

Explore the Bible Series for May 27: Adopting an eternal mindset

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Adopting an eternal mindset

- 2 Peter 3:3-12, 14, 17-18

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The typical mindset is that God allows suffering so we will learn more about him, but God sometimes works in ways we don't expect. As an example, during our seminary years, he reversed my family's fortunes and made his word come alive. You see, we lived in a \$6 million mansion during our two years in seminary.

The house was involved in a divorce settlement, and the wife was trying to sell it. Her mother managed the estate, but preferred to stay at her home in Arkansas. Our job was to be caretakers. There were rules, of course, but we had the run of the place.



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Here's how it worked: The mother told us her expectations and outlined our few chores, then departed. Before leaving, she told us she'd come back now and then to check on us. Meanwhile, we could go about our lives. She really just wanted someone to be there who would watch over the place while she was gone.

True to her word, I came home from work one day to find her there. Lucky for us, we had obeyed her while she was gone. She was pleased with our work, and we were blessed to live in a mansion instead of our one-bedroom seminary house. What I learned was how serious the mandate is to be ready.

Jesus is coming

Our lesson this week is a reminder that Jesus is coming, and we must be ready. We've talked a lot lately about the disparity between what we know and say and what we do. My question is this: If Jesus came back today, would he be pleased?

Because Jesus has been slow to return, we Christians have become lazy. God has given us a manual that lays out his expectations, the rules for how his children should live. We are told to study to show ourselves approved, yet few of us give the Bible more than a cursory read now and then.

Of course, there are the parts we like, and we'll return to them again and again. We like the part about God's grace. We like that Jesus died on the cross to cover our sins. We like that salvation is a work of God's grace, not our good deeds.

But this emphasis on God's grace has become a stumbling block. For most Christians, security of salvation means not having to think about sin or Judgment Day or God's call to purity. Since we are forgiven, we think we can do what we like, leaving Jesus to clean up our messes.

But this is wrong thinking. We like Paul's assertion that where sin increases, grace increases all the more (Romans 5:20). But we fail to read on. "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (Romans 6:1).

If our behavior and attitudes don't change after salvation, is it real? Jesus preached "wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it" (Matthew 7:13). Anyone can recite a prayer and quote Scripture. Anyone can call themselves Christian. It isn't what we say or do that determines our eternal home. Jesus was speaking to his disciples when he told them, "unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3). The key word here is change. Only a changed heart will put us on the straight and narrow road.

Are you ready?

Let's face it, we like our sin. If we didn't, we wouldn't find God's principles so difficult. The trouble, however, is we're so comfortable with our sin, we don't recognize it for what it is. Peter reminds us to adopt an eternal mindset. Jesus has said he is coming again, and like the mother at the

mansion, he could come at any time. We must be ready.

Peter calls us to fine tune our focus as we prepare for Jesus' return, mandating we "live holy and godly lives as (we) look forward to the day of God" (2 Peter 3:11-12). He wants us to realize Jesus' return is real. We will stand before God to give an account for everything we say and do in this life. And we must allow this knowledge to change us. We must become like Jesus, living holy and godly lives.

Sound impossible? Jesus says we must change. Peter specifically tells us we must be holy. Even Paul teaches about the difference between the new and the old man. Would God ask us to do the impossible?

Change is difficult, and we tend to resist it. Our defense typically is that we aren't saved by works, but by grace. But this is not a theology of works. It's a theology of change. And while it is hard to change, it may be worse not to change. That's where the eternal mindset comes in.

One day, we will stand before God. The very idea should strike fear into our hearts. That is, it should if we really believe it. Many people call themselves Christians who have not changed their path to the straight and narrow. Peter is reminding us to take stock. Are we ready to stand before God? Have we deliberately forgotten Jesus' return, loving our sin so much that we're willing to protect it at the cost of God's kingdom? Or have we adopted an eternal mindset, looking forward to Jesus' return while allowing him to change our hearts in the here-and-now?

Let's listen to Peter. Eternity is worth the wait, and it is certainly worth working for.

Discussion questions

- Are your thoughts and actions different than they were before you were saved?
- Do you make your decisions based on how God would judge your choices?
- What changes do you need to make to feel more comfortable about standing before God on Judgment Day?

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