

LIFE AFTER LIFE: "During the Interval"

INTRODUCTION

- What happens to loved ones between the **time of death** and the **time of the resurrection**?
 - Hebrews 9:27 – speaks of the time of death: "it is appointed for man to die once"
 - 1 Thessalonians 4:16 – speaks of the time of resurrection: "And the dead in Christ will rise first."
- **Context of 2 Corinthians 5:1-8**: Paul is continuing the thought of moving our focus from the temporal to the eternal. (4:18 – we look. . . to the things that are unseen).

THE IMMEDIATE STATE (2 CORINTHIANS 5:1)

- **5:1** – Paul is on earth, doing the ministry of the New Covenant, in a body that is like a decaying, cheap, disposable pot.
 - 4:7 – "jars of clay"; the term can even be used to describe a garbage pail.
 - 5:1 - Paul describes his body as a temporary tent which will be destroyed in contrast to the eternal building that is from God. (5:2 - "groaning" describes the experience of the believer in this earthly body.)

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE (2 CORINTHIANS 5:2-4)

- The **Intermediate State** describes the time between the believer's physical death and the believer's physical resurrection.
 - **5:2** – Paul wants to be alive when Jesus comes, but he is realistic that his body is dying.
 - **5:4** - Paul describes death as being "unclothed" (his body is the clothing): the soul/spirit goes to heaven while the body is buried.

Truths About the Intermediate State:

1. Death is a separation, not cessation of existence (Acts 7:59, Luke 23:43, 2 Corinthians 5:6-8).
2. The Christian immediately goes into the presence of the Lord at death (no purgatory or soul sleep).
3. Our body awaits resurrection at the coming of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:51-56, Philippians 3:20-21).

THE IMMORTAL STATE (2 CORINTHIANS 5:4-8)

- **5:4** – Paul is looking forward to that glorious day when he will exchange a weak body for a glorious body like Christ's. (Titus 2:13 – "blessed hope").
- **5:5** – The Spirit is a "guarantee": the word speaks of a down payment which speaks of greater payments to come. (Modern Greek – "engagement ring").

Questions About Saints in the Intermediate State:

1. **WHERE are they?** They are in the presence of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8 describes this as "away from the body and at home with the Lord." In 2 Corinthians 12:2 Paul describes the "third heaven" which is the abode of God.
2. **WHO are they?** They are perfected spirits without bodies – present, conscious, aware, active (Hebrews 12:23).
3. **WHAT are they doing?**
 - a. Their lives are marked by Perfection (Hebrews 12:23)
 - b. Their lives are marked by Praise (Revelation 4-5)
 - c. Their lives are marked by Peace (Revelation 14:13 – "that they may rest from their labors")
 - d. Their lives are marked by Prayer (Revelation 6:10 – "how long before you will judge. . .")

Sermon Application Questions

October 13, 2019

PERSONAL RESPONSES

1 In 2 Corinthians 5:1-3, Paul compares his current body to a **temporary tent** which will be destroyed. He contrasts this to the **eternal building** which is from God.

1 When a person or family goes camping, what are some of the ways that they treat their temporary tent as opposed to how they treat their permanent home?

How does this metaphor inform how we should view our temporal existence in this life?

(Life Group Discussion: Feel free to share some good camping stories!)

2 Have you ever heard a sermon or teaching on **the Intermediate State** (the period between physical death and physical resurrection)? What has been your prior understanding of this subject?

2 Why do you think it is so necessary for Christians to understand the “Intermediate State”? What will happen to our lives if our thinking on this topic is clouded or misinformed?

How did this sermon help you in your understanding of this subject?

DIGGING DEEPER

1 Take some time and reflect on some of the key passages related to this week’s sermon. Ask the Lord for help in making application of these truths to your life.

2 Corinthians 4:7-10

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look 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.

Acts 7:59-60

And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Luke 23:42-43

And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Hebrews 12:22-23

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-5:10 as one unit of thought. (For the sake of this exercise, ignore the chapter division between chapters 4 and 5.)

2 How would you summarize Paul's main idea in this passage?

How is this main idea helpful to how we live our lives today as Christians?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

The theme of comfort is prominent in the New Testament Scriptures. Through the Scriptures we understand our future hope which includes truths regarding the Intermediate State, the Resurrection of the Saints, the Millennial Kingdom and the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 1 Thessalonians 4:18 says that we are not to keep these truths to ourselves but we are to "comfort one another with these words."

Can you think of situations in the church fellowship where a believer needs to hear the comfort of God? What are some passages of Scripture focusing on heaven that you would use to comfort a believer who is in a season of affliction?

2 Randy Alcorn has written that "The best of life on Earth is a glimpse of Heaven; the worst of life is a glimpse of Hell. For Christians, this present life is the closest they will come to Hell. For unbelievers, it is the closest they will come to Heaven."

Take a moment to review your personal testimony and the work God has done in your salvation.

- Remember that you were a **child of wrath** deserving the full judgment and condemnation of a holy God (Ephesians 2:3)
- Remember the infinitely perfect sacrifice **Christ made on the cross** to satisfy the wrath of God on your behalf (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 10:10-14).
- Remember the **infinitely glorious inheritance** that you have in heaven – eternal life which will be an expression of the "immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:7)
- **Ask God to help you never lose the wonders of His grace** – "*Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me; I once was lost but now am found was blind but now I see*".