

Looking Forward to Heaven
2 Corinthians 5:1-8
April 19, 2015

Introduction

We have been studying about the glories of heaven, and how wonderful a place that God has prepared for us. I want us to get back to earth a little bit and remind all of us that this world that we live in is not our home. The Bible says that we are aliens and strangers in this world and that our citizenship is in heaven.

***1 Peter 2:11** Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.*

***Philippians 3:20** But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,*

This world is not our home. We are strangers. We are here only for a brief stay. Our permanent home is in heaven. It is a place where we long for.

***Hebrews 13:14** For here we do not have a lasting city, but we are seeking the city which is to come.*

As Christians, we are to be more preoccupied with heavenly things. Sadly, many people in church are preoccupied with the things of this world. They are focused on trying to make heaven on earth. That never ends well. We try to change government policies to be more Christian. We try to extend our lives so we can live longer and experience as much as we can what this world has to offer. I heard one guy say that he hopes God will not take him home until he finishes the entire Star Wars movies that is coming up. This is truly a tragic attitude of a Christian.

***Matthew 6:19-21** Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

***1 John 2:15-17** Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. **17** The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

Heaven and earth can never coexist in this present age. If I asked people today if they would like to go to heaven today, many would say yes; however, I have a suspicion that many are afraid of death because they want more of what this life has to offer.

If this is the case, if we are not facing death with joy and anticipation, then we are idolizing the world. We have come to settle for the incomplete, fading joy. We have learned to be content with our own sinfulness. We are overestimating our earthly relationships. To wish to avoid death is disloyalty to God.

Death is inevitable. We die by accidents. We die by diseases. We die because of old age. We might even die because of some criminal action. We think of death as an unsympathetic landlord giving us an eviction notice. We sometimes think that death will make us homeless. Because of this,

sometimes we go through hysterical extremes to avoid death at all cost. This is not the reality that Scripture portrays for us.

Paul experienced much suffering as a Christian. We can say that suffering was a dominant feature of his life. Paul faced death everyday and he welcomed death as a friend. Remember, he said in **1 Corinthians 15** that death has lost its sting when it comes for Christians (**15:55**). He knew with joyous anticipation that he would see the Lord face-to-face. He longed to be with the Lord. This should be our attitude.

2 Corinthians 5:1-8

1 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling,

3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked.

4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

- For we know
 - Reality because God tells us
 - He had already told them about the resurrection of the body in **1 Corinthians 15**
- For we know that if
 - Why if? Why not when?
 - He is talking about the rapture

1 Corinthians 15:51-54 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. **53** For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. **54** So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. **16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

- If you are raptured before you die! Great! Awesome!
- But if we die before the rapture—still good news!
- Earthly tent into building
 - Earthly tent = body
 - Interesting that Paul uses this imagery—he is a tentmaker!
 - Tents are temporary, insecure and inferior
 - Perfect imagery for us—we are strangers and aliens of this world
 - We are traveling through this world temporarily to get to our true home
 - Destroyed = death
 - Torn down, dismantled
 - Building from God
 - Permanent, foundation, secure
 - Glorified body—replacing the tent

2 Corinthians 4:14 because we know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in His presence.

- Not built by human hands
 - Not of this creation
 - Give me a body that is heavenly—God-made
 - Give me a body that is eternal, fit for heaven
- Groaning and longing
 - We want to be in heaven—it is a longing
 - Paul is saying that he is tired of this tent that is falling apart—he longs for the building

Romans 8:18-23 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. **19** The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. **20** For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope **21** that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. **22** We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. **23** Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Romans 7:24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

- What is mortal will be swallowed up by life
 - Life = eternal life
 - What Paul was not seeking was a release from his present body
 - But what Paul was seeking was a glorified body—new body fit for heaven
 - Naked—without the glorified body

5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

- Purpose of God
 - What is God's purpose?

Romans 8:28-30 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. **29** For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. **30** And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.

- He predestined some to be made like Christ Jesus!
- Glorified = glorification = we will receive our redeemed body like Christ!
- Holy Spirit as a deposit
 - What God has started He will finish

Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

- Every believer God starts, He will finish—tremendous truth!
- Every believer has the Holy Spirit and He is the guarantee that we will get to glory!

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 *Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, **22** set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.*

Ephesians 1:13-14 *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, **14** who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory.*

- If we lost our salvation—God's glory would be diminished!
- Why? Because it would imply that God could not complete His purpose
- It is His purpose to rescue His own possession so we can forever testify of His glory

6 *Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.*

7 *We live by faith, not by sight.*

8 *We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*

- Home in body away from the Lord
 - We are here on earth in the body we are away from the Lord—we can't see Him
- We live and serve an invisible God
 - We have faith because God's word tells us
 - God's word tells us that heaven is a better place—we believe what He says
 - When we believe what He says, then we'd rather be in heaven than here
- We long to be at home with the Lord
 - We are homesick for heaven

Coram Deo

Do you long to be with the Lord? Do you face death with confidence and eager anticipation?

Psalms 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints.