

Eternity in Our Hearts

We read in the first chapter of the Bible that “**God created man in his own image**” (Genesis 1:27). A man and a woman were created in the image of God as eternal beings. In their perfect sinless state Adam and Eve could look forward to a never-ending fellowship with God. But sadly, when they fell into sin their relationship with God was severely damaged. The image of God in them was marred and tarnished but not totally lost. Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden and life became difficult. Their eternity with God had been compromised.

Solomon, in his reflections on the meaning of our lives, wrote these mysterious words: “**He [God] has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end**” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Set eternity in our hearts? What does this mean? Is this part of the image of God in us? What is it about that enigmatic word “**eternity**” that captivates our imagination?

Made a New Creation

Do you know the story of Arthur Stace? Sydney newspapers referred to him as ‘Mr Eternity’. Brought up in sordid poverty, neglect and crime, Arthur Stace was off to a very bad start in life. Small in stature he later served in France in World War I and returned shell-shocked, partially blinded in one eye and suffering the effects of poison gas. Between WWI and the Depression Arthur lived as a bum and drinker of methylated spirits. If anyone was a real no-hoper it was Arthur Stace.

In 1930 he attended a church men’s meeting simply to get something to eat. He heard the Gospel and experienced a dramatic conversion. Immediately he walked away from a life of alcoholism. Arthur had become “**a new creation**” (2 Corinthians 5:17) in Christ!

Echoes of Eternity

Several months later Arthur Stace heard the Reverend John Ridley speak on “*The Echoes of Eternity*”. He began with this text: “**For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones”** (Isaiah 57:15 KJV). His sermon reached a crescendo when he suddenly looked away from his notes and cried out “*Eternity Eternity I wish that I could sound or shout that word to everyone in the streets of Sydney. You’ve got to meet it, where will you spend Eternity?*”



A One-Word Sermon

At that moment, as Arthur Stace later shared, “*Eternity went ringing through my brain and suddenly I began crying and felt a powerful call from the Lord to write Eternity.*” Wasting no time, Arthur went outside after the service and with a piece of chalk wrote the word Eternity on the pavement. Miraculously it came out smoothly in beautiful copperplate! Arthur, who found it hard to write his own name said, “*I couldn’t understand it and I still can’t*”.



For the next 37 years Arthur Stace rose before dawn to pray at home and then secretly go out to write Eternity on the streets of Sydney. It is estimated that he wrote it over 500,000 times!

Thirty-three years after his death, 70 years after he started writing Eternity on the streets of Sydney, that

one-word sermon was seen globally on TV by an estimated 4 billion people. On New Year’s Eve at the start of the new millennium it was displayed in lights in that beautiful copperplate in 15 metre high letters on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Eternity was shouted from the streets of Sydney to the whole world! Indeed, God makes everything beautiful in its time!

The Bible says that “**we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do**” (Ephesians 2:10). Clearly, God who dwells in eternity had prepared in advance an amazing work for Arthur to do. And this is true for all who are new creations in Christ.

Hints of Eternity

The Bible devotes much less space describing eternity than it does convincing people that eternal life is available as a free gift from God. Most of the brief descriptions of eternity would be more accurately called hints. Very briefly, here are three -

- we will be like Jesus (1 John 3:2)
- we will have new bodies (1 Cor 15:45)
- we will live on a new earth (2 Peter 3:13)

During our earthly days, we who have become new creations in Christ, are “**being transformed into His**

likeness with ever increasing glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Because Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15), this means that the damaged image of God in each of us is gradually being restored by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. But the most wonderful news is that, in eternity, the image of God in each of us will be fully restored. When we see Jesus face to face in eternity "we shall be like Him for we will see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Hallelujah!

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You that you set eternity in our hearts and that You want us to spend all eternity with You in Heaven where there will be no more death, sorrow or pain. Thank You that we can look forward to eternal life because Jesus has promised it to all who believe in Him. Although so many of the details of eternity are unknown, we need not fear because Jesus is preparing a place for us and we will spend eternity with Him. Thank You that in eternity You give us a transformed, eternal body suited to our new eternal life. Though we don't know as much as we would like, it is enough to know that eternity with You will be more wonderful than we could ever imagine. As we look forward to eternity we know the best is yet to come. In the Name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

About 'Image of God' Leaflets

In the Bible we read that God "*created man in His own image*" (Genesis 1:27). Many maintain that all human history revolves around this truth. The Judeo-Christian belief in the unique dignity of human beings is at the very foundation of Western civilisation.

The 2010 Canberra Declaration therefore states:

"We believe that all human life, being made in the image of God, has intrinsic and equal value from conception to life's natural end."

'Image of God' leaflets relate the doctrine of man as created in the image of God to various issues we face in Australia today.

The 21 leaflets in SERIES ONE are dedicated to Sophie Scholl who was martyred at the age of 21 in World War II for writing and distributing leaflets.

You can download other 'Image of God' leaflets at the Canberra Declaration website.

Please:

READ & SIGN

The Canberra Declaration
to Protect

- *Religious Freedom*
- *Marriage and Family and*
- *Human Life*
in Australia

Website: www.canberradeclaration.org.au

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Leaflet 15

Eternity



and the
**Image of
God**