

From The Pulpit Of



Our Heavenly Home

No. 13
Series: 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 5:1-10

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Text

5 For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, ³ if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

⁶ So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸ Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

Introduction

Some people say that it's harder today than it once was to communicate the Christian message with non-Christians. The culture has shifted. Biblical language is foreign. We have to define our terms. The non-Christian doesn't even think in the same categories.

There may be something to these points. We may have to work a little harder to bridge the gap.

But I don't think it should be that intimidating. I don't think it's too difficult. Concepts like human dignity and equality, the virtue of love and compassion, the duty to work for freedom and progress are still the air we breathe in Western culture and they do not come from anywhere else besides Christianity.¹ And the questions the Bible is dealing with are still the fundamental human issues, no matter what culture you're in.

For example, there is one enormous, inescapable issue that all human beings everywhere inevitably faces and that haunts them every moment of their lives, something universal and monumental, something to which the Bible gives a very clear and compelling answer, something that gives you an immediate connection and right to be heard with anybody. And that shared point of contact is – everybody dies. The mortality rate remains at 100%.

Rich people die, poor people die. Educated people die, uneducated people die. Famous people die, obscure people die. Old people die, young people die. African, Asian, American. Pretty and ugly. Healthy and sick. People on the news that you don't know, like the nearly 2,000 swept away in floods in Nepal this week. People that you do

have a relationship with like that co-worker that you saw on a Friday and who got killed over the weekend. Or that loved one that you would love to be able to talk to, but you can't because he or she is not there anymore. Gone. Dead.

Everybody dies, including you. You are dying. It may not feel like it right now. Our church skews young. People in their 20s and 30s think death is far, far off. But it's coming, faster than you think. Last week Paul described this phenomenon spot on – “our outer self is wasting away.” If you don't resonate, just wait, a little while. This week Dolly Parton died. Look at pictures of her in the 1960s and 70s and then compare to pictures in recent years. That's happening to you. Look at pictures of you 10 years ago versus today. You're changing. No matter what you do. Dolly Parton had a net worth of \$450 million, but it couldn't buy her immortality. Wasting away, all of us.

Jerry shared a *NY Times* article with several of us from last week about a man named Bryan Johnson whose personal slogan is – “Don't Die.” He has called himself “the healthiest person on the planet.” Strict diet, supplements, plasma transfusions, constant measurements. “His goal is to make it possible to live forever.” But this summer “he announced that he had developed autoimmune gastritis, a condition in which the body attacks certain cells in the stomach [leading] to iron and vitamin B-12 deficiencies, which are associated with brain fog, hair loss, brittle nails, neurological complications and an elevated risk of stomach cancer.”² Try as we may, we're still outwardly wasting away.

And we try. Boy do we try everything we can to stay the effects of aging. We don't want to die. But we still do. All of us.

Your parents have died or are dying. You are getting older (can you feel it?). Kids: don't think that you cannot die for what seems like forever. I wouldn't want to unnecessarily scare you, but even little kids die. You can get sick. You can have an accident. You must be ready for death by trusting in Jesus.

Death is the great equalizer. It is a universal reality that everyone is facing. And so here's the most obvious in for gospel conversations with anyone. The Bible has something to offer, not just another self-help suggestion for trying to evade death and extend life. We have a sure solution to the problem of death. Death is a reminder of sin. We've all sinned. But Jesus died in the place of sinners. And he rose again from the dead. And he promises to all those who will repent of their sin and put their trust in him as their Savior, that they too will have eternal and glorious life away from sin and all its effects.

The passage of Scripture we're looking at today from 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 is all about this stuff. In short, what we're going to see today is just this: **this life is not all there is. This life is not all there is.** There is the ultimate state – resurrected bodies at the end of the age. There is the intermediate state – souls continuing on after death, before the resurrection. And these realities have a profound impact on our present state. **This life is not all there is.** There is the ultimate state, the intermediate state, and these truths profoundly affect the present state.

Let's pray...

The Ultimate State (vv. 1-5)

Now's the time to have your copy of the text open in front of you because I'm just going to be going through it.

2 Corinthians 5, vv. 1-5 are talking about the ultimate state – what Christians can look forward to finally at the end of history that will go on for all eternity. It is hard to fully fathom, but we must try. If we know that we have an ultimate state awaiting us that will go on for ages upon ages, then this life, even if it lasts for 120 years, is just “a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes” (James 4:14). That's how the Bible describes it. Poof! It's gone.

But if we have an ultimate state in which we will endure in unending, unfading glory, well then that changes everything! That gives us hope. That allows us to say with Paul what he said in the previous passage that we looked at last week that whatever hard things we are dealing with right now (and this life is full of many sufferings; there's no way around it), they are but “light [and] momentary affliction[s]” compared to that “eternal weight of glory” (4:17). We can keep going and not lose heart, even when our physical heart won't keep going, even when our flesh and bones are wasting away, if we know that **this life is not all there is**, if there is an ultimate state that awaits.

And we do know this. Look at v. 1 – “For we know...” This is a strong assertion with strong assurance. Paul is not conjecturing. He is not wishing. He is not speculating. He is confident. We know! How can he be so sure of what he's about to say? Keep in mind that Paul once hated Christianity, thought it was a destructive falsehood that needed to be stamped out. But then he met the resurrected Jesus Christ, in-person, an eye-witness (along with others) of his blinding, dazzling, glory, Savior of Sinners and Defeater of Death.

For non-Christians this life is all they know. The afterlife is a complete unknown. And that's terrifying. They'd rather not think about it. It's anxiety inducing. But because of the fact of the resurrection of Jesus, we *know* “that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God.” Remember: Paul learned a trade to put food on the table for times when financial support wasn't coming in. It's great when Christian leaders can be fully supported, but it doesn't always work out like that. I was talking with an amazing pastor this week who leaves the house every morning at 5:00 AM to drive a school bus to supplement his salary so he can keep doing ministry. That's the kinds of things you'll do to be able to keep preaching the gospel when you know how good of news it really is. Well, what was Paul's gig? Tentmaking (see Acts 18:3). So Paul is well acquainted with tents.

What are tents? They are portable shelters from the elements that could be easily put up and then taken down and moved. They are better than nothing. That's why you see throughout our city little tent settlements for otherwise unhoused people. They will keep out some rain and keep in some heat. But they are not permanent dwellings. Tents are temporary.

On Friday our family went camping at Bullfrog Lake to celebrate Mary's 18th birthday (ever been there? it's just down 55 about 30 minutes from here). She invited 6 friends and we didn't do a tent site this time, although we enjoy tent camping. We were just there for about 17 hours. So we got 2 cabins – permanent structures with concrete floors and shingled roofs and doors and windows that can close. And they were nice. Tents leak easier. Tents easily get cuts or tears. Over time the material loses its

waterproofing. It can be fun, but it's always nice when tent camping is over to get back to your house.

What an apt metaphor for the present, fallen human body which houses our souls. This body is temporary. It's tenuous. It's falling apart. These bodies are flimsy and fragile (remember the earlier illustration of jars of clay?). This life on this earth is not our permanent home. We're just camping. We're passing through. And the tent will one day wear out and be thrown away, put in a landfill. But if our tent is taken down and disposed of, we have a building from God. A permanent, solid, structure; an enduring abode.

What is Paul referring to here? Look up quickly at 4:14. In this context, Paul is thinking about the resurrection body. Just like Jesus' body was destroyed, but then on the third day was raised immortal, so will we who belong to him be. We're getting an upgrade! We're going from a tent to a house, from a body that is wasting away, to a glorified body that cannot be destroyed, like the little pig that had a house made of bricks (not straw or sticks) in the children's tale.

Jesus told us something very similar to what Paul is saying here. You can find it in John 14. He said, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (Jn. 14:1-3).

"[A] house not made with hands." That means it's not our doing. We're not talking about human endeavors like cryogenics or Bryan Johnson's biohacking. This is something that Jesus is preparing for us right now and we will most surely receive when he comes again.

"[A] house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It is a stable, perpetual home. Israel lived in tents during their wilderness wanderings. The center of the camp was a tent for God, called the Tabernacle. Eventually in the Promised Land that Tabernacle was replaced with a permanent Temple. But even that Temple was destroyed. It was made with human hands (Acts 7:48). But Jesus used the metaphor to talk about his own body – "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands (Mk. 14:58; compare with Jn. 2:21). His resurrection body was supernatural, and thus indestructible. And we will be made like him. As Paul says elsewhere – "[O]ur citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself" (Ph. 3:20-21).

I love the way Philip Hughes sums up v. 1 –

[Paul] rejoices in the certainty that the frailty, the limitations, and the gravitational pull of sin associated with his present bodily experience will hereafter become entirely a thing of the past. The believer, accordingly, entertains the certain hope of an incomparably better life beyond the grave, in contrast to the unbeliever whose values are all of this world, and for whom consequently death is the personification of uncertainty and the inexorable frustration of all for which he has lived.³

This is so good to know, “for,” v. 2 goes on, “in this tent we groan.” Have you ever groaned? Groaned when bending down to pick something up and your muscles are stiff? Or groaned for other reasons – groaned at your own residual sin, groaned at other people’s sins that affects more than just them, groaned with creation at the decay on display everywhere (cf. Rom. 8:22).

Life in this body in this world is full of groans that make us yearn for our ultimate state, our ultimate home. The groans are audible longings for getting out of this tent and into something sturdy. Paul mixes metaphors here and instead of just talking about tents vs. buildings, he introduces the similar concept of clothes. “For in this tent we groan, longing to put on our heavenly dwelling, if indeed by putting it on we may not be found naked.”

In this context, using this metaphor of clothing, what does “naked” refer to? It means not having any clothes, not the old clothes *or* the new clothes. Which means not having any shelter, not the tent *or* the building. In other words, it means death, where the soul is extracted from the body, but hasn’t yet been given the resurrected body. Death is when we’ve been unclothed of this body but not yet clothed with immortality; where we’ve vacated this tent, but haven’t yet moved in to the heavenly mansion.

Verse 4 – “For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened – not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.” Death is not a fun process. As one person has put it – “Death, although no longer feared, is still repulsive to the Christian; it is still a disruptive event; it is still the reminder that he has not yet come to that [ultimate state] where there will be no more death [cf. Rev. 21:4].”⁴ Dying is full of groans and gasps. It’s painful, ignoble.

We have modern ways of trying to disguise its disgustingness. But it’s still unpleasant. Paul didn’t have glasses. He didn’t have hearing aids. He didn’t have ibuprofen. He didn’t have a motorized cart. He was starting to feel it more. He was groaning as death approached. Death is not a part of life. Death is unnatural. The rending of body and soul is not the way it was supposed to be for human beings before sin entered the world. And so Paul would prefer to not have to go through that.

What’s he saying here? What he’s saying is that his first choice would be for Christ to come back while he’s still alive. He doesn’t want to be unclothed, but rather *further* clothed, over clothed. He doesn’t want to have to get naked; he’d prefer if he could just have new clothes put on over his current ones. That’s what it will be like for those who are alive at Christ’s return. They won’t die, they will just be transformed in the moment into their glorified state. This is what we should all long for – the return of Christ and entering right in to the ultimate state.

Augustine in the 400s put it this way – “We are burdened with this corruptible body; but knowing that the cause of this burdensomeness is not the nature and substance of the body, but its corruption, we do not desire to be deprived of the body, but to be clothed with its immortality.”⁵ What Christianity offers and holds out as the greatest promise is definitely not just blessings in this earthly life, which is a mist that appears and vanishes. But it’s also not just dying and having your soul or spirit go to some ethereal happy place. It’s to be fitted for a new heavens and a new earth where you can run on the sandy shores and never get plantar fasciitis. Where you can eat the richest of foods and never get diabetes. Where you can be in your body, but have no aches and pains, no

frustrations. But it's not self-indulgence with no consequence, it's full-bodied enjoyment of God, with others, living all-out in love and joy.

"He who has prepared us for this very thing is God." "He has put eternity into man's heart" (Eccl. 3:11). He has promised eternal life "before the ages began" (Tit. 1:2). He made us with a longing to live forever. And then when he regenerated us he put in us a desire to live forever with him, to behold his glory in a glorified body. That desire is a proof of your salvation. Paul says God "has given us the Spirit as a guarantee." Remember all that we've seen in 2 Corinthians about the New Covenant, the era of the Spirit? We Christians have the Holy Spirit living with us in this tent, causing us to see the unseen, to behold the glory of God in the face of Christ even though we do not yet see him face-to-face. And the presence of the Holy Spirit is described as a deposit guaranteeing our full redemption to come.

This life is not all there is. There is an ultimate state coming. We know it. We have the down payment, the surety. We groan, but they are not hopeless groans, but groans of expectation, anticipation. Oh to be raised with Christ and live with him forever! It will fulfill all of our deepest longings. Do you long to be in this ultimate state? Do you dream of the return of Christ and the resurrection body where you will be with the Lord fully and forever? Do you think about that much? Or are you just focused on this life?

The Intermediate State (vv. 6-8)

The ultimate state is Paul's ultimate desire. But even if he does have to die (which, it turns out he did), he believes in an intermediate state that will still be great. And so therefore he can say that even in the midst of all the groanings that come with life in this tent that's falling apart, the death groans that long for a permanent home – our resurrected bodies in a new creation – he and those who share his same faith "are always of good courage."

Verse 6 – "So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight." This ties in to what he said at the end of ch. 4 about looking "not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." In this falling apart body on this fallen planet, we have the Holy Spirit and so we have faith, a faith that sustains us, that keeps us going. But faith is not sight. We long for sight. We long to be with the Lord. That longing is ultimately fulfilled in the ultimate state.

But notice what Paul is saying here in vv. 6-8. He's saying that there is an intermediate state. And Paul prefers that too. First preference – be alive at the Second Coming and avoid being unclothed, but rather just be further clothed and immediately ushered into the ultimate state. But if that isn't in God's plan, then his second preference is to die, because he knows that death will usher at least his soul into a state of intimacy with the Lord that is even better than what he experiences here by faith in the power of the Spirit.

Notice what he says in v. 8 – "Yes, we are of good courage [though outwardly wasting away and headed toward death], and we would rather be away from the body [that is die] and at home with the Lord." Paul prefers death to life in this world because death brings him into an even higher state of enjoyment of the Lord's presence. It's not

the ultimate state, but it is an intermediate state that is great. The old King James translation puts it this way – “to be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord.”

It’s not ideal, but the Bible does teach that the soul can be unfused from the body for a while. And the soul can retain a consciousness and be in God’s presence. The disembodied soul is still longing for ultimate state, for the return of Christ to make all things right and reunite body and soul. That’s why in Revelation 6:9 we see “the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne” “under the altar” in God’s presence, but they are crying “out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood?’” Souls go on after bodies die. They are longing for something more – the return of Christ. But they are still at rest in God’s glorious presence. And for Paul, that was still better by far.

We see Paul’s calculus clearly in Philippians 1 where he says, “For to me... to die is gain.... My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better” (Ph. 1:21, 23). If Paul couldn’t be alive at the return of Christ and translated right into glory, he was happy to die and have his soul go be with Christ.

*Vital spark of heavenly flame!
Quit, oh quit this mortal frame:
Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying,
Oh the pain, the bliss of dying!
Cease, fond nature, cease thy strife,
And let me languish into life.⁶*

Paul clearly believed in an intermediate state. His first choice was still the ultimate state, but this was a great second choice. He would happily take the intermediate state. To die was gain.

If Jesus is the foundation of our hope and just as he was raised so too will we be raised, Jesus’ pattern also gives us reason to believe in an intermediate state. What happened to Jesus after his earthly tent was destroyed on Friday, before his heavenly body rose on Sunday? Did he cease to exist? No. The Bible says that “he gave up his spirit” (Jn. 19:30). His last words were – “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (Lk. 23:46)! So his body was lifeless, devoid of the animating soul. But that soul was with his Father, awaiting reunion with the body in a glorified state. Which is why he could say to the criminal who was crucified next to him who repented and believed in Jesus while he was dying – “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise” (Lk. 23:43).

Christians have always held to both of these comforting realities – the ultimate state (the resurrection of the body) and the intermediate state (the immortality of the soul). Paul held to it. Remember: Paul, before he was a Christian, presided over the execution of Stephen. He watched that godly man groan under the pains of pelting stones and heard him say with his final breaths – “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59). More verses could be marshalled in support of this doctrine of an intermediate state (e.g., 1 Thess. 4:14). “There is, of course, no question of death separating the believer from Christ, but only the soul from the body; for nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39).”⁷

You need to know these things, get them squarely in your mind. **This life is not all there is.** There is the ultimate state. And there is the intermediate state. And so you can be of good courage even as you are facing physical death. Are you afraid of death? Are you ignoring it? Or are you confident in Christ and longing for him more than anything else this world has to offer?

The Present State (vv. 9-10)

But now let's talk about the present state. How does a solid understanding of the ultimate state and the intermediate state affect the way we live in this present state? That's what vv. 9 and 10 are about.

Paul says, "So whether we are at home or away..." I'm not sure which is which here, because he's used these descriptors in different ways in the preceding verses. "At home" could mean at home in this body (v. 6) or at home with the Lord (v. 8). "Away" could mean away from the Lord (v. 6) or away from the body (v. 8). But either way, the point is the same. Paul is saying whether we are dead or alive, alive or dead "we make it our aim to please him." "Paul does not say how we 'please the Lord' while 'at home with' him. Perhaps this is stated for rhetorical reasons," suggests one commentator, "to preserve the symmetry begun in v. 6. But we are in no doubt how to please him while we are away from him, that is, in the present mode of being."⁸

If you love Jesus because he first loved you, he mercifully died for your sins, rose to give you the hope of eternal life, gave you the Holy Spirit as a down payment, has initiated a relationship of epic significance (a reconciled relationship with your Maker!) and you long to be with him in life after death and life after life after death... then in this life you will want nothing else than to please him, right? This is how we should live this life.

We should not live to please ourselves. *What do I want to do? I want to try this experience. I want to visit this place. I want to get this luxury.* That's how the unbeliever lives. But we know that **this life is not all there is.** So we're not living for ourselves. And the Christian hope of heaven is not just a consolation after we've sucked as much as we can for ourselves from this world, then we get to go on living for ourselves in another. No. It's about being with the Lord. He's our treasure, our everything. And so that profoundly affects how we live in this life.

We live in this body so as to please the Lord. Not to please ourselves. How much of your life is living to please yourself? And also, we should live not to please other people. How much of your life is occupied by people pleasing, trying to make others happy, which is really just another way of living to please yourself because you don't want other people to be unhappy with you. That's not pleasant. But the Christian life is supposed to be a life free from living to please others and living to please yourself, and just swept up in living to please the one who didn't live for himself but came and died for you.

To quote Paul again, more fully from Philippians 1 – "[I]t is my eager expectation and hope that... with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I

know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith” (Ph. 1:20-25). Is that your mantra – “To live is Christ, to die is gain.”

You have eternal life with Jesus in glory ahead of you, even if you die. So use this vapor, this mist of a life to go out in a flame for Christ and his glory! Have an aim, not to see how many states you can visit before you die; not to become a millionaire before you die; not to have a nice house; not to have a nice body; but to please the Lord, to live all out for him. To give yourself to ministry through the local church. To want to see more churches planted in Chicago and to the ends of the earth. To tell your friends and neighbors and co-workers about Jesus even if it doesn’t immediately please them, even if they persecute you, even if they kill you. So what! As long as you are here in this present state, make it your aim to please your Redeemer.

Paul steps up the motivation in v. 10 – “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” There is a final judgment coming. The Christian message is not just happy eternal life for everyone. When Christ comes again there will be a reckoning, a trial, an assessment of how you lived your life in this body here on earth. Therefore, as someone has put it, “[e]veryone who is mindful of their mortality must therefore be mindful of their morality.”⁹ All will be judged.

For those who have not put their trust in Christ – that he bore their sins in his body on the Cross – that Final Judgment will be terrifying and will spell condemnation. You will have no defense. You will be judged fairly and you will be justly sentenced to eternity apart from the favor of God, to continually exist in misery. “In that day of manifestation both the hypocritical and the hypercritical will be shown for what they really are,” as one person has put it.¹⁰ All haters and all fakers will be thrown into the eternal fire.

But for those who have admitted their faults now and clung to Christ as their beloved Savior, their only hope of righteousness before the holy God, there is no condemnation. There is no fear of banishment. There is no chance of being punished, praise God!!! All the punishment was exhausted on Jesus at the Cross.

But we will still have a meeting with Jesus where our whole lives in this body on this earth are evaluated. There will be good works to show that will demonstrate that you truly were saved. Those good works will not be the basis of your entrance into eternal glory – the basis is only and ever Christ and his work on your behalf. But your good works will give evidence that you truly were united by faith to Christ, they will be the demonstrable fruit of the root of genuine faith, confirmation for the universe to see that you were indeed his. Even that thief on the cross will have some good works to show that he was truly a believer – he stood up for Jesus against the other thief on the other side that continued to hurl insults at Jesus (Lk. 23:40).

So the judgment seat of Christ will give opportunity to show that we were indeed saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. But it will also be a time of dispensing rewards. Everyone will be infinitely happy. But there are different types of infinity. Some will receive more rewards for the way they used their lives in this present state. All that you’ve done, all that you’ve sacrificed, is seen and will be recompensed. There is great purpose in this life. There is great reason and reward for living sold out for Jesus. Life in the body matters. NT scholar Paul Barnett writes – “This teaching about

the judgment seat before which all believers must come reminds us that we have been saved, not for a life of aimlessness or indifference, but to live as to the Lord.”¹¹

Are you living aimlessly? Are you living with divided loyalties? Are you stuck in some pattern of sin? Are you wasting your life? Or are you seeking to leverage your life for God’s glory?

The Bible’s clear that **this life is not all there is**. But that isn’t just pie in the sky when you die that has no bearing on the here and now or that makes you so heavenly minded you’re of no earthly good. No! It makes you make the most of the present state. It motivates you to kill sin and give yourself fully to the Great Commission and stop messing around living for lesser things than to know Christ and make him known.

Conclusion

In this passage Paul has given us some profound teaching about the ultimate state, the intermediate state, and what that means for our present state. There is so much here to meditate on. In some ways I’ve been saying that I think we don’t think about these things as much as we ought. We get distracted with earthly comforts or trying to avoid earthly discomforts and don’t fix our hearts on what’s to come, how we will be freed of our groaning at the final resurrection, and how even if we die, we enter into paradise with Christ, as we await the final state. I don’t want you to live as if this life is all there is. I want to awaken you to eternity.

But let me close with this provocative quote from C.S. Lewis. He says:

There have been times when I think we do not desire heaven but more often I find myself wondering whether, in our heart of hearts, we have ever desired anything else.... All the things that have ever deeply possessed your soul have been but hints of it – tantalising glimpses, promises never quite fulfilled, echoes that died away just as they caught your ear. But if it should really become manifest – if there ever came an echo that did not die away but swelled into the sound itself – you would know it. Beyond all possibility of doubt you would say “Here at last is the thing I was made for.”It is the secret signature of each soul, the incommunicable and unappeasable want, the thing we desired before we met our wives or made our friends or chose our work, and which we shall still desire on our deathbeds, when the mind no longer knows wife or friend or work.¹²

Really what you want deep down and are searching for in all your relationships and vacations and event planning and pleasure seeking is something that this earth as it is cannot give you. You were made for more! You were made for a heavenly home. And I pray that you will see that today.

The Lord’s Table

Benediction

“Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient

children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’ And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1Pe. 1:13-19).

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This sermon was addressed originally to the people at Immanuel Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois, by Pastor Nathan Carter on Sunday morning, August 30, 2026. It is not meant to be a polished essay, but was written to be delivered orally. The mission of Immanuel is to be a multiplying community that enjoys and proclaims the Good News of Christ in the great city of Chicago.

End Notes:

¹ See Glen Scrivener, *The Air We Breathe: How We All Came to Believe in Freedom, Kindness, Progress, and Equality* (The Good Book Company, 2022).

² Anemona Hartocollis, “He Said He Was the World’s Healthiest Man. Then Came a Stunning Diagnosis,” in *NY Times* (Aug. 21, 2026).

³ Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 160.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁵ Augustine, *Civ. Dei*, XIV, 3, as qtd. in Hughes, 171.

⁶ Alexander Pope, “Ode: The Dying Christian to His Soul,” as qtd. in Philip Comfort and Daniel Partner, *The One Year Book of Poetry* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1999), September 14.

⁷ Hughes, 171.

⁸ Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 273.

⁹ David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, NAC (Brentwood: B&H, 1999), 266.

¹⁰ Hughes, 180.

¹¹ Barnett, 277.

¹² C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: Collier, 1962), 145-47.