his temporal perspective ended in the loss of his eternal soul: *“But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’”⁶*

Those who have their heart set on eternity look at their life through different eyes—the eyes of faith. They have a different value system. They understand that they are in this world but that they are not of this world. Therefore, they lay up treasure in heaven rather than on earth. They do not lose heart in times of suffering. They are not driven to compete with those whose eyes are set on this world. They do not buy what they don’t need with money they don’t have. Dave Ramsey said, “We buy things we don’t need with money we don’t have to impress people we don’t like!”

Those who have their heart set on eternity spend their time on this earth preparing for eternity. Leonard Ravenhill said, “This life is just a dressing room for eternity.” They spend their time on this earth helping to prepare others for eternity. If our evangelism and discipleship doesn’t prepare people for eternity, then we are only preparing them for their best life now. Leonard Ravenhill also said, “A true preacher is a man sent from another world into this world with a message from that other world, for lost people who are in this world who will soon be going to the next world.”

Those who have a heart set on eternity will be grieved with the invasion of this temporal world into the church and into the hearts of believers so that they will cry out for revival. Revival restores the eternal perspective in the church. Leonard Ravenhill said, “Revival is the ascendancy of the spiritual over the material.” Revival will take place when we make eternal things priority over temporal things.

Do you have an eternal perspective? Is your heart set on eternity? If not, then now is the time to answer the call of eternity.

² Ecclesiastes 12:13–14 (NKJV)

³ Ecclesiastes 3:14 (NKJV)

⁴ 1 John 2:15–17 (NKJV)

⁵ Luke 12:19

⁶ Luke 12:20 (NKJV)