

Death, Where's Your Sting?

HOOK

Imagine you've been kidnapped and forced to look at a beautiful view for the rest of your life never to see our loved ones again. That's how we see death, even heaven.

The Christian salesmen present the gospel – the greatest, eternal life saving news of all time – into a sales pitch for heaven (or get out of hell free card). But there's no beauty, or big house, or anything pleasurable you could promise me that would supersede my family. That's why Christian salesmen aren't disciple makers, they're commitment card counters. There must be more.

What does everyone who has ever lived has in common? All die. Cemeteries are full of people who were once young and felt that death was forever away, yet it came just the same. Solomon wrestled with this incessantly in Ecc. Death is inevitable.

(Disclaimer)

BOOK

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 - *1 For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands. 2 We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing. 3 For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies. 4 While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. 5 God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit.*

6 So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. 7 For we live by believing and not by seeing. 8 Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. 10 For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.

LOOK

Truth: Our bodies are temporary, perishable, subject to unavoidable decay, the law of entropy.

V.1 *For we know that when this earthly tent we live in is taken down (that is, when we die and leave this earthly body), we will have a house in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands.*

- Comparing our earthly bodies to our heavenly bodies as being the clothes of our spirits. The endurance and majesty of our heavenly body is like comparing a house to a tent.

V.2 – *We grow weary in our present bodies, and we long to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing.*

- We are anxious and uncomfortable here in a fallen world wrestling against our dead old natures. Groaning for something that can't be found here.

V.3 - *For we will put on heavenly bodies; we will not be spirits without bodies.*

- We won't be disembodied spirits. Our humanity was never evil. It was made "good." (Side note on Gnosticism?)

V.4-5 – *While we live in these earthly bodies, we groan and sigh, but it's not that we want to die and get rid of these bodies that clothe us. Rather, we want to put on our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by life. 5 God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit.*

- It's not that our bodies are evil and we need to shed them, but God's glorified body for us swallows up our temporary body making us eternal. It's God's gift to His people and we can look forward to it with the same confidence that we have the Holy Spirit.

PROBLEM: We (even Christians) see death as defeat, robbing us, crushing us. Isn't that we pray so hard, hold vigils, and get excited about some preacher that's healing people – hoping that raising people from the dead is still in the cards. It's not obedience to God's Word, but **fear that... this world is better than the next**; better than the eternal life Jesus earned for us through His sacrifice. (Example: Bethel)

When someone dies young, we think of all the things they didn't do, joys they missed out on. ("They're in a better place." Do we believe it? No.) Isn't this an evidence of our mentality that this life is better than what's waiting for us?

BUT (unpack v.6-10)

V.6-7 – *So we are always confident, even though we know that as long as we live in these bodies we are not at home with the Lord. 7 For we live by believing and not by seeing.*

- We aren't able to see Him yet or feel His hands in ours. Our spirits don't feel completely settled yet. During this brief, temporary season in our existence, we are walking by faith and not by sight. This is **an evidence of eternity in the human creature** (see Ecc.3). We all feel a desire for something which can't be found in the physical world. Something, the ungodly can't explain, but drives them to find fulfillment in empty wells.

V.8 – *Yes, we are fully confident, and we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord.*

- But believers have a very different experience. We feel an EXCITEMENT to leave the temporary behind to be in the arms of the Eternal, to be with Jesus.

V.9-10 – *So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please him. 10 For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.*

- The goal for a Jesus follower is the same. Whether living in the temporary physical realm or in the eternal realm, we strive to please our loving God.

This is game-changing and life-altering for a Christian. It changes our mentality about life and the motives behind every act of love. This is a confidence and hope the ungodly will never share.

(Refer to 1 Cor. 15 to read more about the body after death.)

1 Corinthians 15:50-57 - *50 I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. 53 For this*

perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

55 “O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you afraid of death? Two Possible reasons.

1. You love this life too much

Revelation 12:10-11 - *Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*

- Remember, we are trading what is temporary for what is eternal.

What is the purpose of our lives then?

1 Cor. 5:9-10 - *So whether we are here in this body or away from this body, our goal is to please Him. For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body.*

God is King-Creator-Owner of everything. We are stewards of our own lives. We are stewards of our relationships. We are stewards of our families. They were never ours. Only lent to us for a period of time. Our role in God’s plan is not to hold on to them as long as we can, but care for them as best we can.

How do we care? We love through sacrifice.

- It’s harder to sacrifice for Jesus and others when we’re sure this life is better – the only option left to us when we have this outlook is selfishness.
- It’s far easier to sacrifice if we’re sure eternity is better and we’re living with that life in our focus – the only option is surrender.

We have faith that being with Him is greater than anything or anyone here.

Are you afraid of death? Possible reasons.

1. You love this life too much
2. Your relationship with God isn't right

Philippians 1:19-24 - *Yes, and I will rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, 20 as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.*

The gospel (Jesus' life, death, resurrection) was never about getting us out of hell, or even getting us to heaven. **The gospel is Jesus returning us to Himself.**

The greater the relationship with Jesus, the less and less we fear death.

EX. Doctor's dog in the next room story.

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Story of Stephen seeing heaven before death and my imagination.

TOOK

Have you chosen Jesus? Surrendered your life to Him?