



Links Players

Immortality - Eternal Life: Temporal and Eternal

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.... (1 Peter 1: 4-5, ESV)

Twenty-five years ago, Payne Stewart, Robert Fraley, Van Ardan, and others died in a tragic plane crash. Months before, Payne dramatically won the 1999 US Open, wearing his unmistakable “plus fours” and Tam-O’-Shanter hat, clipping Phil by a shot.

Golfers watched as Payne’s unresponsive Learjet streaked across the skies. We were glued to the television, hoping this US Open Champion and his friends could be rescued.

Not long before these tragic events, I had the opportunity to play with Payne. He was “dressed to the nines.” I’ll never forget the moment for many reasons, but two stand out: he complimented me on my shoes and wore a W.W.J.D bracelet (i.e., What Would Jesus Do?).

To listen to some, all this talk about Payne’s accomplishments in golf and life is a waste of time—all that matters is where anyone, including Payne, goes after their mortal life is over. Should Payne have dropped golf and exclusively pursued “spiritual things,” whatever people mean by that?

Others respond, “Christians are so heavenly minded, they are no earthly good.” Should Payne have kept eternal things at arm’s length and merely focused on the matters at hand, leaving the eternal issues to be decided at death?

In the movie *Gladiator*, Maximus says to his men as they prepare for battle, “What we do in life echoes in eternity.” Of course, he was right, but not because Valhalla (neither the golf course in Kentucky nor the one from Norse mythology) awaits, but because Jesus has prepared a place for those who follow him.

Of course, if we had to choose between temporal and eternal things, then by all means, choose Jesus and an eternal life that is “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.”

However, Scripture does not drive a wedge between the temporal and

the eternal; Christianity teaches us to prioritize Jesus and the eternal in, over, and through the temporal.

After all, eternal life doesn’t begin at death; it begins when God’s life enters a man or woman’s soul. According to Scripture, eternal life is not merely a quantitative thing (living forever) but a qualitative matter (the life of God in the soul).

Furthermore, just because our mortal life is transient doesn’t mean it is worthless—remember, “what we do in life echoes in eternity.”

Jesus once said, “Either you are with me or against me.” He didn’t mean loving him implied neglecting all the wonderful things in our temporal existence. He meant one’s relationship with him, or the lack thereof, determines everything else in this life and the life to come.

Prayer: Jesus, invade my heart with the life of God now and increasingly so “world without end.”

READING: 1 Peter 1:3-9; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

1. Think of those rounds that you were over par early in the round (seen things) and how you envisioned “going low” over the last twelve holes (unseen things). Did “seeing the unseen” inform and shape your attitude and posture? If so, how?

2. After reading both texts, notice and discuss how Peter and Paul use the reality of the future to shape and inform the present. Discuss.

3. Application: According to Scripture, doing “spiritual things” means going about one’s temporal life being led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Discuss.
