

Reflections

Everybody Talks
About Heaven
But...

2-28-10



Reflections

Home! After a long vacation journey it's always great to be back home. The journey was, to be sure, eventful and full of experiences that would frame memories that carry us back from time to time in our thoughts to sights, sounds, and special places we visited while travelling, but still, as little Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz said "there's no place like home"! For the Christian, home means not only an earthly place but a heavenly one as well. Jesus has promised us eternal life and, as He told His disciples, an eternal abode with Him in Heaven. *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.² In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.* (John 14:1-3 KJV)

The writer of Hebrews tells us that the men and women of faith who have gone before us and now comprise a great cloud of witnesses to God's truth, considered themselves citizens of another world. ...These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and **confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.** ¹⁴ **For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland.** ¹⁵ And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ **But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.** Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:13-16 NKJ)

Paul tells the Corinthian Church that...For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

(2Cor. 5:1 NKJ) Paul further explains ...So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.⁷ For we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. ⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. (2 Corinthians 5:6-9 NKJ)

So, if Heaven is our true home, why are we so fearful to go there? It does seem to be true that we all talk of Heaven, but we are not very anxious to go there. In part the spark of life that God has given us is a powerful gift that is not easily parted with. He has programmed a survival desire that serves us well when we are sick and struggle to get well, or in danger and fighting to survive. Jesus, however, was not held by fear of death when He died for our sin. He willingly gave up His life and then took it up again that, we too, might have eternal life with Him and the assurance of a heavenly home.

Again we turn to Hebrews to appreciate what His sacrifice provided for us. ...Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death **He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,** ¹⁵ **and release those who through fear of death** were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Hebrews 2:14-15 NKJ) When we recognize that it is appointed for each of us to die and after that the judgement, we often forget that in Jesus we have already been judged as purified by faith in Him. We, can therefore, look at death as something not to be feared but, putting it into God's perspective, it is merely our door to Heaven's glory, our home!

Our grief at someone's passing can be mitigated with the joy that comes from knowing that they walked with the Lord and have entered His presence. Our loss is real and our grief is real, but so is the assurance of our eternal life in Him. When we face death, we can do so knowing that the grace of God who has removed death's sting, will carry us into His presence in Christ to be with Him eternally. We will be home at last!

Heaven is indeed real, but so is Hell. While Heaven is our promised dwelling if we have accepted Jesus as our Savior, Hell is also promised for those who have rejected Him. Let's accept therefore the assurance of salvation, and Heaven, by receiving, by faith, the redemption purchased by Jesus. Then we can truly say..."O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:55-57 NKJ) **Pastor Doug**