

Art Katz:

Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:16–18)

There is a danger that we will dismiss this as a kind of biblical rhetoric, a kind of fanciful manner of speaking peculiar to Paul, and nod with a kind of acquiescence that it has a sweet sound to it, but completely lose what is being said.

The foundation of the apostolic mindset, however, is a true apprehension of the things that are eternal, not in anticipation of a future enjoyment, but of a present appropriation, and that is what makes the church peculiar. We have no idea how important the subject of eternity is. To lose the meaning of this word is to lose everything, and it will condemn the church to being mundane and ordinary, institutional and mechanical, a weariness of the flesh, instead of a joy and a power. In other words, the absence of eternity in the consciousness of the church disfigures and nullifies it as being church. We are going to have to contend for this reality, because the world is not hospitable to it. Paul not only found this eternal dimension, he also dwelt in it, and yet that did not condemn him to irrelevancy. On the contrary, it made him all the more relevant, and so will it make us also.

In the above portion of Scripture, we find two references to the word eternal. Eternity was something that had become so powerfully real to Paul that it affected his present considerations, and had practical consequences for his living. "This momentary, light affliction" has got to be a statement of a man who has either tossed every kind of reasonable criterion and rationality to the wind (Paul was a man who had been shipwrecked, beaten with rods, left for dead, stoned, reviled, persecuted and defamed, etc.), or he has some kind of standard and measure of things of which we know nothing. Apostolic seeing perceives things that others do not see, and measures by a measure that others do not understand. It sees redemptive suffering in this lifetime as being merely momentary and light. The church must come to this seeing, for this seeing is apostolic reality and truth. What Paul is, is what the church must be.

Paul never did dwell on his sufferings in some kind of morbid way, but dismisses them as being momentary and light, and he can do so only on the basis of one thing, namely, the ability to glimpse the eternal weight of glory. This is not a luxury that we can consider 'having' or 'not having.' This is an utter, apostolic requirement for anyone who has serious intentions with God. The fact that we have not yet experienced suffering indicates where we have been until now, namely, exercising some lesser kind of faith^{3/4}if it is a faith at all^{3/4}that has not excited the world's hatred against us.

I am talking about the most practical 'nuts and bolts' reality that will keep us as an apostolic people—for surely we are on a collision course with suffering. If we will not see the eternal and the eternal weight of glory, then what is a light affliction shall be for us great. What is momentary shall be long and continuous. Everything depends on our actual knowing of the eternal. We may know that eternity is there, and distant, and something that we will obtain after this life, but we have not brought the eternal dimension into the present now, and for that reason we have grievously erred, and to that degree we are not apostolic.

Seeing the Unseen

God's provision for bearing the things that must come in this life is looking upon the things that are eternal, unseen and invisible. The issue of seeing is crucial, and I know it is going to take a conscious and concerted effort to bring us to this kind of seeing. Everything presently conspires against it. The world wants to fill our eyes with all of its voluptuous images. Everything is clamoring for the attention of our senses. We are continually bidden to look down upon things. It takes an apostolic determination to break that, to close out the things that are visible, and to focus and dwell upon the things that are invisible and eternal. It will produce a remarkable thing in us, namely, a growing indifference to the things that are of the world. Paul did not look at the things that are seen. He wrested his eyeballs away from the visible, sensual things that would have been a gratification for his soulish, physical life. By his insistence not to see the things that were visible, God gave him to see the things that were invisible and eternal.

To be called to this kind of seeing is another name for suffering. The things that are seen give us assurance and confidence, but to turn our eyes onto the things that are invisible and eternal will produce a wrench in us. It is going to require an exertion and a moral energy to divert our eyes from the sensual things that are ever and always before us, and to learn to direct and fix them on the things which are invisible and eternal. To make that the basis for all our seeing is at the heart of apostolic! Do we see this world as under judgment? Do we see it as soon to pass away? Or are we overwhelmed and intimidated by the things that are visible?

If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. (Colossians 3:1–4)

We need to adjust our whole mind-set and attitude. We may 'believe' in eternity, but we have agreed with the world that it does not become relevant until after this life. In other words, it becomes applicable when this life has ended. To have this attitude guarantees we will not be found disagreeable or controversial to the world. The world wants to relegate eternity to a future consideration that has no present application. Eternity is, however, not another kind of time frame; it is not merely endless time or a quantitative thing, but profoundly and foremost a qualitative thing. That qualitative thing is available now^{3/4} it is eternity now. When we begin to see all our moments set in the context of eternity, we will bring to those moments an intensity, a care, a solemnity, and a seriousness that we would not otherwise have had. Heaven is reality, and it is coming down to earth. It is that new City whose Founder and Builder is God, and God has called us to the apostolic task of bringing eternity into time.

The Eternal Mindset

The book of Revelation begins by John speaking of the things that shall shortly come to pass. There is a certain immediacy and urgency in his apostolic writing, and yet it is almost two thousand years later, and it has not yet happened. He was not deceived, but rather writing and speaking from a mindset that God intends characteristically to be true of saints in every generation. We need to develop a sense for the things that are 'at hand,' the things that are imminent and about to come into time, for example, the appearing of the Lord, the establishing of His millennial Kingdom, and the apocalyptic conclusion of the ages.

We have not impressed the world or communicated to it the sense of the urgency of that which lies beyond death. In fact, we cannot begin to do it if we ourselves are not presently in that dimension. We can, therefore, only communicate eternity as a technical and theological truth. We know that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one and the father of lies. Lying is everywhere about us and in the very air that we breathe, and the greatest lie is the renunciation and rejection of eternity. Even the thought of it does not come into the consciousness of men. Men are living their lives in the world as if this life is the total purpose for being, and we have allowed them to get away with it. If we as believers subscribe to eternity by giving assent to the doctrine of eternity, the reality of which comes to us after death, then we have given ourselves over to the lie. Church is church when its very existence, presence and character are a refutation of the lie, because it shows that the issue of eternity and the things that are ultimate and that pertain to God are in fact the true questions of life. Church is church when it lives as if it believes that.

We need to come to the world as people who are presently in that dimension, where the things that are eternal are brought into our daily, mundane and ordinary considerations. When we do, then those things no longer become mundane and ordinary. Everything becomes charged with that which is eternal. When you stand before a people, it is not just a delivery of a message, but an issue of life or death. Things are hanging in the balance that will affect both time and eternity. The consequences, therefore, are momentous. Everything is charged with a meaning beyond that which one can define. Eternity has been brought into the now, and it is the whole dimension in which God Himself dwells. That is why Paul can speak about the eternal weight of glory, because that is where the realm of glory is to be glimpsed and sensed.

An Apostolic Distinctive

This is intrinsic to that which is apostolic, and this is one of the ways to tell the true from the false. The false apostles give the correct statements, but lack the sense of the eternal in what they are about and communicate. They are men of time, and you do not get the sense of that which lies beyond time. They have not been in that realm, and so they cannot communicate it. It is not part of their conscious being. I do not think that the full understanding of eternity can be obtained in a day, but is rather something that is fashioned over a process of time.

Paul is the quintessential apostle, and these are intrinsic and central elements of apostolicity^{3/4}the apostolic mind-set. It is going to take a willful and calculated chosen policy of beginning to turn our sight and attention from the things that are before us to the things that cannot be seen. We need to make the realm of the invisible and eternal our realm, and the foundation of all our being. It must become the normative condition for all of our seeing. When we find ourselves in a culture or society, how affected and impressed are we by it? Do we see beyond and into the eternal? That seeing changes everything. Paul is timeless, and when he said he was a citizen of heaven, it was not a little fortuitous, glib phrase, but a statement of fact. That is where he had his effectual being, and where we must have ours also. To be apostolic is to be heavenly, nothing more and nothing less. We are not to be the parrots of glib phrases that other men have spoken. It is going to take a calculated shifting from our whole sensual and earthly orbit to break the power of it, and to bring us into another dimension where the weight of glory is. Once there, we need to live and move and have our being in it. We will be another kind of people. We will not be the victims of sin—we cannot be. Those are the symptoms of the fact that we are in the wrong place.

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven ... (2 Corinthians 5:1-2)

Apostolic 'knowing' is something that is registered in our guts by which we long and groan. Do we so feel the weight of our mortality that our spirit yearns to be freed of this box and to come into what shall be the ultimate thing given by God, by which we shall be eternally clothed? Right now, so long as we must endure our mortal bodies, we endure them with groans, and not with hair blowers, pampering and perfuming, and not with fashions and fads. Our body is just a necessary contrivance and convenience that houses our spirit, but we groan so long as we are boxed in, waiting to be clothed with that which is eternal. This is ultimate sanity, and we need to come into it. I am not disparaging the body^{3/4}Paul does not either, but there is something that is expressed here as a longing and groan that is at the heart of apostolic. It can only be expressed by one who has crossed that threshold and who is in the eternal realm—and knows it. We are far too much at home in the body. We are too much body conscious—how we appear, how we clothe it, how we feed it, how it looks—and do not realize to what degree body consciousness robs us from true reality in God.

The whole world is calculated to conform us to its values. So long as we are in the realm that is temporal and earthly, we shall be its victims. If we only gaze at the things that are seen, and do not fix our eyes on the things that are invisible and eternal, we shall be swept into things that pertain to fashion and fads. If we dress ourselves in the fashionable, impressive and colorful, we have a body consciousness. No one will ever fault us, but it will rob us of a consciousness of God in the realm that is eternal. To be absent from the body, even in our attention and consciousness, to that degree, is to be present with the Lord. It is an apostolic principle against which the world is fighting like a mad dog to keep us from.

Strangers in the World

To live, move and have our effectual being in eternity will make us become strange and somewhat peculiar to all those who are outside of us. We are somehow continually looking upward, seeing things that do not occupy their attention. We will find ourselves becoming increasingly 'pilgrims' and 'sojourners' in the world, looking for a City not made with hands. This is not biblical poetry, but the normative intention of God for all true saints and foundational to the faith. We are those who are always looking for something that is not in view, but our very anticipation of it actually brings it to pass.

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, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! (2 Peter 3:11-12)

The 'Day of God' or the 'Day of the Lord's appearing' is not a fixed chronological event. It does not take place of itself independent of our condition, but rather it is our very condition that brings Him. We can hasten the Day of the Lord's appearing by being the kind of people we ought to be, that is to say, looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God. This is not some esoteric subject, but utter reality. The issue of eternity is the issue of His coming, and the establishment of His Kingdom.

When Paul spoke to the Greek philosophers about a God who has appointed a Day in which He shall judge all nations by Him whom He has raised from the dead, it was as natural to him as breathing. He was not at all embarrassed to step from philosophy to theology in the same breath. For Paul it was not a matter of going from the secular to the sacred. It was all sacred, all eternal, all heavenly, and all real: a Day of Judgment and God as Judge. They were not just religious thoughts, but the very foundations of all reality. Paul dwelt in this eternal dimension, and brought it to bear on all of his earthly considerations. Eternity is the issue of Heaven or Hell, and we are going to be remarkably ill equipped to speak of either unless the consciousness of eternity affects our every waking hour.

We need to squint our eyes just a little in order to sense the massive deception in which the whole world is lying. I see it especially in my own Jewish people. They are brilliantly intellectual, remarkable in their careers and professions, from physics to computers, sociologists, historians, businessmen, financiers; but they are completely mindless with regard to eternity. It is a category that has no weight for them. It is a vapor, an idle thing, but Paul let the philosophers of Greece know that the whole purpose of human existence is to seek after God. It sounds so embarrassing, so simplistic and intellectually dull, yet it is the very purpose for all of our being. We are to establish in this lifetime a relationship with God that will affect all eternity.

The Apostolic Task

Why do we not speak with that same simplicity, that same urgency and that same absoluteness? Perhaps we do not believe it as absolutely as Paul did, nor do we live as if we believe it. We are simply not that occupied with the things that are eternal, and therefore we are unable to persuade men. We need to press mankind to come to terms with eternity, even though they will accuse us of being dogmatic, narrow-minded and intolerant, and yet that will be enough to intimidate many of us to silence. There is nothing more embarrassing and intimidating to the modern Christian than to be considered narrow and dogmatic. It did not, however, intimidate Paul. Eternity is not a narrow concept, and the world needs to be disturbed by people who cannot contain themselves, who are beyond the issue of taste, politeness and good manners, who burn with the reality of eternity, and who take every opportunity to express the things that are Divine.

Our absoluteness is the very height of offense to a world that is relativistic and pluralistic. They do not want to be told that there is anything that is absolute, that there are only two eternal alternatives, but they need to be told, not by people who bring the correct doctrine, but by those who come with a burning conviction. Do we really believe God has fixed a Day in which He will judge the world in righteousness? Our apostolic task is to bring an unwanted and unwelcome message to an indifferent world, and it is a message we can only bring in the same proportion that we can demonstrate it. It is not enough to be 'correct.' We have to come to them, as it were, from the eternal place.

The Meaning of Eternity

Paul wrote to Timothy,

Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called ... (1 Timothy 6:12a)

It is evident that Paul is not speaking of some future time, but now! It is something given by the life of God—a particular kind of wisdom, a mindset and a perception. Whosoever believes on Him, shall have eternal life, not just future, but now. It is a very peculiar state of being, a dimension that is concurrent with time, and indeed, it is a dimension that needs to be contended for, if we will enter into His life. "Contend for the faith that was once given to the saints" is more than just an injunction to embrace their doctrines, but an invitation to come into a certain dimension of being. It is not going to make you ethereal and irrelevant. You are not going to become

dreamy or visionary, for if eternity is anything, it is the very essence of that which is real.

Eternity needs to be brought into time, and the church is the only agency on earth given by God through whom that can happen. But it is an apostolic church that lives, and moves, and has its being in the eternal dimension, and who abides in Him, who inhabits eternity. Our problem is that we secretly covet the world's admiration. We want to succeed on the world's terms, if not academically, then theologically. We find ways to be polite, and to address our Christian convictions in a manner by which the world can receive them. We have lost the apostolic view, which was intended to confront the world in its entire framework of thought, for the whole of non-Christian thought is a lie, for it has not reckoned on eternity. It has not brought the invisible things into its consideration, and therefore all of its other considerations are amiss.

The world needs to be confronted by the things that are eternal. Paul himself demonstrated this on Mars Hill. He struck at the very heart of the world and its lies. It is remarkable that he came down that hill alive, when he could just as easily have been the object of men stopping their ears and rushing upon him with teeth gnashing. Are we eager to preach Christ and Him crucified, Him risen, the soon coming King and Judge? We cannot divide these realities. Paul was determined not to know anything but Christ and Him crucified^{3/4}and it takes a determination! Everything in the world, the flesh, and the Devil conspires against it. It wants to diminish this truth, and put it in mere religious and doctrinal categories, but we are enjoined to preach this gospel to every creature, namely,

... He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead. (Acts 17:31)

God has furnished proof to all men by setting a 'Paul' before them, who not only proclaims the doctrine of resurrection and judgment, but is himself a demonstration of the resurrection life, a taste of the power of the ages to come. The issue of resurrection is already the issue of eternity, for it is the life to come. And when a man stands before unbelieving Greeks and speaks to them penetratingly out of that life, then God has furnished proof to those men.

Eternity as Resurrection Life

There is an entry into the eternal dimension through the reality of resurrection life. Merely approving the doctrine is not enough, we need to live and move and have our being in Jesus Christ, or our words about an imminent judgment are without value. There can be no preaching of the resurrection, or of eternal judgment unless the entire framework of our life is changed. Do we really want to see all men everywhere repent? They need to see the eternity that is already in us, and they shall be eternally condemned except that they receive Him in whose Name we come.

We are moving to a final and ultimate confrontation with the philosophical spirit of the world. Something timeless and eternal must be presented to men by an apostolic church, a people who have laid hold of that which is eternal, and are not just awaiting some future state. They are already appropriating it, and bringing it into their present consideration. The issue of the resurrection in us is the issue of eternity for them. God is desirous of an apostolic mind-set, for these are the foundations of the church^{3/4}not the issues of the mechanics of church government, however important that might be in itself. A church without the eternal dimension, however correct it may be in every other form, is not an apostolic or authentic church.

This is a position far beyond correct doctrine. Something must come again into the atmosphere of God's corporate people, a sense of urgency that we ourselves cannot calculate or establish. We must be purveyors of a sense of imminence, and of the things that shall shortly come to pass. We must bring the eternal sense of things, and the eternal stakes of heaven or hell, because we have already sensed the eternal weight of glory as being so presently real to us now. The rejection, the abuse, the reproach, and the persecution that will come to us for bearing an unwelcome word to a world that does not want to hear, is for us, only a momentary and light affliction. But it will be true only to the degree we see that which is invisible.

True Biblical Faith

The giants of the faith of Hebrews 11 were all eternally minded. What was the foundation and root of their overcoming faith? Why is Abraham called 'the father of faith'? We have to fight for the meaning of these great, biblical words. Even the word 'faith' itself has suffered terrible assault in this recent Charismatic generation, and so I am glad that God gives us definitive statements:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks. By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found because God took him up; for he obtained the witness that before his being taken up he was pleasing to God. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. (Hebrews 11:1-6)

I am going to show that the reward God offers here is essentially not in this life, but in the life to come. True faith is a faith that does not expect its reward in this life, but afterwards. The men of old gained approval by their faith, but they did not obtain the promise. For example,

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after (emphasis mine) receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. (v 8 kjv)

The word after is a critical, key word in the definition of biblical faith. In other words, there is something very peculiar about biblical faith, which does not expect or look for its reward, answer, consummation, fulfillment or gratification now, but after. This is totally contrary to the tenor of the world that looks for its gratification now. It is a conflict of two wisdoms, one is based on instant, immediate gratification now, and the other is predicated upon that which comes after. Everything that is natural, human, soulish, fleshly and carnal, expects, deserves and wants its gratification now. In a word, true faith calls us to a posture that is contrary to that which is 'natural.'

That is why we need to be weaned from natural gratification, and to find our orientation and being in that which is 'other-worldly' and beyond this life. We need to become citizens of heaven. All of these categories are contrary to the way that man is constituted naturally. That is why man would rather predicate his life on reason rather than on faith. Faith is unseen, but man wants to see, to be gratified; man wants now.

Abraham, the great father of faith, was not only called to go out but also called to go into. There is a conjunction between those two words. Israel was brought out of Egypt in order to be brought into the Land of Promise. Abraham was to go into a place he was to receive after for an inheritance. The words 'inheritance' and 'heir' are a theme that is repeated throughout the Old and New Testament Scriptures. Inheritance implies something that comes after, usually after a death.

By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise. (v 9)

This is the foundation of Abrahamic faith, not only for Abraham, but also for those who dwelt with him. Isaac and Jacob, and all of the saints of old, had this as their foundation. They had the immovable confidence that they would be the heirs of promise. Everything is predicated on what was spoken by God. Verse 13 says that, "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises." This is not some typographical error, but the deepest meaning of the word 'faith.' The promises were not to be realized in their own lifetime. They all died, without exception, not having received the promises. Not one of them received the reward of their life of faith and sacrifice in this life, but received it as an inheritance after. I do not think any of them were bitterly disappointed. They knew better than to expect it in this present life, but they were assured of the reward, the promise and the inheritance. This life, therefore, was distinguished by a walk of faith as pilgrims and strangers, who embraced the hope and inheritance, though it was afar off.

Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees to the Land of Promise, but when he was in it, which is to say, when he was in the right place, it was strange and foreign to him. He was uncomfortable, because it was not yet the time to inherit it. The time comes only after—after this life, in the resurrection that enters us into the eternal fulfillment of the promise. That means the whole premium of biblical faith rests on the assurance of resurrection. Abraham was expecting an eternal inheritance, which is why Paul could say that if there was no resurrection for us, then we of all men are most to be pitied. The 'faith' as it has been promulgated to us today

is almost invariably situated in the now. It says, "You will receive health, you will receive a boyfriend, a girlfriend, an apartment, a job, a Cadillac—now." The emphasis is on now. It has a payoff now, or else you are out of the faith! For the great fathers of the faith, it was an inheritance to which they are heirs after. Even though they were physically in the Land of Promise, it was not yet the fulfillment for them.

If we are comfortable in this present world, we are not yet in the only true faith. To recite certain verses, and expect their material fulfillment, does not mean that we are in the faith. We are in the faith of Abraham when, like him, we are strangers and aliens, not only in the world, but also in the Land of Promise. We need to look for the coming of the Lord, to long for His appearing, the coming of that whole millennial and future fulfillment that is eternal. That is why eternity needs to come into our consciousness now. The remarkable paradox is that to be preoccupied with the things that are future and eternal would make you believe there would be little effect and consequence now. In fact, what does the world say, "If you are heavenly minded (eternally minded) you are of no earthly good." That is a lie, because the opposite is true, "Except you are heavenly minded, except you are eternally minded, you are of no earthly good." Every value that the world celebrates as right and true is unmistakably a lie. What the earth needs is not more earth, but more heaven. Eternity must come into time, the holy into the profane, the sacred into the everyday, by people who are already walking in heaven as if it is the very foundation of their life and being. That is the only true faith.

A promise is something spoken by God, despite every appearance to the contrary for its fulfillment, predicated entirely upon His honor, the truth of His Word, and His ability to fulfill it. Can you die with confidence believing that you will receive the promise, though you have not seen it in your lifetime? Can you believe it with such a quality of conviction that it affects, not only how you live, but also how you die? That is to say, we do not go around disappointed, dejected, or sullen. This gives us a much more realistic understanding of what the purpose for this present life is as well as the nature of the payoff in the life to come. The thing that God gives in power to loose us from the seduction of this present world is the assurance of the thing that comes after, namely, a City whose Maker and Builder is God.

I have heard people say, "If Paul only had faith, he would not have suffered all he did, and that he suffered because he had an 'inadequate' faith, and did not know that Jesus had already 'done it all,' and that all the sufferings were brought on him by himself; and that he did not have the faith to know his Kingdom privileges, and therefore he suffered." That statement reveals just how warped our understanding is of what constitutes biblical faith. Everything seems to suggest that we are not to expect the fulfillment now. Can we live like that? Have school and college prepared us to live with deferring a gratification and fulfillment now in the expectation that it will come after? Are we so confident that there is going to be a resurrection from the dead? And that we will not die disappointed if the promise does not come now, because we are superbly assured it will come after? It is worth waiting for, and it will affect not only how we die, but also how we live. We know we are in this faith by how we live now.

The Promises of God

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (v 13)

The promise has got to do with the establishment of specific statements God has made to the patriarchal fathers of the faith, for example, to David, that upon His throne would be seated a descendant from his loins who would rule over the house of Israel forever. We need to come into a Hebraic mentality that was reflected in the disciples who were with Jesus in His resurrection, when He spoke to them for forty days on the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God. They asked Jesus, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6b). We have lost the sense of eternity in exact proportion to our having lost or never understood the issue of the Kingdom as a theocratic reality. The Kingdom has ever and always been the political rule of God in the earth; the law shall go forth out of Zion and the word of the Lord out of Jerusalem. That may not mean much to us as 'modern' believers, but it has meant a great deal to generations of Jews who lived and waited for the fulfillment of that promise.

Abraham's looking for a City whose Builder and Maker is God is synonymous with looking for and hastening the coming theocratic Kingdom. The issue of God's Kingdom in terms of His ruling over His creation is the issue of God's glory. It is all the more to His glory that this rule will take place in the literal Land of Promise, and in the capital of that Land, Jerusalem, the city of peace, on the holy hill of Zion. If we do not have this

perspective when we read these verses in the book of Hebrews, then our understanding will have a certain subjective meaning, but it is not the full meaning.

To desire Jesus, and to long for His appearing, are not to be understood as an emotional palpitation of the heart. It is the Lord coming to be vindicated in the very place where He was publicly humiliated, and where they put a sign up over His head in three languages, "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" as a mock, and gave Him a crown of thorns. In that place alone, He will establish His rule over His creation. To love God is to love Him in the sense of desiring to see the fulfillment of all that is rightly His, and which has been so long denied Him. Abraham understood this. It was the gospel that was preached to him, which contained a promise of a restoration that would establish God's glory, and be revealed through His rule over a creation that has long rejected Him, and distorted and destroyed the image of God in man. This is the hope and the promise, for which fulfillment men waited, but did not receive it in their lifetime. These all died not having received the promise.

How can we purport to be looking for Jesus and wanting to be with Him, and yet not have a concern or awareness of what it will be that eternally glorifies Him? I am uncomfortable with fascination for Jesus and a 'love' of Him in His own person that somehow does not take into consideration the things that eternally glorify Him. That is why both things are mentioned in the same chapter.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (v 13)

The 'them' is plural as against seeing 'Him' who is invisible, something singular. Both things are true. It is not the pitting of one against the other, and I am appealing to you to see the issue of the Lord and His coming in the context of what His coming means, namely, the issue of His glory forever. The issues are worked out and enacted in the Last Days. And when they are completed, history is completed, and we move out of the dispensation of history and the times of the Gentiles, and into the millennial and eternal realm, which is to say, the thing that comes after. That is why it is only they who endure to the end who will be saved. Many are not enduring because they do not see the end, they do not expect the end, and they do not desire the end. They have not seen the faith in the eschatological, apocalyptic and theocratic setting, the very thing that God intends we should all see as being normative. That is what the word 'promise' refers to.

They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth. This changes our whole status, and our whole earthly tenure will be radically altered if we really embrace this view. How many Christians see themselves, desire to be, or are seen by others as being pilgrims, strangers and sojourners in the earth? This must be an inevitable consequence of the embracing of this view in truth. 'Pilgrim' and 'stranger' suggest that one is not likely to be popular. One will never be comfortable in the world. You will be chafed by it, you can never succeed in it, or be at home in it. You are always looking for something beyond and other. It is a prickly feeling to be strange, because everything in modern society is trying to win you to feel like others, to be accepted and approved. But to feel odd and strange, and never able comfortably to fit in, is not something that is gratifying for the flesh.

The drift and main theme of our modern evangelism is this world and this present life orientated, for the benefits one receives. I can hardly imagine that anyone who is 'saved' on that basis is saved on a foundation that will enable them to endure and overcome until the end. It may well be that the whole carnal character of the church, and the tremendous fall-out rate, has something to do with the kind of message that people are hearing from their inception into the things of God. It is not centered in an eternal view of the kind that Paul had.

Have you noticed how some minister is called to initiate the sessions of Congress by opening in prayer? There is a kind of dalliance between the world and the church by which we sanctify and endorse this present world. We do not challenge its assumptions, or bringing to the attention of the world that its time is limited, and that God has established a Day in which He will judge all men; that this world is under judgment, and that God is not slack concerning His promise that the Day of the Lord will come, but He is not willing that any should perish. In not voicing that message, and condescending to bring a 'religious' dimension to the secular world (for which we get tax-deductible benefit), we reinforce the world in its lie. We allow them to go on without any consciousness of eternity or the eternal issues of heaven and hell. We ourselves are not that persuaded of heaven, and therefore we are not equally able to persuade men of hell. If eternity is only a category and not a passionate conviction, then we have no message for the world. And if the church is not evangelistic in the apostolic sense, then how is it the church? One of the principal functions of the church is to proclaim the gospel of this Kingdom. That includes proclaiming the message of judgment, but few of us have a stomach for being 'strange' and being looked upon differently, not only in the world, but even by other Christians.

Our True Dwelling Place

When God gathers up His elect, He will gather them up "from the four corners of heaven." That does not mean we are going to be in another stratosphere. Both will be situated on terra firma, but both will be dwelling in two radically and diametrically opposed places. One will dwell in the earth, they will look down for their gratification now³/₄earthlings. The others are those who dwell in heaven while they are yet in the earth. They are looking for the City whose builder is God. Their eye is suffused with the things that are unseen and eternal.

Jesus had a conversation once with a ruler of the Jews, a man by the name of Nicodemus, the epitome of Jewish, religious ability, morality and ethics. If there was no God, then what Nicodemus represented was the perfect answer for human ideals. But there was another Man in whom he was in conversation, who represented something altogether 'other' than what Nicodemus was. He was the Man from heaven, Jesus the Christ. Nicodemus sensed something about Jesus that exploded all of his religious categories. And though he could not understand Him, he was probing to find out, lest he missed it:

"Rabbi, we know that you have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." (John 3:2b)

It was the earthly man asking earthly questions, and he received heavenly answers from the heavenly place by a heavenly Man,

"And no one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven." (John 3:13)

In other words, Jesus is letting Nicodemus know, that although they may be physically in Jerusalem, He was Himself in heaven. Jesus was explaining to him what reality really is. Are we bewildered? That means that we are more identified with Nicodemus than we are with Jesus. How can a Man be standing in Jerusalem, and say that He is in heaven. If we do not yet understand that, then we have not yet attained to biblical faith. Faith takes the ordinary and mundane and brings to it the quality of eternity now. It makes the profane sacred, and it brings eternity into time. It is for the absence of this that mankind is freaking out. Mankind was created in God's image to live in the dimension that I am now describing. We were created to live in righteousness, truth, love and reality, but the world is so removed from God and His categories and dimensions that it has become stunted, and thinks that everything of consequence is in this present world. It is a contorted and restricted living that is not a true living at all. The ministry of the church is to demonstrate the message of a Kingdom of God that is at hand, "Look, here it is! Look at the reality. Look at a people who are completely free from intimidation, fear, anxiety and distress!" Just seeing our peace would be shattering for those who are unglued by what is happening in the world.

"Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3b), and then, "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

We may well ask what relationship Jesus' answers had to Nicodemus' questions, and the answer is nothing, and it does not have to. We are not obliged to give earthly answers to earthly questions, but only heavenly answers, even if it leaves men bewildered!

The Afflictions of the Saints

As we have said, Paul saw the eternal weight of glory that made his present afflictions both momentary and light. Here is a seeing that affects the present in a very tangible and substantial way. This is an end-time provision of God, lest we become cowards, and be made fearful, or be compromised in the faith for the fear of pain and suffering. There are saints who actually went with rejoicing to the stake to be burned alive. They saw it as the logic, the conclusion, and the verification of their true faith. They rejoiced that their life had to end this way, and now they were assured of the crown. They were already rejoicing in the anticipation of the reward that they hardly felt the flames.

This is the faith to which we are called. It is a calling to be focused on the things that are invisible and eternal. It is a choice that we make every day, every hour and every moment. Where do we allow our eyes to rest and to dwell? Eyes are the organs of the senses; they want so much to be gratified; they want to see and look like something different. But it is sensual, earthly, carnal, and devilish absorption. God's call is to look up, and to see the things that are invisible and eternal. The eternal weight of glory, which is to say, the eternal reward, is ours in the measure of our willingness to enter into the sufferings of Christ. Redemptive sufferings precede the glory, and the glory will be to the degree that we bear the sufferings. In fact, if we intend to have this apostolic mindset and view, we are making ourselves candidates for suffering in one form or another. We will be a marked people before the principalities and powers of the air, and they will test us, and God will allow the testings. He employs the Devil's devices for the good. If the Devil inflicts suffering upon the saints because they are entertaining apostolic and eternal things, then the greater the glory and the character that is shaped and worked by the bearing of it. The patience and the long-suffering that are wrought in us are only possible "for the joy that is set before us." God is not calling us to some kind of masochism, where we bravely suffer for the sake of suffering, but we bear it because we anticipate the glory that is to come. The greater the suffering, the greater the weight of glory.

The Eternal Mindset

The utter conviction of the centrality and significance of eternity is central to the apostolic and Abrahamic faith, which means that this present life is only preparatory and transient. It is a whole reversal of values, and the things the world has sought to induct us into. In fact, if we talk about this life as preparation, and that suffering is a necessary ingredient in that preparation, and that the reward and the full significance for our being comes in the life to come, then we will be viewed as being medieval. Yet this is the biblical faith.

And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. (v 15)

Paul means not only the country, but also the values of the country and the things that are celebrated in this present world. We have got to fight for this eternal view because it is daily threatened and contended against.

But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. (v 16)

We are chastened in this life for the life to come, because in the life to come there is no chastening work, in my opinion, at all. It is in this life that this preparation is performed,

Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards (my emphasis) it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble; and make straight paths for your feet (Hebrews 12:10-13a)

Notice the practical implication now because you believe that for then.

... so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears. (v 13b-17)

The intention of the Holy Spirit in these words is entirely eschatological. The whole gist and meaning, using Esau as an example, is to bring us into the alertness and awareness, that the preparation of this life is for the eternal, and that this is the inheritance that comes after. Esau was unable to deny himself a meal. In fact, he thought he would die if he did not get that meal. He was so rooted in immediate gratification that he could not even defer and set back for a later time the gratification that he had to have now.

The whole purpose of discipline or chastisement, which is to say, the painful dealings of God against our flesh, is to break the power of the need to be gratified now. The definition of a son is one who can defer his gratification for the reward that comes after. You do not need to receive a pat on the back after you have preached, "Well done, that was a great message!" A lot of us will collapse at this point, and compromise our message, even fishing for the compliments and the acknowledgments of men. Only a son can give total obedience to delivering the word without in any way modulating it so as to receive the gratification of applause and affirmation. If you want to see God and obtain His holiness, then this is the way.

Look at Chapter 10 of Hebrews. Paul is talking about the suffering of saints and about the great conflict of sufferings,

But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of suffering, partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one. (vv 32–34)

These saints, of whom Paul is referring, took joyfully the seizure of their property. It is one thing to bear it with a kind of resignation, but how can you rejoice for the loss? Only on one basis, namely, they knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and abiding possession in exact proportion to what was lost. They knew it in themselves as a conviction, which is a knowing that is beyond mere doctrinal acknowledgment, and the proof of their knowing was that they took the seizure joyfully. Their joy was the statement of their faith in the most acute moment of being stripped. They were a people free from fear and intimidation, and the issue of security and possession. We can know whether eternity is just an abstraction or the deepest reality by our reaction to being stripped of our earthly goods. The latter evidences itself in a joyful surrendering. There is a difference between bearing something with a brave kind of resignation, as opposed to counting it all joy. Joy cannot be feigned. It is a heavenly quality, not some kind of human happiness. They knew in themselves, really knew, that they had a better and abiding possession in heaven beyond the proportion they lost. A faith that is not eschatological, that does not expect heavenly reward, and that does not look upon eternity as the greater and enduring reality, is not biblical faith.

Jesus Himself died with these words on His mouth, "My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me?" He was stripped of everything—in hope of the joy that was set before Him.

Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. (vv 35–36)

In other words, they did not receive, nor did they expect to receive, the promise until after they had done the will of God. That is a strange thing to consider. It means they did not receive in this life the thing for which they gave themselves totally to God. They did not receive the thing for which they were striving in God. If we are to be joined with them in the same quality of faith, then we will need to radically reconsider what we are presently about. It means we can serve God tirelessly and totally, without having to have our reward in this life. The world and its rewards do not move us. We cannot be wooed and seduced by honorary doctorates. There is so much religious ambition, where men have to succeed now, have to be rewarded now, have to be acknowledged now, now, now.

We do not see the hidden saints, who can serve God without being recognized and known by men. We need rather to be joined with the saints that have gone before us instead of looking for the reward that men can bestow presently. With every reward that is presently bestowed by men, there is an appropriate compromise in our integrity, in the quality of our faith, and in the quality of our witness and service to God. The true children of God do not move to the cues of men. They do not respond according to the things that make for religious success now. They look to something that is eternal and has a greater reward, and therefore they allow God to ruthlessly deal with them, removing any impulse that wants to be recognized by men now, that wants success now. They, and we, will receive our reward at the same time Abraham receives it, namely, in the Day of eternity—at the Lord's coming.

For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. (v 37)

How then Should We Live Now?

Jesus' coming will usher in the Day of eternity and the reward. It was written two thousand years ago, but the Lord has not come, and yet how could Paul say, "in a little while"? Was Paul guilty of exaggeration? For Paul it was little, in the same way that his afflictions were both momentary and light. It was little because he already anticipated eternity at the door. It was not an issue of chronology, but an issue of God's character. He who promised will come. It is an issue of the God who promises.

Here comes the punch-line,

Now (emphasis mine) the just shall live by faith. (v 38 kjv)

Having just spoken about what comes after—the inheritance, eternity and the reward—Paul brings the subject to the immediate, "Now the just shall live by faith." In other words, "Now the just shall live by this eschatological faith." Will the Lord find this kind of faith upon the earth when He returns? It is the faith of His coming, the faith of His appearing, the faith of His Kingdom, and the faith of the fulfillment of all these promises—and He asks us to live by it now. How do we live now that is really living and not just 'getting by'? How do we live joyfully now, because anything other than that is not living? Everything that Paul said comes to bear now, and that is what I love about God. This is the paradox of the faith. Having spoken all of those things about afterwards, He comes to now. And now is not now, except in the light of what comes after. Now is only now because of what comes after. Now can be lived as now dynamically because of what comes after. Now would not be now without the promise and the reward, and He who made it. Now is only now because God is God. Now we can live by faith in the anticipation and confidence of the recompense of the reward that comes after. It gives us the incentive to serve God now, and which also eclipses every present reward:

But just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

There is a crown to be won and a treasure that is being laid up. The key to apostolic lifestyle and living, and prophetic seeing and being, and of courage and overcoming now is because of what comes after. This alone is the faith once and for all given to the saints for which we need earnestly to contend! Faith is a mode of living that has taken into its deepest consciousness the eschatological, apocalyptic expectation of the end of the age in its theocratic promise, and that transforms, therefore, our quality of life now.

We are moving toward a consummation and a hope. What we are now, and how we walk now, are altogether related to what we anticipate for the future. Furthermore, we have a foretaste now of the power and the glory of the age to come by the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is a token, a down payment, and a foretaste of the powers of the age to come. One of the terrible things wrong with the Charismatic and allied movements is that they have not seen the Holy Spirit in His eschatological context. They have seen the Holy Spirit only as a present phenomenon, as if it is the whole thing already that has been poured out on all flesh, when it is hardly more than a sprinkling. The baptism has been seen as something to renew our denominations, and to bring a degree of titillation and excitement into an otherwise dull Christian life. It amazes me that God's fist did not come down on the whole Charismatic thing and blot it out in a moment. It borders on being sacrilegious, a misuse of the Spirit, and likely even a misappropriation, because it does not see Him in the context of God's intention, being only a token, a down payment and a foretaste of the powers of the age to come. God wants to whet our appetites in anticipation of the thing that is future, enduring and eternal.

Eternal Reward

The concept of eternal reward is virtually absent from the consideration of modern Christendom. It was foremost, though, in the consideration of the apostolic generation. Paul strove to obtain the reward, and therefore it is not something to be despised, but rather we should earnestly seek to restore this understanding. It is a remarkably glorious theme that has been historically lost to us, and yet is central to the whole faith. The principalities and powers of the air profoundly resist this subject, because to lay hold of the issues of eternity opens up a whole dimension of release in the church that makes it a qualitatively different proposition, both in the world and toward the powers of this world.

Are we awaiting the Lord's coming as a piece of doctrinal correctness, as an inevitable historical necessity, as

something that will be for us an escape from a tribulation that we do not want to bear? Or is He someone who is coming to give us the reward appropriate to our service and sacrifice? It makes a great deal of difference, because it determines and influences how we live now. What will sustain us in a time of persecution? How will we stand under it and not collapse? How will we bear that remarkable oppression if we do not have an expectation of a reward? The reward is God's 'nuts and bolts,' end-time provision for enduring and overcoming. I do not believe that any believer can really overcome, except that he has this as a lively and powerful incentive in truth in his heart and spirit.

Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. (Revelation 22:12)

The rewards, our place in the heavenlies, and our relationship with the Lord in the millennial Kingdom in ruling and reigning with Him, are proportionate to the quality and kind of our labor and service in this life. The fact that some will rule over two cities, some over five, some over ten and some will not rule over any, shows that there are degrees of reward. Ruling and reigning with Christ is the right to perform righteous judgments. Judgment is not a judicial application of the Law, but bringing the wisdom of God to bear into a situation that needs it. We come to that place of stature and maturity to exercise those judgments out of the character and stature obtained in this life.

Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. (1 Corinthians 3:8)

Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Corinthians 8:13–15)

The issue of eternal distinction is totally individual, and completely a matter of our own desire. It is what you yourself have accomplished, or done in this life, by the grace of God that is given, in proportion to our willingness to undertake and perform the works of God. Not every work is God's work. Merely because it is religious, 'spiritual,' or because we are fulfilling a need, does not mean that that work will earn for us honor, reward, or distinction. We may well come to experience that many of our works will be burned up, being hay, wood and stubble, rather than gold, silver or precious gems. The reward will be based on what is accomplished in this life in works that pass the fire. Only that which passes through the fire^{3/4}because fire tests the works^{3/4}qualifies for eternal reward. The works of God are those that have their inception in Him, and are performed in the power of His life, by motives that are pure, and that seek His purposes only, and His glory. There are works to be performed, and if we do His works, we can expect retaliation and consequence against ourselves in a world that will become totally antichrist in the Last Days. Any significant work for God is the very kind of thing that is likely to bring upon our head a counter reprisal. Only the expectation of reward for that work is the incentive that is likely to perform it.

Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 6:1)

It suggests that we can lose our reward, due to impure motives. If we want to be seen, recognized and honored by men in the doing, we therefore lose the corresponding eternal reward. It is the hope of that reward that will enable us to perform a work, even when people do not acknowledge it, or are not grateful for it. This is a complete reversal of the incentives that most men require in this life. They do because they want to be seen of men, recognized, and celebrated.

Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11–12)

The joy of it is experienced now, in the moment of the shame and rejection. That is a living faith, because you anticipate the reward in such a way that it is a present factor in your joy. If our faith does not eventuate in joy in the moment that we suffer disgrace, reproach and rejection, for Christ's sake, then we have not the true faith. If we have just an academic faith or a doctrinal thing, then we will be quite glum.

The anticipation of the future thing, that is both enduring and eternal, and a reward that does not fade away, does not rust, does not corrupt, and cannot be stolen, is designed by God to be the most powerful, cogent

motive for our present service. God intends it to be an enormous factor in our present overcoming life. This was a factor for Moses in his own overcoming, and his own separation from Egypt:

By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward. (Hebrews 11:24-26)

Paul said that we would all stand at the judgment seat of Christ, not to determine the issue of our salvation, but to determine the issue of our reward. It is there that our works are tested to see whether they can survive the fire of God's evaluation and judgment. When we say the phrase 'good works,' we automatically recoil, because we think that somehow it is threatening the gospel of grace. Salvation is a gift of God by grace, but what we do with the grace, having obtained it as a gift, determines our eternal place and eternal reward. Works is only a bad word when we think that we can labor for our salvation. Something should come from our faith, something visible, something productive, and this is what God weighs, evaluates and rewards in the Day of His coming.

The Mystery of Rewards

Neither will we all rise at the same time. Some of us will rise with the first resurrection of a first fruits kind, that is to say, those who will rule and reign with Him in His millennial Kingdom. Others will sleep through the Millennium, and only rise with the general resurrection of the dead that is described in Revelation Chapter 20, where the books will be opened, including the Book of life, to see if their names are written in it.

Some of us will not be equipped to rule and reign with Christ, because we have ignored,