

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Wed. Eve. Bible Study - 5/25/16

Growing In The Christian Life

Looking Forward

Scripture Portion: 2 Corinthians 5: 1 - 10

Awaiting the New Body

¹For 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 instead with our heavenly dwelling,³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. ⁶Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

The prospect of the unbeliever is a very solemn one. The same inspired Word which assures us of the blessed future which is in store for the Christian warns us of the fearful and terrible destiny awaiting the unbelieving soul. The same loving Lord Jesus who comforts our hearts with the promise of the Father's house (John 14: 1-3), speaks in unmistakably clear language about the peril of dying in an impenitent state (John 8: 21 and 24), and of spending eternity in Hell (Matthew 5: 22 and 29-30; 10: 28; 18: 9; 23: 15 and 33; Mark 9: 43, 45 and 47; Luke 12: 5). What a solemn prospect! But, thank God, no one need have such a prospect, for *the Christian goes right on!*

What is the Christian's prospect? While we are on the earth we shall continually be surrounded by *sin*, we shall experience our share of trial and *suffering*, and if the Lord does not come in our lifetime we shall pass through the vale of *death*. But even with regard to these things the prospect of the Christian is glorious. Our blessed Savior has conquered sin, and through Him we may be more than conquerors (Romans 8: 37), He has promised us the all-sufficiency of His grace in every time of testing and suffering (2 Corinthians 12: 9), and He has robbed death of its sting and the grave of its terrors (1 Corinthians 15: 54-57). So the Christian's prospect even in this life is glorious - but, thank God, *the Christian goes right on!* What does the Word of God say about our prospects concerning the life to come?

1. The Christian looks forward to the RETURN of the Lord Jesus Christ

This is the supreme hope (expectation) of the believer, the one event above all others of which he is sure and which he anticipates and expects. The hope of the Christian is not death; we hope to go without dying (1 Corinthians 15: 51; 1 Thessalonians 4: 17). The Christian's hope is not Heaven, although it is certain and wonderful that Heaven is our home (John 14: 1-3); and the hope of the Christian is certainly not in any earthly government, in the immediate ending of wars, or the bringing in of better living conditions. The hope of the Christian is the personal, bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a *sure* hope (John 14: 1-3); a *confirmed* hope (Acts 1: 9-11); a *comforting* hope (1 Thessalonians 4: 18); a *purifying* hope (1 John 3: 3); and a *blessed* hope (Titus 2: 13).

2. The Christian looks forward to the RAPTURE of all who are Christ's at His coming

When He returns, two wonderful things will immediately take place:-

- **"The dead in Christ shall rise..."** (1 Thessalonians 4: 16). All who are His will be raised (1 Corinthians 15:23 and 52).
- **"We who are still alive...shall be caught up...changed..."** (1 Thessalonians 4: 17; 1 Corinthians 15:51). Every Christian who is alive on the earth when the Lord comes will be instantly "changed" - that is, he will receive a new body.

Yes, we shall have new bodies (1 Corinthians 15: 35-39), like His glorious body (Philippians 3: 21); we shall no longer be limited and confined to a weak, frail body, but we shall have new bodies - and it is to this that we look forward with holy anticipation (Romans 8: 23).

3. The Christian looks forward to REUNION with and recognition of loved ones

Before long we shall see our loved ones whom we have "loved and lost awhile" and who died "in Christ". When we see them we shall recognize them - of course! The Word of God *implies* this (1 Corinthians 13: 12); the parable of Luke 16 *confirms* it; the Transfiguration scene *illustrates* it (Luke 9: 27-36); the Return of Christ *ensures* it (1 Thessalonians 4: 17); and the Resurrection of Christ *guarantees* it (1 Corinthians 15: 20; Philippians 3: 21) - so comfort your heart with this blessed thought (1 Thessalonians 4: 18).

4. The Christian looks forward to a future of unclouded REJOICING

Now we experience sorrow, disappointment, tears, separation, sickness and death - *but the best is yet to be!* There will be no pain nor trials in Heaven - look up Revelation 21: 4! But the apostle Paul speaks of a special cause of rejoicing in "that day" - **look up 2 Corinthians 1: 14 and 1 Thessalonians 2: 19**. He is saying that one reason for special joy will be to find those in the presence of the Lord who have been won to Him through our life and testimony.

5. The Christian looks forward to receiving a REWARD for Christ-like living and for faithful service

If we live carefully (Ephesians 5: 15), and seek to be faithful in all the service we engage in for the Lord (Matthew 25: 21), we shall hear His "Well done!" and we shall receive His reward. In this connection look up Matthew 12: 36; Romans 14: 12; 1 Corinthians 3: 13-14; 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5: 10. Rewards are spoken of under the figure of crowns, and these will be given for: (1) living a disciplined life (1 Corinthians 9: 25); (2) enduring trials (James 1: 12); (3)

winning souls (1 Thessalonians 2: 19-20); (4) shepherding the flock (1 Peter 5: 2-4); and (5) loving His appearing (2 Timothy 4: 8). So there are many ways in which we can qualify for a full reward (2 John 8).

6. The Christian looks forward to accepting new RESPONSIBILITIES

We shall serve Him throughout the whole of eternity (Revelation 22:3), and the fidelity with which we serve Him *down here* will determine the sphere and extent of our service *up there*- look up Luke 19: 17! What an incentive this should be to holy and consistent living and prayerful, zealous service!

7. The Christian looks forward to seeing and being with the Lord Jesus Christ in His final and glorious REIGN and Triumph

We shall be with Him during the 1,000 years of His earthly kingdom (Revelation 20: 1-6), and when He is King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19: 16), how our hearts will rejoice! Now our dear Lord is rejected and spurned by the many, but in that day all will recognize that He is LORD (Philippians 2: 10-11). Yes, we look forward to the Crowning Day which is surely coming - for the Christian goes right on!