

EVANGEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (PCA)

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Sunday Worship 8:30 AM and 11:00 AM

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Life on the Other Side

"He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken;" Isaiah 25:8. This truth is restated several times in the book of Revelation. "And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain..." Revelation 21:4.

Having just finished a series of sermons through the book of Isaiah it is reasonable that Heaven is on my mind. Isaiah 60-66 has a great deal to say about the eternal state.

The apostle Paul was excited about the prospect of leaving this life and being with the Lord in Heaven; II Corinthians 5:8. He said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain;" Philippians 1:21. He went on to say: "I am torn between the two; I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body;" Philippians 1:23-24.

A strong desire to live is normal. In fact, its a rare exception for anyone who has good health and is engaged in productive, satisfying pursuits to view death as desirable. Yet here he declared that, "To die is gain." How could he say that? No doubt his suffering and trials made him feel that way at times. He, no doubt, longed to be released from the persecution and hardship he was enduring, but Paul was not an escapist. He was willing to endure anything in his service for Christ. The reason for his attitude is stated in verse 23. He desired, "To depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

The reason Paul could look forward with such anticipation to Heaven was that he lived for Christ on earth. He was able to say and really mean it, "For me to live is Christ."

Its not the way for most people. Some live to eat; others for selfish satisfaction. For them to live is pleasure. For others to live is wealth; but Paul's consuming passion and love, and the thing which occupied his time and directed his energies, was Christ. It is to the extent that we love and serve the Lord Jesus here and now that we can anticipate the prospect of seeing Him and being with Him in Heaven.

Heaven is a glorious place. Paul wrote: "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us;" Romans 8:18. And writing to the Christians in the city of Corinth he could say: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal;" II Corinthians 4:17-18.

The Bible paints a magnificent picture of Heaven. It is a truly desirable place. Jesus had His home with His Father in mind as He neared the cross. "Now glorify thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was;" John 17:5. He had said shortly before this: "In my Father's house are many dwelling places...I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am there you may be also;" John 14:2-3.

C.S. Lewis wrote: "At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendors we see; but all of the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Someday, God willing we shall get in."

Jesus said to the unbelieving Jews: "In spite of the works I do, you do not believe. You do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them and they shall never perish;" John 10:25-28.