

(1) Discuss among yourselves your own personal experience in having witnessed the death of a friend or family member. What impact did it have on you? Did it direct your thoughts to the state of your own soul? Did it awaken consideration of the nature of the afterlife? Did it fill you with fear and dread or with hope and anticipation? Why?

(2) Many wrestle with the uncertainty that death seems to bring. But Paul says the promise of resurrection life with Christ is guaranteed to us through the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 5:5). What does this mean? How does the Holy Spirit “prepare” us for physical death? In what way does the Spirit serve as God’s “guarantee” that what he describes in vv. 1-10 is true?

(3) Paul seems to say it is **good** to remain alive on this earth to serve Christ and his people, that it is **better** to die physically and enter Christ’s presence, but that it is **best** to be alive when Christ returns. What does this mean? Why does Paul say it in terms of good, better, best?

(4) What happens the instant a Christian dies? What do we know of this from vv. 6-8? How do these verses answer those who believe in either purgatory or “soul sleep”?

(5) Talk about the nature of heaven and the life to come. Specifically, what is the nature of the reward that Paul envisions in vv. 9-10? How does it strike you to hear that Christians will differ in their rewards and in their degrees of happiness? Why is this something that will not lead to envy or frustration or unhappiness?