

# Living In Light of Eternity

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, Watermark. My name is Chris. I help oversee community groups here at Watermark. I hope you had a great Christmas and you are rested.

New Year is a time for hope. I hope that I will get that Cafe Pacific fanfare before it goes. I hope that I can work off that 10 kg that I put on over Christmas as soon as possible. I hope that my boss doesn't realize just how much time I did spend on Facebook over this last year. I hope this talk is not going to last very long because I've got lunch planned. We all have hopes. We all have dreams. We are all dreamers of a perfect world.

We want perfect children. Children who are easy to look after. We want a perfect job where everybody does what we want. We have great colleagues.

[ 1 : 11 ] It's wonderful. We have job satisfaction. We want a perfect spouse who does everything for us without complaining, without moaning, without grumbling. And it's wonderful. We want a perfect government who is completely for the people and there is no corruption at all.

We're all dreamers. It doesn't matter whether you are an atheist, a Buddhist, a Christian, whatever worldview you are from, etched deep into the heart of your soul is a desire for a perfect world. A world where things happen just the way you want them to. The problem is this world that we live in is not a perfect world.

With people who are not perfect who often end up disappointing us. Life ends up disappointing us. C.S. Lewis put it this way.

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, then the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

[ 2 : 29 ] The most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. You see, most Christians, including myself, would say, I believe in the idea of heaven.

The idea that there is an eternity spent with God in a renewed creation, in this amazing paradise of joy, where there is no pain, mourning, suffering, hurt.

It's all wiped away. It is incredible. Most Christians will say, yeah, I believe in that. But if you think in the reality of your life, day to day, how much impact does that really make on your life?

And I have to say, it sounds more like a vague fantasy hope that is somewhere out there, which maybe I think about at an odd funeral occasionally. And it doesn't really shape anything of the way I live my life.

So we come to the passage today. And it's written to a group of Jewish Christians who are probably in Rome.

[ 3 : 37 ] And they have started off their race following Jesus. And they have been so passionate about Jesus that they have been willing.

And if you look just in verse 32 to 34, it says they've been willing to even joyfully accept the plundering of their property. Over Christmas, you probably joyfully accepted the receiving of some property.

But they accepted the plundering of their property because they thought that Jesus was so amazing. The problem is, life was hard for them.

And they've grown tired. They've grown tired of following God. And they want to go back to living a more comfortable life. They want to go back to living where it's not always a struggle.

It's not always hard. Where things can just be okay. We'll compromise a bit on Jesus. But we just want to have life a bit more comfortable now. And the author of Hebrews is going to say, Listen, there is a reward coming that if you follow Jesus is so much better than anything you desire now.

[ 4 : 54 ] And he's going to take you through a whole list of heroes. We're only going to look at a couple of them today. The heroes of the faith. Who he's going to say, look at these guys. They're to

inspire you to keep going on the race, on the following Jesus as I've called you to.

So we're going to look today at the idea of living our lives in the light of eternity. And we're going to look at this in three parts.

The first part is realizing that when you see life with an eternal perspective, you realize that here is not your home.

Here is not paradise. That's the first point. The second point will be when you have an eternal perspective, you realize that life here is temporary.

The third thing is when you live life with an eternal perspective, you will run for a different price. So first of all, this is not your home.

[ 5 : 58 ] This is not your paradise. Turn with me to look in your bulletin at the passage. We're going to start Hebrews 11 verse 8. By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance, sorry, obeyed when he was called to go to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance, and he went out not knowing where he was going.

By faith, he went to live in the land of promise as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise.

For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God. You see, if you know the story of Abraham, God calls Abraham out of a comfortable, wealthy situation, surrounded by his friends and families, and he tells him to go to the land of Canaan, a land of promise where he is going to give him and his descendants this land.

And so Abraham goes, but he goes and he lives as a nomad, living in tents with no fixed place to live. Even when he gets into this land, he's in this tent, and he must have looked out of the flaps of his tent after a particularly rainy day, and he would see the Canaanite cities all around, which must have looked so attractive to him because they look so secure, they look so peaceful, they look so great, and he must have thought, oh, I'd love to live in one of those, not in this tent where I don't have a fixed place to live.

And if you've been camping, you know, if it's rained and you haven't slept for three nights, you are soon longing for home. And that's what Abraham has got, this longing for home.

[ 7 : 48 ] But the thing is, he's not looking at the Canaanite cities around him. It says that he was looking forward beyond that to a city with foundations whose designer and builder is God.

You see, he is prepared to live as a nomad, or what verse 13 says is a stranger and an exile on the earth.

He's prepared to live like that, forsaking his comfort because he sees that there's something better coming. He sees that there's a city that God is building.

Now, my uncle has just designed and built his own house, all to his own specifications. Everything that he would want is in this house. But imagine if God was your architect, and God was the designer, and he says, I'm going to build you a house.

Not just a house, a city. And when you look at the architectural drawings of this city, it will be beyond your wildest dreams.

[ 9 : 00 ] That's what Abraham has got in his vision. That's why he's prepared to live as a nomad. And you see, the call from Abraham, though, is here is not paradise.

Paradise is to come. So are you prepared to wait? Are you prepared to see that now is not your destination? You don't have a destination mentality.

You've not arrived yet. This is not where we are. This is not the final place. But here is preparation. It's preparation because sometimes life is frustrating.

It's not paradise. It's not the home that you want it to be. Here is sometimes disappointing.

Sometimes painful. But actually, all of that, God is saying to us through Abraham that that is because God wants to prepare you now.

He doesn't want you to be satisfied with now. He wants to prepare you with a longing for what is to come, that city that God has built and is building for you.

[ 10 : 13 ] You see, when we hit the pain of life, we often ask questions like, if God is good, why does he allow the suffering to happen to me? If God is good, why didn't he answer my prayer?

If God is good, why hasn't he given me the job position that I wanted? If God is good, why am I still single? Now, I don't know the answer to all of those questions.

But I think sometimes we ask those questions without having an eternity perspective. And eternity gives you a reality check.

Eternity says, this is not paradise. It will always be tainted with pain. It will always be tainted with suffering and difficulty.

But you see, when you have a preparation mentality, you even see the pain and the suffering creating a greater longing for full redemption, healing, restoration, that perfect world that God says he is building and is going to bring.

[ 11 : 20 ] You see, if you don't have this perspective, if you don't have this perspective, I think there are two implications. If you don't see life, if you think that life is paradise now, you will live with unrealistic expectations of life and of people now.

you know, you know, increasing number of studies are showing that one of the major causes of marital breakdown in society today is disillusionment.

because people started with expectations in their marriages and their marriages, that their partner was going to fulfill them, was going to satisfy all of their dreams.

And then, a few months, a few years down the line, the guy who they thought was so handsome now has a tropical rainforest growing out of his nose. And he can't remember a thing that you've asked him to do.

That woman who you thought was going to center her life around you, now when the kids come along, you're kind of pushed aside. And your dream of that perfect relationship place in, you're trusting.

[ 12 : 36 ] Because when we start expecting things of other people and of this world that only God can truly satisfy, like happiness and contentment, you are always going to live disappointed.

We do the same with church community. We do the same with jobs. With jobs, we move from job to job to job to job because we always think the grass is always greener on the other side.

But then two or three months in, and you've had a great time, your colleagues are fantastic, and you think, this is what it's all about, and then your boss changes. And your new boss is a complete idiot. And suddenly, your dreams of a perfect world lie shattered at your feet. Because if you don't live with an eternity perspective, you will always live more disappointed than thankful.

You will always see the things which happen in life, and you will grumble. You will tell everybody about that boss. You will grumble to everyone who will listen to you about the hardships in your life.

[ 13 : 43 ] Because grumblers, and I am sometimes, grumblers are people who have lost perspective of eternity, and you think that paradise is meant to be now.

But that's not, that's the first implication. The second implication, if you lose the perspective that here is not paradise, you will always live in fear of missing out.

If you think that here is your final destination, you will try and cram everything into your life right now. You'll begin to try and get everything for yourself. You'll center everything around getting what you want.

And you see, that is why people are so impatient. I don't know if impatience is a problem for you, but impatience is simply saying, I'm God around here.

I've got to have things done now in my timing. I'm not going to wait for God. Because impatience wants paradise now for me.

[ 14 : 50 ] But it's a sign that when you're impatient, you've lost perspective of eternity. You think that here is paradise. paradise. You see, you know when you go to the sales, and there's one product you really want to buy, and you notice it in the shop over there, and you see it's half price, and your eyes light up, and you start walking towards it, and then out of the corner of your eye, you see that Mrs. Wong is also there, on the quest for the same product.

At that moment, panic starts to rise within you, and you forget about everybody else. Politeness goes out of the window, and you're charging towards that product at the speed of light. And just as you get there, you get there before Mrs. Wong, you grab the product, and you turn around with a triumph, that you have it.

But the problem is, you've lost perspective, because you were afraid that you were going to miss out. And we do this all the time. You do it on the MTR, just to get that one seat.

You know, every day, that daily athletics competition for the seat. We talk about opportunity cost. You see, I think, when we talk about opportunity cost, that's often another way of saying, I'm afraid of missing out.

Because we've loaded all our expectations in the present, and we've lost sight of eternity. But Abraham's lesson to us is, if you're a Christian, you're a nomad.

[16:24] You're an alien and stranger, and sometimes you will be disappointed. Sometimes you can make choices, because you're following Jesus, which will mean that you will miss out now.

But you don't miss out, eventually, because Abraham says, if you miss out now, that will create a greater longing for that city, that better country, that better possession, that God has planned for you.

It is so much better, and it says, God has prepared it for you. It's certain. You don't have to fear, that you're going to miss out now, because you will have eternity, in the perfect world.

That's the first point. It's not paradise now. Second point. When you live, we see life in perspective, you will see the temporeness of the present. Read for me, verse 23 to 26.

By faith, Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months, by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith, Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to be mistreated with the people of God, than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin.

[17:48] He considered the reproach of Christ, greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. Moses is another story, which is all about, if you know the story, it's all about a guy, who's been saved, from death, by the Egyptians, he's brought into Pharaoh's household, he's brought up in Pharaoh, the king of Egypt's household, he's got amazing job prospects.

He could become one of the most powerful people, in the whole of Egypt, but inside, he knows that he's a Jew, he belongs to God, and yet he has this conflict, because he sees his own people, who are oppressed, and at one point, he has this tension, and he calls it, here in the passage, he says, he chose, to be mistreated, with the people of God, rather than to enjoy, the fleeting pleasures of sin.

You see, that sin that he's talking about, I don't think was some kind of wild, sexual immorality, or anything, no, the sin that he's talking about, was he could stay comfortable, in Egypt, with all the wealth, that he had, or he could choose, to follow what God, had called him to do in his life, which was to identify himself, with his people, and to be the one, who would lead them out of Egypt, and he chose, he chose to miss out, actually, he chose to be identified, with the people, and actually, he had to go into the wilderness, for 40 years, he lost it all, but the key word there is, it was the fleeting pleasures, of sin, comfort, and pleasure, is for the moment, following Christ, and the pleasure, that he will give, is for eternity, you see, what an eternity perspective does, it gives you, the big picture, of life, a long term view, of life, what we normally do, is we shrink, our lives down, to just narrow moments, in our lives, where, things that just, begin to wrap us up, they're just small things, but they wrap us up, they consume us, and we can no longer, see beyond the moment, let me put it another way, in this room, 50, 60, or 70 years later, pretty much, all of us, will be dead, have you thought about that, now,

I'm sorry to be morbid, at kind of, new year, but actually, I'm not that sorry, because, as Christians, how often, do you ever think, of death, some of you do, I know, but, we should think about it, far more, because what death does, it puts life, in perspective, you see, what is truly, important, in life, you see, I saw, the, the Disney version, of, Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol, over Christmas, very good, watch it, if you haven't seen it, but if you don't know the story, it's basically, about an old stingy man, called Scrooge, who hates Christmas, who, who just wants, to live his life, to make as much money, as he wants to, he doesn't care, about anybody else, and then one day, he's visited, by a number of ghosts, and one of the ghosts, who visits him, is a ghost, who is actually, his former business partner, who was just like him, in life, but when he comes, to him, he comes with chains, which are held down, by all the money, that he gained in life, and he's suffering, greatly, because he's restless, and he says, he says this,

I quote, no space of regret, can make amends, for one life's, opportunity misused, such was I, oh such was I, the guy Scrooge, replies, you were always, a good man of business, Jacob, business, cried the ghost, wringing its hands again, mankind was my business, the common welfare, was my business, charity, mercy, patience, kindness, were all my business, the dealings of my trade, were but a drop of water, in the comprehensive ocean, of my business, what he's saying is, he'd made life, so narrow, that he'd actually missed, the big picture, of all that God, had for him, now I'm going to confess, something to you, please don't let it go, beyond this room, because this is, very important, Fiona and I, have been married, for six months, and I happened to, meet a friend, the other day, and, and, while I was waiting,

[ 22 : 50 ] I got talking to a guy, and, who I knew a bit, and he said to me, oh I heard you got married, I said yes, and then, he looked down, at my finger, and he said, where's your wedding ring, at that moment, I wanted the second coming, to come very quickly, because I never take off, my wedding ring usually, and suddenly, I realized, I had no clue, where it was, I looked, everywhere for it, as I went home, and was thinking about, how to tell Fiona, fearing the Armageddon, was on its way, I kind of thought, of all the tactics, you know, okay, I just want to take you out, for a meal, at the Four Seasons, you know, there's nothing behind this, but as I told her, eventually, I plucked up the courage, and, I said to her, what had happened, fearing the worst, and her reply, shocked me actually, because she said to me, and I'm paraphrasing, something like, you know,

I'm disappointed, but, you know what, in the grand scheme of things, it's just a bit of metal, it's not, that important, there's more important things in life, now, you see, at that moment, I mean, I was blown away, because instead of beating me over the head, she extended grace to me, for my carelessness, and I'm not, I'm not hiding behind the fact that, my carelessness in that, but what I want you to get is this, and, and by the way, don't use this husband's, like, say to your wives, you know, I, honey, I lost the kids in, in IFC, and, but you know, in the light of eternity, it's just not that important, don't go there, okay, just don't go there, but seriously, what I'm saying is this, there are so many things in our lives, which, we start arguments about, we stress over, which become these huge things in our eyes, but actually, in the big picture, in the light of eternity, aren't that important, it's not that wedding ring is not important at all,

I'm going to get another one, it's okay, don't worry, but in the light of eternity, it's not worth arguing about, it's not worth fighting about, see, we narrow our focus, so much so, often in life, to the little things, that we lose the perspective, of who God wants us to be, of the race that God has got us on, so that's the first thing, here's not our home, it's not paradise, here, look in the big picture, life is temporary, eternity is forever, third thing, final point, when you see life, in the light of eternity, you run for a different prize, if you've noticed, all the way through this passage, it keeps talking about reward, it keeps talking about, something that's better, it's better possession, a better country, a better home, read for me, chapter 11, verse 6, it says, and without faith, it is impossible, to please him, to please God, for whoever, would draw near to God, must believe, that he exists, now, if you're a Christian, you're probably doing, pretty well on that one, okay, even if you're not, you may do quite well, on that one, but read the next part, this is stunning, you must believe, that he rewards, those, that seek him, you must believe, that he rewards, those, that seek him, the thing about, the reward, that God offers, is that God, is the reward, everything else, flows, from a relationship, with him, in perfection, he is the greatest prize, and that when you know him, the reward, that flows from that, is incredible, but,

I think, if I think about myself, and I think about, many other people I know, often, we don't think, that God's heaven, that being with God, is so amazing, the prospect of eternity, with God, doesn't thrill us, because God, doesn't thrill us, you see, life, is often filled, with things, that are hurtful, and painful, but, and still, you really understand, the goodness, of God, and that knowing him, is amazing, beyond compare, you will live, with other things, as your hope, because some of us, feel very disappointed, and let down by God, you know, maybe things have been tough, in life, maybe you've lost loved ones, maybe the marriage, that you thought, was going to be made in heaven, actually quickly turned to hell, maybe the church, that you thought, was going to love you, judged you, and hurt you badly, and now you have, a doubt, about the goodness of God, and so your heart, in your heart of hearts, your heart is not warmed, by the idea, of an eternity, with God, the thing is, a heart, that tends to doubt, the goodness of God, doesn't tend to run, to him for help, doesn't tend to desire, to be with him, and I think often, we've become resentful, towards God, because we have, a destination mentality, we think, that God, you should answer my prayer now, you should come through, for me now, you didn't deliver, what you said, you were going to deliver, so God, you can't be good, and God says, no I never promised, that I give you paradise now, but I promise, that I've got something, better for you,

I've got something, that is worth the wait, so will you trust me, will you trust me, because the author of Hebrews, and we're going to, finish through, just with these last three verses, the author of Hebrews, answer, when we've lost sight, of how good God is, and we're wondering, about the race, that we're going on, and we're beginning to doubt, whether we should go on that, Hebrews chapter 12, one to three, therefore, since we are surrounded, by so great a cloud, of witnesses, let us also lay aside, every weight and sin, which clings so closely, and let us run, with endurance, the race

that is set, before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter, of our faith, who for the joy, that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated, at the right hand, of the throne of God, consider him, who endured from sinners, such hostility, against himself, so that you may not, grow weary, or faint hearted, what Hebrews is telling you, is here, you've got to do four things, first of all, look around you, at those who have gone before, you read in the Bible, read the Christian biographies, see the life of people, who have gone before, secondly, look at Jesus, look at Jesus, and he will inspire you, the image here, is of an athletic stadium, filled with thousands, of spectators, shouting and cheering, the athletes, who are on the race, and as you, are there, in that race, you look around, at the crowd, and who do you see, you see all the heroes, of the Christian faith, and they're all there, you see David, you see Moses, you see Abraham, you see Paul, you see Peter, and they're all there, and they're all cheering for you, saying come on, press on, it's worth it, it's worth it, it's worth it, keep going, keep going, on the race, that God has given for you, and then, you look around, to the finishing, straight, of this long distance race, and there, you are transfixed, by one figure, the greatest champion, of all, the one, who won more records, than anybody else, the one who stands, and ran the toughest, race of everybody, you see Jesus, and if you tend, to doubt his goodness, when you look at him, what do you see, but you see, nail prints, in his hands, and his feet, and you look, into his forehead, and you see, deeply etched, a scar, there, and you know, that he ran, that race, for you, he ran it, for you, he's the founder, and perfecter, of our faith, that word founder, means the forerunner, the one who's gone before, the one who's blazed, the trail, the one who's done, the toughest race, for you, so he can inspire, you to carry on, but he's not just, an example, he's also the perfecter, of your faith, when you're weary, when you're tired, he says, [ 32 : 49 ] I empower you, for this race, I have done everything, to give you the strength, to keep going, to press on, to that prize, that home, that I have made, for you, so you just need, to persevere, and you need, to keep looking to me, you need, to keep looking to me, when life is a struggle, look to me, almost out of time, what we need, to do in response, are two other things, lay aside every weight, and lay aside, the sin, that so closely, clings to us, thing is, if you're carrying, a few extra pounds, you're not going to run, the race so well, so if, there are things, that you know, that actually, weigh you down, things as you're thinking, about 2014, they're consuming, your thoughts, they don't have to be, bad things, they can be good, hopes and dreams, maybe hopes, for a job position, maybe the health, of your family, maybe the education, of your children, maybe you're a spouse, anything like that, but actually, it's consumed you, that's all you're thinking about, the challenge is, lay it at the feet, of the one, who loves you enough, to have died for you, and say, God help me not to make this, the focus of my life, I lay it before you, because life is not about me, it's about you, it's about you, because in eternity, it's not about me, it's about God, and lay aside the sin, that clings so closely, maybe there are habits, that you know, you've been in, this year, and you just allow them, to drift, eternity says, you've got to deal, with them now, find someone, that if you know, you've been struggling, with something, find someone, in 2014, that you say, hey, I want you, to hold me accountable, to this specific thing, I want you to challenge me, because I want to run this race, I don't want anything, to hinder me from it, because an eternity perspective, gives you balance in life, it enables you, when you enjoy the comforts, the pleasures of this life, you can enjoy them, because you know, they are a glimpse, of the perfect world, that God has for you, enjoy them, but no, don't cling to them, because life is temporary, those things can be temporary, here is not your home, and God has something, so much better for you, and if you don't get, the things you want, you can be disappointed, you can be, sad, but it won't crush you, because you know, that that is to prepare you, to have a greater longing, for the destination, that God is going to take you to, the prize is God himself, live in the big picture, don't get wrapped up, in the small things, let's pray, maybe just, as you want to think about, what is your hope, for 2014, 2014, what is your prayer, for 2014, for the future, 2014, for the future, 2014, 2014, what is your prayer, for 2014, 2014, 2014, because, having hopes, and dreams, are good things, but God wants, to give you, a perspective, of eternity, for this coming year, where you don't cling, to your dreams, so tightly, that you become, a grumbler, that you become, a complainer, that you become, impatient, but that you can learn, to wait joyfully, Lord I pray, that you'd help us, help us, to see you, as our greatest prize, help us to be willing, to miss out, even this year, because there are times, where we want to just, follow you, and we're willing, to lay things aside, because there's something, so much better to come, please let heaven, become a reality, in our lives, let it become something, which shapes us, day by day, let us see the

glory, of all that you have, planned for us, thank you so much, for your goodness, Amen.