

Death & Glory

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[0 : 00] Let us turn again to the chapter we read, 2 Corinthians, in chapter 5, and reading at the first verse, 2 Corinthians 5, in verse 1.

For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Now, while we're faced with death all around us and about us, and death is something that affects families and friends, because sadly we know our families and our friends, members of our family circle and members of our group of friends, they die.

And that is always one of the sore, painful things of life. But it's something that certainly in this particular age that we live in that we don't want to dwell upon.

We realize it happens, but we don't want to spend too long thinking about it. And if people are given to thinking about it, they're looked upon as being strange or morbid.

[1 : 17] because when we begin to think about death and what is going to happen, it makes us feel vulnerable. It hammers home our own mortality and it leaves many people feeling very, very uncomfortable.

And a lot of people try and take comfort when they think of death by somehow thinking, well, it'll be all right anyway at the end. And people hold on to this kind of idea that somehow, some way, that everything will work out and it'll be all right.

But they don't really think about it. They don't take on board and they don't even open their Bibles to find out what God is saying. But somehow they convince themselves that everything will be all right. And I would say that despite the humanist influence of today's society, and it is huge, there is still despite this humanist influence in the hearts of most people an awareness that life doesn't end at death.

You will often hear people talking, you will hear it so often, talking about those who have died, those who have gone on, and you'll often hear them talking in this kind of way, oh, he's up there or she's up there looking down and such like.

[2 : 41] They are aware, even although they maybe have no clue of what has happened or what's going on, you will hear them talking in this particular way. So despite the incredible advance of humanism within society, there is still within the heart of man an awareness that life doesn't end with a grave.

And that's not a strange thing for people to think, because God has given us a soul, a soul that will never die. And so just as we are body and mind, we are also spiritual in our being.

And it is inevitable, but that there is an awareness of that, however deep down it may be. But that is there, and it is something that we cannot really get rid of.

A lot of people try and suppress it and push it down and pretend it's not there and do things that will try and obliterate all such thinking. But it's still there, because that's the way we're made.

God has made us in that particular way. Now, the thing is, the Bible has shown us so clearly how things are to be.

[3 : 58] And I am honestly baffled. It's one of the things that baffles me, as to why people will not open the Bible and read the Bible, God's Word, God's Book.

Because a lot of people, even although they've got no particular interest or concern about Christianity, will still acknowledge the existence of God.

What kind of God they have in their mind, we don't know. A lot of people who maybe have no real idea have an awareness that there is some supreme being, some superior being, and very often guilty of taking the great God who is overall down into the level of their own imagination.

But what is baffling is that here is a book that is like no other book. And this is a book of God. And the Bible alone tells us, this is the amazing thing about the Bible, it takes us on a journey. From before there was anything, into the formation and creation of the world, into the origin of human nature and life at every shape and form, takes us on the journey of how sin and evil entered into the world, takes us personally, showing us the journey through life, a journey to death, and a journey after death into the eternal destinations set out before us.

[5 : 30] It takes us and shows us that this world, which had a beginning, will one day as we know it come to an end, where God will fold up, where the elements will melt with a fervent heat.

It's all here. The whole journey, before and after, and all that's in between. And it's really quite amazing how people will never open this book.

And you have people saying, how did it all happen? Where did it all happen? You have all kinds of theories about this and that. And it's all here. But you see, the problem is, at the moment, you open this book, and you begin to read it.

And you begin to believe what it's saying, you realize straight away, I am accountable to this God. And that is why people, it makes life, for the moment, more tolerable to a certain extent.

Close the book, keep it closed, let's not go down that road. But that doesn't alter the fact that one day, everybody is going to have to face this great God. And so, at one level, the answer to so many questions that we have in life are found in God's Word.

[6 : 43] And that's why Paul is so positive about the future. And that is why the Christian is so positive about the future. Because they know where they're going.

It makes a huge difference to your life when you know where you're going. You see, heaven is a reality. It is something that we are firmly persuaded of.

We believe it. There's no believer in here today who is not persuaded of the reality of heaven. And that being the destination of all God's people. And, of course, we do, we believe this by faith.

And Paul, of course, is here, is talking about the unseen. And he's talking about faith and what will, what's happening. And that's how he begins it in chapter 4 at verse 16.

And he's talking there and he's saying this light momentary, verse 17, affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

[7 : 46] Paul is here tying the present with the future. He's tying the here and now and the difficulties of life, the sore things of life, the pains and the hurts and all these things.

And he's tying it in towards ahead. And he's saying God's at work. And even in these things that are hurting you and maybe today there is a pain in your heart and you're saying to yourself, Lord, what are you doing?

This is what God is doing. He's preparing an eternal weight of glory for you. And what you are going through just now in the hand of God, this is part of his shaping and preparation for it so that one day you will enjoy that eternal weight of glory.

Right now, it might not make sense to you. And we've always got to remember that God's ways and thoughts are different to ours. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are God's ways and thoughts higher than our ways and thoughts.

So God is working everything towards this future glory. And so now in chapter 5, Paul goes on to talk about death and glory. And you'll notice that there's absolutely no doubt in the apostle's mind about what's ahead.

[9 : 07] And he says, for we know. Paul doesn't say, you know, he doesn't say, you know what I think you'll be. He's saying, for we know.

It's not just Paul who's saying it. He's talking, he's joining us all together. And he's saying, we know. I know and you know. Well, how do we know? Well, of course, God had revealed this to Paul.

But God has also revealed it to us. There is a twofold way in which we know. First of all, by faith, we know it because it is here in God's word.

God has revealed to us what will be. The second thing is, we're told that in verse 5, that he who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the spirit as a guarantee.

All this that Paul is talking about here and elsewhere is God has prepared it. And he has given us the spirit as a guarantee.

[10 : 11] The spirit is like a down payment. The Holy Spirit is like a down payment. It's a guarantee that the Christian will receive this resurrection.

And part of the guarantee, part of the spirit's ministry is persuading us and assuring us. That is why it's so very difficult often to explain things to people.

Because God's spirit ministers with our spirit. Assuring us. Persuading us. Convincing us. Making us aware of these things.

And that's simply why it's so personal. As has been often said, people say it's better felt than told.

And it's this awareness that what is happening, what you know it is real.

And so Paul tells us that the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed. We have a building from God. Now, of course, Paul was a tent maker.

[11:18] And he uses this very aptly. The tent. And as we know, a tent was something you just put up. And it was very, tent was often flimsy. It's transient. It's up and it's away. Very different to the foundation and the settledness of an actual building.

And you'll notice that Paul is contrasting the tent. Our earthly body. With the eternal home and the building. A home is a place where you live.

That's where you're going to be. That's where you stay. Home. A building. It's there. It's not something like a tent that you put up and fold up. Then you take down and fold away and you put up somewhere else.

Two very different concepts. One is fixed. The other is flimsy. And comes down. And so Paul is talking here about the tent.

And that is what we are in at the moment. We are in this tent. Because of sin. Sin came into this world. And God said in the garden.

[12:21] Before Adam and Eve sinned. God said. If you eat of that fruit. You will die. And we know what happened. They did. And the process of death began that very moment.

And it has continued ever since. Sin entered. The wages of sin is death. And we can't prevent it. No matter what we do. We cannot prevent the relentless march of death.

It will catch up on us. We cannot put it away. There is no power available to us. To stop it. To halt it. You could have the people with the most money in the world.

They can't stop it. The greatest medical scientists. They can't stop it. Nobody can stop it. You could be the president of America. You could have all the money of your Bill Gates.

And these multi-billionaires. You could have all these things. And you cannot prevent the relentless march of death. It will eventually take us. And just as you see a home.

[13:25] A beautiful home. But as the time goes on. Eventually homes begin to get shabby. They begin to become dilapidated. And as the centuries go on. You'll see them collapse. And that's what happens to our bodies as well.

They get worn out. As the years go on. The mobility goes. The aging process catches up. We can't prevent it. Now the thing is. We love our bodies.

Bible tells us that. No man ever yet hated his own flesh. It is natural to us to love our bodies. And probably the great instinct within us is self-preservation.

Because we love our bodies. And although we are spiritual and mental. We have minds and our spiritual nature. We.

The way we operate in this world is in the physical. In the sense that we use our limbs. And use all these things that God has given us.

[14:26] But eventually. They begin. Everything begins to wear out. And. It's a sore thought. Often we dismiss it.

But it's a sore thought. That one day. This body which has served as well in this world. Will. Will. Be put into the dust. To be eaten.

By worms. And return. To the dust. That's what the Lord said. From dust you came. And from dust you will return. It's a sobering thought.

It's a humbling thought. But it's a fact. It's a reality. And it's little wonder. That those. Who only live for this world.

And have no thought of God. And no thought. Of. Putting their trust in the Lord. That life is so empty. Because if you.

[15:20] That's it. You're saying to yourself. I live for a. X number of years. In this world. Then. My body's in the grave. And is it the dust. And. Is that it?

No wonder. There's so much despondency. And despair. With so many people. But it's not despair for Paul. Because. Paul goes on.

And he says. Even if this tent. Our earthly home. Is destroyed. He says. We have a building from God. A house. Not made with hands. Eternal. In the heavens.

And Paul is really saying. You know. Whatever. However good it is here. It's going to be even better then. In a sense. That's kind of what Paul is saying. If we can come back to somebody.

Who is without the Lord. The thought. Of going into eternity. All alone. Must be one of the most awful thoughts.

[16:21] I often. It's one of the things. I'm sure we often do. Is to try and picture in our mind. What certain things are like. And I think one of the most awful things.

That you can think of. Is somebody. Who has no hope. In the Lord. Because. When you think about it. When you come to die.

You have to leave. Everything. Behind. Everything. In this world. Those. Even who were closest to you. You know.

You even have to leave your body behind. There's not. One. Thing. That you ever had. Or possessed. Or was part of you. That you're going to take with you.

When you die. Just. Your soul. Your identity. That will go. Can you imagine. What it must be like. Going out into the great.

[17:18] Unknown. All alone. You've left. Everything. That's familiar with. To you. Behind. Naked. Not just naked.

Physically. But naked. There's nothing. Just your identity. The spiritual nature. Gone. It goes one of two ways.

If we are in Christ. We are bound in him. We cannot be separated from him. He has a hold of us in his hand. Into death.

When we are transported out of this world. There is an angelic company. We are brought instantly. Into the presence of the Lord. You know.

It's a wonderful. It's no wonder there's a wonderful hope for the believer. That's why the believer can look at death. Positively. But if we don't have Christ. How bleak.

[18:17] How empty. How frightening. How frightening. Can you think of anything more terrifying than that? And that's what the Bible shows us. We can't work that sort of thing out of shells.

But this is what the Bible is showing to us. And so that's why it's so important. And if you're here today my dear friend. And you haven't made this salvation sure.

Please go to the Lord today and cry to him. All it takes is one cry. A cry from the heart. A cry that you mean. Say Lord. Have mercy upon me.

Lord. Save me. And he will. So the question is asked. What is this building? So it's destroyed. We have a building from God.

A house not made with hands. Eternal in the heavens. And some people think that this verse is actually speaking about the resurrection. But I don't think so. Because verse 4 tends to speak about the resurrection.

[19:15] For while we are still in this tent. We groan being burdened. Not that we will be unclothed. That's what happens when we die. Paul is talking. When he talks about being unclothed. He's talking about us leaving our body behind.

But that we would be further clothed. That is a resurrection body. So that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. That's at a later stage.

There are two stages. So what happens when we die? Well at one level I would have to say I don't know. But again. What we do know from scripture.

Now some people think that at death. That the soul at death is given a sort of an intermediate body. Some people have this opinion. So that when we die.

We're given this intermediate body. Until the resurrection. And the reason why people think like that is because they say. How can a soul function without a body.

[20:19] But that's because we're thinking purely of this world. And thinking of it as this physical world. What we've got to remember is that God is a spirit. And God functions absolutely perfectly.

And the soul in glory will function perfectly as well. Again some people think at death that the believer will go into a kind of a state of limbo.

And it won't be until the resurrection. That when the body is raised that the soul then will join with the body. And go into the presence of Christ. That is when we arrive as it were in heaven.

But that is not scriptural either. It is very clear that the soul will leave the body. And the soul goes into the presence of the Lord.

Remember what Jesus said to the thief on the cross. He said today. Today. Not at the resurrection. But today you will be with me in paradise.

[21 : 21] A place prepared and fitted for our soul. Now as I say I don't claim to understand all that happens. But the one thing we know is.

That the soul will be alive. It will be vibrant. It will be energized. The soul will be interacting in and with the immediate presence of Christ.

And I believe with all the other souls that are present as well. There will be a full enjoyment. A full realization of where you are.

Far more so than even where you are right now. So that this will be an immediate entrance into glory. And verse 4 tells us then that Paul is looking forward to the time when he will also be reunited with the body.

This same body that we were talking about a moment ago. Which has served us so well. But which will eventually. It wears out. It will serve us for our day.

[22 : 25] We don't get another body here. It will serve us for our day. It will go into the grave. But that's not the end. You know there's an awful finality about a grave.

And we all know the difficulty that the grave. It's one of the most difficult places to go to. And it's an awfully sore and hard thing when a grave is being filled in and the turf rolled over.

And you say to yourself oh well. That's it. Well that's it for a wee while. It's not the end. That's it for a wee while.

Because these graves are to open. And the Lord sees fit that the body is to rise again. The same God who made the body in the first place from the dust to the ground.

Will take the dust that's already there. And raise it so that it will be your body. It won't be somebody else's. It will be your body. And it will be remade.

[23 : 26] Fitted exactly. For the new environment in which it will live. And reunited with your soul. There will be a coming together of body and soul.

It won't be somebody else's body. It will be your body. With your soul. Into this glorious state. That's the hope of the believer. Into this eternal building.

And there it will never grow old. And you'll be in an environment that is completely at peace. There'll be no anxieties. No frictions. No troubles.

No pains. No diseases. No death. What a prospect. What a future. There's nothing greater in the world.

Than to know that this is your future. And we've been given the key to this. Already here and now. And the key is grace.

[24 : 24] And that key. This key of grace. Will eventually turn into glory. Well as we come to conclude. I just want to ask one question. My dear friend.

If you're here today. Without Jesus Christ. What are you doing. About your future. Remember. It's going to come one day.

You're going to. You will. You will. And I will. We'll close our eyes in death. I want you to prepare for that. And we prepare. Now.

This is the opportunity. This is the day of opportunity. And Jesus is saying to. To you. Look. Take me. I will be a shelter.

For the storm. I will be your comfort. And consolation. When you go down. Into death's dark veil. You're not going to go down on your own. I'll go down with you.

[25 : 23] And I will take you up. On the other side. And we're going to be together. Forever. And ever. Please. Won't you make that. Your future. Make your future today.

Secure. By taking Jesus. Just now. Let's pray. Oh Lord. Lord. We pray that.

This great future. That is held out before us. Might be the future. Of every single one of us. In here. Oh Lord. We pray. That we. None of us.

Will close our eyes. In death. And like the rich man. Open them. In hell. Lord. As we have sat. Under the gospel.

May gospel blessings. May the gospel privileges. Be ours. And that we might know. The peace of God. That passes all understanding. Lord.

[26 : 18] Do us good. We pray. Guide us. And keep us. Bless all. Our loved ones. Our homes. And our families. We pray for protection. For healing. For help. And for grace. Take away from us our sin.

In Jesus name. Amen.