



February 11, 2018

“The Temporal and the Eternal”

Ecclesiastes 3

Pastor Gary Hamrick

Time is divided into two aspects: temporal and eternal. There are some things that will expire and come to an end (temporal), and some things that have no ending (eternal). What separates the temporal from the eternal, as far as it concerns us, is a matter of life and death. Solomon wrote about life, death, judgment, and eternity in Ecclesiastes 3. In this message, Pastor Gary explains how temporal life is and how inevitable death is, but how undeniable eternity is and how remarkable eternity will be for all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior!

### Life Is Temporal

1. **Psalm 139:16** - *“All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”*
2. **Ecclesiastes 3:3** - *“a time to kill...”*
  - a. Pastor Gary said: “By the way, that word, kill, is different from the word, murder. [Solomon’s] not endorsing murder, but he [was saying] that sometimes in the course of life, there is death in the line of duty, [and in] matters of war.”
3. Pastor Gary said: “What was happening in our country [in 1965 when The Byrds released *Turn! Turn! Turn!*] was a matter of history. Was that there was this counter-culture revolution. You [had] all the flower children and the hippies of the 60s and 70s, and during that time, what marked the culture of our country was a time [when the young people] were very spiritual, but they were anti-God. In fact, when Woodstock [took place in the summer of 1969], they opened with an invocation by a Hindu guru. ... They were very anti-God, anti-authority, anti-establishment, [and] anti-war. They were about free love, free sex, [and] free

drugs. Their mantra was: 'Peace and love.' ... The reason [this] song became so popular [was that the] culture was at the same place as Solomon was when he [wrote] Ecclesiastes chapter three. [They] were searching for purpose, searching for meaning, [and] searching for happiness. ... They identified with the words of Solomon, that's why [the song] became popular. ... In the midst of that whole counter-cultural revolution of the 60s and 70s, when people were experimenting with this and experimenting with that... there emerged in the midst of this same culture, [young people] who realized that all of those things only led to emptiness. ... They realized, [that in the end,] without God in the equation; [they were] empty. ... You know what emerged? The Jesus Movement.<sup>1</sup> [There] were thousands and thousands of hippies turning to Christ because they were tired of the anti-God, anti-authority, free sex, free love, free drugs, [and] all of this stuff."

- a. Many different publications and news organizations documented The Jesus Movement, including: CBS, ABC, *Rolling Stone Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *Life*<sup>2</sup>, as well as a number of books.
4. Pastor Gary said: "This is not just a historical thing; it's a cyclical thing. Every generation, to some degree or another, experiences and experiments in similar ways. [People] are looking for satisfaction apart from God, [and] questioning the meaning of life, [and] seeking identity and purpose, [and] experimenting sexually, and with alcohol and drugs, and having, often, a low view of authority. It's all symptomatic of the same thing; that life without God is a futile pursuit of happiness and fulfillment. Now, what makes it more difficult, in this generation, ... is that some of those futile pursuits have become legitimized in the mainstream culture, or worse, they've become legalized by our government. ... So many people [today] are saying, 'It's okay!' ... What we need in America is another revival, and I pray that the young generation once again leads the way. I am encouraged, as I speak to teenagers and those in their 20s, who have a heart for God, and who know the truth enough to reject some of the nonsense that they hear in their high schools and universities, and who love Jesus more than trends or fads or popularity, and who stand for what is right and true, no matter what the culture legalizes or glamourizes or advertises, and, who find their identity and their security in the Lord Jesus Christ! May this young generation once again lead a revival in America!"
5. Solomon laid out fourteen pairs of life's polarities, which demonstrate the endless cycles of events that always come full circle.

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<sup>1</sup> June 21, 1971 cover of *Time* - <http://content.time.com/time/covers/0,16641,19710621,00.html>

<sup>2</sup> June 30, 1972 cover of *Life* - <http://www.originallifemagazines.com/LIFE-Magazine-June-30-1972-P2851.aspx>

6. Time is in God's hands.
  - a. **Ecclesiastes 3:1** - *"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven."*
  - b. **Ecclesiastes 3:11a** - *"He has made everything beautiful in its time."*
  - c. All we can do is measure time and mark it; we have absolutely no control over it.
  - d. **Daniel 2:21a** - *"He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them."*
  - e. **Acts 1:7** - *"[Speaking of his Second Coming, Jesus] said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.'"*
  - f. Pastor Gary said: "[Since] we can't hasten time [or] delay time [or] control time, we just simply need to trust God's timing. His timing is always perfect. [We] may not understand the season; we may not even particularly like the season that we might be in, [the fact is] that God's timing is perfect, [and] he is sovereign concerning time."
  - g. **Psalm 31:15** - *"[David, speaking to God, said:] My times are in your hands..."*
  
7. Whatever time or "season" of life you find yourself in, enjoy it.
  - a. Pastor Gary said: "[We need] to see God in [each] season, [and] to recognize his goodness and his faithfulness in the present. Too many times we get stuck either reminiscing or regretting past times, or hoping for or longing for future times, and in the process [miss] the present."
  - b. **Ecclesiastes 3:12** - *"I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live."*
  - c. The season each of us in right now will never come again.
  - d. Pastor Gary said: "[Some of you are in a bad season right now]. ... God, in his grace, also ushers in a new season, because sometimes the season we are in is hard. There are still lessons to be learned, but, nevertheless, God, in his grace, [will] bring in a new season in [his] time. [I'm] not trying to dismiss [the fact] that you might be in a bad season... [I'm] just speaking about the context [of what Solomon wrote, which was,] don't regret the past season and don't always wish for the next [season - savor the present]."
  - e. "If we live in the past or live in the future, we never live, because we always miss the present." - Pastor Gary's paraphrase of a statement made by Blaise Pascal <sup>3</sup>

### Death Is Inevitable

8. **Ecclesiastes 3:2** - *"... a time to be born and a time to die..."*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/394542-let-each-of-us-examine-his-thoughts-he-will-find>

9. Pastor Gary said: “If you don’t know the Lord in a personal way, you’re apt to feel the same way that [Solomon felt]. It can be very depressing if you don’t have the hope of who the Lord is. Death can be something that is very fearful if you don’t know the Lord. I mean, death by itself is fearful, even if you do know the Lord, in the sense that it’s the unknown. But, when you know the Lord, at least you have that peace that when death comes it’s not the end, because, for the Christian, death is not the end; it’s just a transition. ... It’s moving from this life, immediately into the presence of the Lord. ... Of course, death itself is grievous to us, when we lose a loved one, but to the one dying in Christ [it’s] just a transition into the presence of the Lord. ... For a Christian, when you die your spirit separates from your body. ... Your spirit is the real essence of who you are because your spirit is the sum total of your soul, which is your mind, will, and emotions. You will retain your understanding, and you will recognize your loved ones when get to heaven. ... And so, as mysterious [as] death is, it is nothing for the Christian to fear...”
- a. The Bible doesn’t teach the Jehovah’s Witness doctrine of “soul sleep.”<sup>4</sup>
  - b. **2 Corinthians 5:8** - *“We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.”*
  - c. **1 Corinthians 15:55** - *“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”*
  - d. **John 5:24** - *“[Jesus said,] I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*
10. **Ecclesiastes 3:19–20** - *“Man’s fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; a man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from the dust, and to dust all return.”*
11. It’s important to remember that Solomon was not in a good place with the Lord at this point in his life, and his theology was weak!
12. We have the distinct advantage of being offered the opportunity to receive the free gift of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.
13. **John 11:25–26** - *“Jesus said to [Martha], ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies [physically]; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die...’”*
- a. Jesus was speaking about eternal life when he said, *“and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”*

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don\\_stewart/don\\_stewart\\_127.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_127.cfm)

## Judgment Is Unavoidable

14. **Hebrews 9:27** - *"... man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment..."*
15. **Ecclesiastes 3:17** - *"I thought in my heart, 'God will bring to judgment both the righteous and the wicked, for there will be a time for every activity, a time for every deed.' "*
16. **2 Corinthians 5:10** - *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad."<sup>5</sup>*
17. Pastor Gary said: "Here's the good [news]. As a Christian your judgment [has been] satisfied at the cross. You see, the punishment intended for [us] was placed on Jesus... and by his crucifixion [we] are made whole... So, there is an accounting, but for the Christian... the judgment day is not a day of condemnation it is a day of commendation. [For] Believers who have already been forgiven in Christ... the judgment has been satisfied by virtue of [our] faith in Christ on the cross, and therefore, when [we] stand before God... [he will determine how our deeds should be rewarded]."
  - a. **1 Corinthians 3:11-15** - *"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day<sup>6</sup> will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames."*
18. **Romans 8:1** - *"... there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..."*

## Eternity Is Undeniable

19. **Ecclesiastes 3:14** - *"I know that everything God does will endure forever..."*
20. **Ecclesiastes 3:11b** - *"He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end..."*

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<sup>5</sup> David Guzik's commentary on 2 Corinthians: see section (A), subsection (4).

[https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/archives/guzik\\_david/studyguide\\_2cr/2cr\\_5.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/archives/guzik_david/studyguide_2cr/2cr_5.cfm)

<sup>6</sup> Seven times in the New Testament there is mention of a literal Day of Judgment.

21. Pastor Gary said: “God has placed an eternal longing in each of us. There is [an] undeniable, innate knowledge that there is something more than what this world has to offer. There is something more than here and now. ... Buddhists and Hindus are in pursuit of it through reincarnation. Muslims are in pursuit of it through good works and jihad. But anyone can find it through a relationship with Jesus Christ. ... Eternity awaits. Heaven is real. [Eternity in heaven] is our hope. [Eternity in heaven] is our joy. [Eternity in heaven] is our inheritance as followers of Jesus Christ. And anyone can believe and receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior... Heaven is not an inevitable destination. ... Heaven is accessible to anyone, but [not everyone] ends up there. The access is through Jesus Christ and knowing him as your personal Lord and Savior. Life is temporal. Death is inevitable. Judgment is unavoidable. But, eternity is undeniable.”
- a. [Romans 6:23](#) - *“For the wages of sin is death, but **the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**”* (Emphasis added)
  - b. [1 Corinthians 2:9](#) - *“... ‘No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.’ ”*

#### Discussion Questions

1. Read [Ecclesiastes 3](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks about the cultural revolution that happened in America in the 60s and 70s. (See #3 and #4 above)
3. Spend time reading and talking about the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared in the “Time is in God’s hands” section. (See #6 and #7 above)
4. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments and the Scripture references he shared concerning the fact that death is inevitable. (See #8 through #13 above)
5. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s remarks and the Scripture references he shared regarding judgment for sin. (See #14 through #18 above)
6. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s comments concerning the incredible promise Christians have concerning a home in heaven. (See #19 through #21 above)
7. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).